DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 21 APRIL 2021

WORLD | 10

Pak govt surrenders to radicals on France

SPORTS | 12

SRH keen to end losing streak

TABLOID

Wash away feeling of depression

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WEATHER

Max: 38.4°C
Min: 27°C
RH: 33%
Rainfall: 5 mm

Forecast: Cloudy sky. Rain likely in some parts. Max/Min temp. 38/26ºC

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Navami till 12.30 am (Thursday)
Star: Pushyami till 7.55 am
Varjyam: 8.52 pm to 10.29 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.49 am to 12.40 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR
Ramzan 8,1442 AH

PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.54 am
Zohar: 12.25 pm
Asar: 4.39 pm
Maghrib: 6.39 pm
Isha: 7.50 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.33 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.55 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 1.42 AM
MOONSET TODAY 1.00 PM

RAMZAN TIMINGS
IFTAR: 6.39 PM (TODAY)
SEHRI: 4.31 AM (TOMORROW)

COUNTER POINT

This is not what I meant when I said stock essentials...

Stay at home to avoid lockdown, says Modi

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asserted that lockdowns should be the "last resort" to deal with the raging Covid-19 pandemic, and sought to deliver a message to reassure the nation that his government was making all efforts to augment medical care as the country was again faced with a "big battle" against the virus.

In his address to the nation, Modi said the people were undergoing suffering but "we need to fight it out with all our might" and expressed confidence that the coronavirus will be defeated with the combined efforts of the people. "I want to thank our doctors and all our healthcare workers for working non-stop in this fight against Covid-19 pandemic," he said.

Modi said that the shortage of oxygen cylinders has come across as a major problem and said all stakeholders were working collectively to meet this challenge.

But he noted that the situation is different from last year when there was no Covid vaccine in the country or infrastructure to produce PPE kits and other much-needed medical goods.

He said lockdown should be the last option and focus should be on micro-containment. "If we all follow Covid-19 protocols, there'll be no need to impose lockdowns."

He urged the people to reduce their movement and do not venture out unless it is required. He also requested people take Covid vaccine.

India's total tally of Covid-19 cases climbed to 1.53 crore with 2,59,170 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, while active cases surpassed the 20-lakh mark, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Tuesday.

Modi also asked states to convince migrant workers, a large number of whom have begun leaving for their home states in distress following lockdowns in cities like Delhi and Mumbai, to stay put where they are with a guarantee that they will be vaccinated in the coming days and will also not lose their livelihoods.

"In today's situation, we have to save the country from lockdown. I will also request states to use it as the last resort. We have to try hard to avoid lockdown and the focus has to be on the micro containment zone. We will improve our economy's health and also take care of the people's health, he said.

With reports of patients dying due to lack of medical care, Modi said he empathises with the pain of those having lost their near and dear ones and shared their grief.

CICSE CANCELS CLASS 10 BOARD EXAMS, FINALLY

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Parents and students heaved a sigh of relief after the CICSE announced on Tuesday that Class 10 exams will be cancelled for academic year 2020-21. The council had previously said that the exams had been postponed.

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) announced that in view of the surge in Covid-19 cases, exams for Class 10 stand cancelled whereas those for Class 12 remain postponed until further orders. This is in line with the CBSE decision.

■ Page 2: Parents heave a sigh of relief

NIGHT CURFEW IN TS FROM 9 PM TO 5 AM

Shops to shut by 8 pm; curbs to remain in force till May 1

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The Telangana state government on Tuesday issued orders imposing night curfew across the state with immediate effect from 9 pm until 5 am every day up to May 1 to contain the spread of the Coronavirus.

Orders to this effect were issued vide GO MS No. 87 by way of a follow-up to a directive from the High Court to the government to impose lockdown or night curfew. "The various measures to control Covid-19 in the state have been reviewed. It is decided to introduce a night curfew in the state as a further measure to prevent the spread of Covid-19," chief secretary Somesh Kumar said in the order.

During the curfew period, all offices, shops, establishments, restaurants etc shall remain close from 8 pm except for hospitals, diagnostic labs, pharmacies, and those dealing with the supply of essential services. The essential services include the print and electronic media, telecom and internet services, broadcasting services, IT and IT enabled services, delivery of all goods through e-commerce, petrol pumps, LPG and CNG, petroleum and gas outlet, power generation, transmission and distribution, water supply and sanitation, coal storage and warehousing services, private security services and production services or units that require uninterrupted services.

The order said all persons are prohibited from roads and other public places from 9 pm except those involved in essential services. Those exempted also include government officials on emergency duty, private medical personnel, pregnant women and patients for medical care, persons coming from or going to airport, railway stations and bus stations.

There is no restriction on inter-state or intra-state movement of essential and non-essential goods. No separate permission or passes will be required for such movements. Public transport vehicles, including autos and taxis will be allowed to function within a stipulated time. Violation of this order will result in case registration and prosecution.

Charminar in Hyderabad wears a deserted after the night curfew came into force at 9 pm on Tuesday. — *GANDHI*

SHORT TAKES

CBI ARRESTS BOLLINENI IN ASSETS CASE

MADDY DEEKSHITH I DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Srinivasa Bollineni Gandhi on Tuesday in a disproportionate assests case.

A CBI official said on Tuesday that a case was previously registered against Gandhi, besides others including Chiluka Sudha Rani and Satya Sridhar Reddy for allegedly demanding ₹5 crore for input credit with regard to GST. The accused was a close aide of former AP chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu as one of the longest serving officials in the Enforcement Directorate, from 2004 to 2017. There were many allegations against him in the past too.

■ Page 2: Bollineni bought lands in Amaravati: CBI

UGC-NET gets postponed

New Delhi: The UGC-National Eligibility Test (NET) scheduled to be held from May 2 to 17 has been postponed in view of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, Union education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' announced on Tuesday. The National Testing Agency said the revised dates will be announced later, at least 15 days before the exam.

Control rooms for migrants

New Delhi: The ministry of labour and employment on Tuesday announced setting up of 20 control rooms to address grievances of migrant workers amid rising number of Covid-19 cases and subsequent restrictions imposed by state governments. The ministry last year had also set up 20 such control rooms to redress grievances like non-payment of salaries.

KCR'S HEALTH REMAINS STABLE, SAY DOCTORS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The health condition of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, who tested positive for Covid-19 on Monday, was stated to be stable on Tueday.

According to official sources, a team of doctors is monitoring the health of the CM round the clock.

As per the doctors' advice, the CM quarantined himself at his farmhouse in Erravelli on city outskirts. The RT-PCR test performed on the CM also came positive on Tuesday, sources added.

"Doctors monitoring the CM's health condition stated that there is no need to shift him to hospital. He was advised to remain in home isolation for nine days," they said.

All arrangements were made on Monday to shift the CM to Yashoda Hospital, Somajiguda, if the need arose but doctors advised him home isolation since he had only mild symptoms.

Meanwhile, TRS leaders and cadre performed special pujas in all major temples across the state on Monday for the speedy recovery of CM. Special pujas were held at the Yadadri, Vemulawada and Kondagattu Anjaneya temples.

Endowments minister A. Indrakaran Reddy on Tuesday urged priests at all temples to perform special pujas and archanas for the speedy recovery of CM. CM's political secretary and MLC Sheri Subhash Reddy performed special puja at the Edupayala Durga Matha temple.

SEC is in isolation, civic polls doubtful

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS I DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Serious doubts have risen over the conduct of the local body polls in Telangana, with State Election Commissioner C. Parthasarathi currently being quarantined.

The Commission, it was exclusively learnt and confirmed by Deccan Chronicle, based on court directions, has sought the "opinion" of the state government on whether it should go ahead, or postpone, the polls.

Elections for two corporations and five municipalities were scheduled to be held on April 30.

For all practical purposes, the SEC being currently indisposed from performing his duties, being in quarantine, is leading to a gross compromise on the basic principle of free and fair polls.

Highly placed sources said that the Commission has written to the state government, "seeking its views" on holding the elections in such an increasingly worsening pandemic.

Sources said the SEC was reacting to a query on holding the polls from the Telangana HC. "Though the SEC is all powerful to take decisions, the state government, in whose court the issue lands under the guise of consultation process, becomes the de-facto deciding authority," sources said.

■ Page 2: Congress asks poll panel to defer elections

TS COVID COUNT NEARS 6,000/DAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The surge of Covid-19 cases continues with Telangana state reporting 5,926 new cases, the highest ever daily number, even as 18 more people died from the disease on Monday.

The active cases in Telangana shot past the 40,000 mark to stand at 42,853, while 14,622 Covid-19 victims were in various government and private hospitals, according to the state Covid-19 bulletin released on Tuesday.

■ Full report on Page 2

Rahul tests Covid+, Kejriwal goes into isolation as wife catches virus

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said he has tested positive for Covid-19 and has mild symptoms.

"After experiencing mild symptoms, I've just tested positive for Covid," the 50-year-old posted on Twitter.

"All those who've been in contact with me recently, please follow all safety protocols and stay safe," the Congress leader wrote.

In a tweet, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished Rahul Gandhi a speedy recovery. "I pray for the good health and quick recovery of Lok Sabha MP Shri Rahul Gandhi ji," he tweeted.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, meanwhile, has quarantined himself after his wife tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday.

The chief minister's wife Sunita Kejriwal has tested positive and is under home isolation, a Delhi government official said.

Union minister Jitendra Singh and former minister and senior Congress leader Anand Sharma have also tested positive for Covid-19 disease.

RAHUL CALLS CENTRE'S VACCINE PRICE PLAN FOR STATES DISCRIMINATORY

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday attacked the Centre yet again, this time calling its vaccine strategy one of "discrimination, not distribution".

He questioned why people aged between 18 and 45 will not get a free vaccine. "No free vaccines for 18-45 year olds. Middlemen brought in without price controls. No vaccine guarantee for weaker sections. GOI's Vaccine Discrimination - Not Distribution Strategy (sic)," he said in a tweet.

Rahul Gandhi

His attack comes a day after the Centre announced the "liberalised and accelerated phase 3 strategy" of Covid-19 vaccination that will come into force on May 1 and will allow the entire population above the age of 18 years to get vaccinated.

Congress leader P. Chidambaram said the new vaccine policy is "heartless" and "lacks vision".

RAJNATH ASKS ARMED FORCES TO HELP STATES IN FIGHTING COVID-19

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday asked armed forces to be in close contact with the state governments and be ready to provide any required assistance on Covid-19 situation. Mr Singh held a virtual meeting to review the preparedness of the ministry of defence and armed forces to deal with the recent spike in Covid-19 cases across the country.

Rajnath Singh

He urged the defence PSUs, Ordnance Factory Board and DRDO to work on a war-footing to provide oxygen cylinders and extra beds to civil administration and state governments at the earliest.

The defence minister has also delegated the emergency powers of procurement so that critical needs are procured.

The minister suggested that they utilise the services of vaccinated retired Armed Forces personnel to assist the civil administration.

GOOD | IDEA Top court says High Courts can appoint retired judges to clear pending caseload

SC finds 'ad-hoc' route to clear case pile-up

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

With a backlog of more than 57 lakh cases pending in High Courts across the country coupled with 40 per cent vacancies, the Supreme Court on Tuesday paved the way for appointment of retired High Court judges as the ad-hoc judges by framing guidelines invoking its powers under Article 224A of the Constitution. The ad-hoc judges will have a tenure of two to three years.

In a crucial judgment, Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a bench also comprising Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Justice Surya Kant, empowered the High Court Chief Justices to pick up ad-hoc judges. The bench, however, said such appointments should be made only after first recommending the appointment of permanent additional judges to fill up the existing vacancies.

It is for the first time that the Supreme Court has taken recourse to Article 224A to clear the way for the appointment ad-hoc judges in the High Courts.

> It is for the first time that the Supreme Court has taken recourse to Article 224A of the Constitution to clear the way for the appointment ad-hoc judges in the High Courts.

The top court said the ad-hoc judges should be given cases which are more than five years old but the Chief Justice has the discretion to allot them the cases less than five years as well.

"The number of ad-hoc judges should be in the range of two to five in a High Court... The emoluments and allowances of an ad hoc judge shall be at par with a permanent judge of the Court, minus his pension," the bench said.

To eliminate any possible issue between who will preside over the bench, whether a sitting judge or an ad-hoc judge, the court said that the bench comprising ad-hoc judges will only comprise them.

The top court judgment came on a public interest plea by a Lucknow-based NGO Lok Prahari filed in 2019 seeking the appointment of ad-hoc judges taking recourse to Article 224A of the Constitution to address the problem of rising backlog of cases.

Article 224A gives discretion to the Chief Justices of the High Courts to recommend appointment of the retired judges of the same High Court or any other High Court, laying down the trigger points for exercising that power.

The bench lays down that the past performance of the candidates in both quality and quantum of disposal of cases should be factored in selection of the ad hoc judges as the objective is to clear the backlog and their consent be taken before recommending their names.

The top court said that the Chief Justice of the HC should start the process three months in advance for such appointments.

Since the judges to be picked up for the ad-hoc judge positions have already been appointed in the post through a warrant of appointment, the bench said there was no need to refer their names to the intelligence bureau and other agencies for clearance.

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Liquor rush

People rush to buy liquor even as the shop was downing shutter ahead of the night curfew at Madhapur in Hyderabad on Tuesday. — *R. Pavan*

Migration to TS cause of rise in Covid cases: Etala

Says there is no shortage of medicines, oxygen at govt hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The rise in Covid-19 cases is mostly in areas such as Hyderabad, and rural Telangana is not witnessing this on the same scale as urban areas, health minister Etala Rajendar said on Tuesday.

The minister said that one of the primary reasons for the increase in Covid-19 cases was people travelling into Telangana from other parts of the country; and there are a large number of cases being reported in districts adjacent to Maharashtra.

Rajendar, who appealed to the people to follow safety norms, maintained that 95 per cent of all people being diagnosed with Covid-19 were asymptomatic and only 5 per cent required care in hospitals.

However, the daily Covid-19 bulletin released by the state health department continued to maintain that the number of asymptomatic patients is just around 80 per cent of all cases.

As on Monday, the department said asymptomatic patients accounted for 81.1 per cent.

Top department officials have been for long saying that the number of asymptomatic patients is around 80 per cent, while about 12 per cent of patients are requiring some kind of hospital care, of this category, very few actually require critical care.

Rajendar appealed to people not to rush to private hospitals but visit a government hospital where, if required, they will be admitted and provided treatment free.

The Chief Minister has instructed that costs are not an issue and the government is willing to spend any amount of money to ensure the health of all people, he added.

There is no shortage of any medicines, oxygen or other requirements at government hospitals.

The health minister was speaking after a review on Covid-19 situation in the former unified Nalgonda district that he co-chaired with power minister G. Jagadish Reddy at Suryapet.

On the night curfew enforced from Tuesday, Rajendar said the government had reviewed every aspect and took the decision as there was a lot of travel between Maharashtra and Telangana. "The decision was taken in view of public health safety and I appeal everyone to follow the rules," he said.

THE CHIEF MINISTER HAS INSTRUCTED THAT COSTS ARE NOT AN ISSUE AND THE GOVERNMENT IS WILLING TO SPEND ANY AMOUNT OF MONEY TO ENSURE THE HEALTH OF ALL PEOPLE

— ETALA RAJENDAR

CASES ON APRIL 19
5,926

DEATHS ON APRIL 19
18

● Officials have been saying that the number of asymptomatic patients is around 80 per cent, while about 12 per cent of patients are requiring some kind of hospital care, of this category, very few actually require critical care.

5,926 new cases, 18 deaths in TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The surge of Covid-19 cases continues with Telangana state reporting 5,926 new cases, the highest ever daily number, even as 18 more people died from the disease on Monday.

The active cases shot past the 40,000 mark to stand at 42,853, while 14,622 Covid-19 victims were in various government and private hospitals, according to the state Covid-19 bulletin.

As many as 28,231 Covid-19 patients were either at home or in isolation centres.

With 793 cases on Monday, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area led the state in the number of fresh Covid-19 infections. As many as 25 of Telangana's 33 districts reported new cases in triple figures.

Following GHMC area in cases was Medchal-Malkajgiri with 488, Ranga Reddy with 455, Nizamabad with 444 and, Kamareddy district with 262 on Monday.

The number of cases in Khammam district doubled from 113 on Sunday to 247 on Monday.

The bulletin said that a total of 1,22,143 tests were conducted in the state on Monday, and results of 6,033 tests were awaited.

It said 2,209 people recovered from Covid-19 on Monday. Total cases so far in the state were 3,61,359, while deaths rose to 1,856, it said.

JAB SHORTAGE IN STATE; ABOUT 4L GET VACCINATED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Vaccine shortages continued to dog the state, particularly for people turning up at vaccination centres for their second shot of Covaxin.

Most vaccination centres had with them supplies of Covishield that resulted in those seeking a second shot of Covaxin being asked to come back later.

Meanwhile, health department officials said they were expecting some 6.7 lakh doses in all of both vaccines to arrive on Tuesday that would ease the situation, at least for the next few days.

For most part, for every two Covishield doses, the state has been getting one dose of Covaxin. As on April 19, Telangana received a total of 32,52,990 vaccine doses of which 62,970 doses have been issued to the armed forces.

On Monday, the department said it administered 1,55,869 first doses of the vaccine while another 21,352 people received their second dose.

The number of people who received their first dose was 27,47,831 while 3,81,664 got their second doses too.

Congress asks poll panel to defer elections

From Page 1

While the second wave of Covid-19 is showing a severe impact on the state, the government decided to conduct elections in Warangal and Khammam municipal corporations besides five other municipalities.

In a shocker to the opposition parties, in what has become a standard operating procedure, the SEC, the notification, the poll schedule, and the reservations to wards were all announced in quick succession on the same day. The opposition, by the modus operandi first unveiled in the GHMC elections, ends up having the least possible time to pick candidates.

The SEC issued notification on April 16 and gave just two days time to parties to find candidates and have them file their nominations, an once of the practice perfected during the lead-up to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation polls, which had also attracted severe criticism from the opposition parties.

"We are making a genuine and an apolitical appeal to the SEC and government to postpone the municipal elections keeping in mind the dangerous situation prevailing in the state," said N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president.

The government itself admitted the grim situation and imposed night curfew in the state, he pointed out.

As widely reported in the media, the public meeting recently held by Chief Minister and TRS supremo K. Chandrashekar Rao, as part of the campaigning for Nagarjunasagar bypoll, ended up being a possible Covid super-spreader. Besides Mr Chandrashekar Rao himself, several other participants at the meeting, including the TRS party candidate N. Bhagat and energy minister G. Jagadish Reddy were found to have tested positive soon after.

Elections and campaigning in parallel to the surge of a second wave of Covid has drawn widespread public consternation even as the courts are constantly pulling up the government over its actions to prevent further spread and managing the Coronavirus spread. In West Bengal, all major parties have now declared that they would not organise any public meetings.

"When Telangana is going through such a health crisis, what is the need to rush these elections for municipalities? Why risk the lives of lakhs of people at a time when long queues outside hospitals, testing centres, for oxygen cylinders, for Remdesivir and other drugs and sadly, outside crematoriums? How can it come down to a choice of power over people?" said an official.

4 HELD FOR SALE OF REMDESIVIR IN BLACK MARKET

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD APRIL 20

Four persons, including employees of healthcare and pharma sectors, were apprehended by the Hyderabad police commissioner's Task Force for illegally procuring and black marketing the Covid-19 emergency drug Remdesivir.

According to the police, Shaik Mazhar, 33, a pharmacy store owner, was caught trying to sell six vials of Covifor, near a private hospital on Tuesday. He had priced the injections costing ₹5,400 at ₹35,000 when he was arrested on a tip-off.

In another case, the Task Force nabbed Md Abdul Hafeez, 52, a pharmacy owner, along with his employees Shaik Jilani, 27, and Mohammed Bin Saleem, 51, who were trying to sell Remdesivir injections in the black market. "The four injections, priced at ₹3,490 were being sold to the public for ₹23,000," police said.

● **Shaik Mazhar,** was caught trying to sell six vials of Covifor, near a private hospital on Tuesday. He had priced the injections costing ₹5,400 at ₹35,000 when he was arrested on a tip-off.

Curfew time

Police tell vendors to wind up at Magalhat in Hyderabad after the night curfew was imposed by the Telangana police on Tuesday. — *DECCAN CHRONICLE*

CHGs to treat all patients

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD APRIL 20

The Cantonment General Hospitals (CGHs) maintained by Cantonment Boards are extending medical service to all patients approaching them for treatment, and not just the military families, as a special gesture during the Covid times.

"Suitable liaison with district authorities and nodal Covid officers will be done by cantonment general hospitals (CGHs) to facilitate timely treatment to patients.

It is requested to issue necessary instructions to CEOs of all cantonment boards in this regard and monitor the progress regularly," an official release said.

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday called upon the armed forces to be in close touch with state governments and be ready to provide required assistance.

He also delegated emergency powers of procurement so that critical requirements are met immediately, the defence ministry said.

This decision was announced at the review meeting held through video conference by Rajnath Singh with the top officials of the ministry including the Chief of Defence Staff and chiefs of Army and the Navy along with secretaries.

Parents heave a sigh of relief

From Page 1

A parent from Hyderabad Public School, Dr Samina Ali, said that first announcement from the CICSE to only defer the examinations had made her sceptical and worried at the same time because she did not want her son to sit for the exam amid the havoc that she was seeing first hand as a frontline worker.

"My child was prepared, I didn't want him to appear for the exams. It is not just the child but also poses a fatal threat to the entire family," Dr Ali said.

The CICSE also instructed schools to prepare for admissions to Class 11 and plan for the next academic year.

Another parent, Shruti Tibrewala, said that they can look forward now that the board has finally decided on not conducting the exams.

"The announcement earlier about only postponing Class 10 exams was a setback, because students could not do anything. There was no clarity on what to do next, whether keep preparing for exams or start looking ahead. But now there is finally a sense of relief," she said.

Parents that *Deccan Chronicle* spoke to all echoed the same thought.

The CICSE further said that any decision on Class 12 ISC exams will be taken in the first week of June after monitoring and assessing the Covid situation.

BOLLINENI SRINIVAS BOUGHT LANDS IN AMARAVATI CAPITAL, SAYS CBI

From Page 1

He was appointed as the superintendent of the GST Anti-Evasion Division wing, located at Basheerbagh GST Bhavan, with the support of Naidu.

He joined the Central Excise department as an inspector in 1992. He was promoted to superintendent in 2002.

Later, he went to the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence on deputation in 2003, where he served for a year. Srinivasa Gandhi was transferred to the ED in 2004, where he worked until 2017. It is alleged that Gandhi looked after the Rajya Sabha member Sujana Chaudhary's fake invoice fraud case and has been accused of acting in his favour and making huge profits in return. It is learnt that Sujana Chaudhary was not arrested, despite facing serious charges, because of this reason. In 2019, the CBI booked Srinivasa Gandhi for illegally amassing assets.

He is also charged with having spent huge money to purchase open plots and agricultural lands in Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh.

SHORT TAKES

OLD CITY LOCALS STOCK ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The imposition of night curfew meant residents thronging grocery shops in Old City on Tuesday evening to buy and stock essential commodities with great frenzy. Queues were seen before the ATMs.

The news on imposition of night curfew in the city disappointed the hoteliers and Haleem makers. They were worried this would adversely impact their revenue to the tune of 80 per cent. More so, as in the month of Ramzan, their business starts after 7 pm. In the Ramzan season, fasting people prefer to stay at home during the daytime and come out for shopping and dining in the evening.

Haleem makers decided to reduce the production up to 60 per cent. Mohammed Abdul Majeed, president of Haleem Makers Association said, "Already our business has suffered badly and with this curfew on, we are not able to do any business. Only one hour is left after Iftar (breaking of fast)." He said many haleem-makers will be forced to shut their shops.

Majeed appealed to the government and the police to allow transportation of meat from slaughterhouses to haleem-making points during the night hours. "We start preparation of haleem in the wee hours and for this we need meat at night time. If the transportation is not allowed in the night hours, we will not be able to prepare haleem before the Iftar time."

GGH DENIES ISSUE OVER BODIES OF COVID PATIENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Gandhi Hospital authorities have said that there was never an issue of bodies of Covid-19 patients being kept in rooms near wards because there was no space in the hospital mortuary to hold the patients losing their lives.

"It is a fact that we hold the bodies of the deceased patients for some time in a room or hall next to a ward. But this is not because there are many patients losing their lives and lack of space in the mortuary," Dr M. Raja Rao, Gandhi Hospital superintendent explained.

"The reason why this is done is because as per protocol, when a patient passes away, an ECG is required to be taken as a final check and only if there result shows that the person has flatlined, only then the death can be officially declared," Dr Raja Rao said.

The reason why sometimes we have to keep bodies in a room near a ward is to ensure availability of a power source to run the ECG machine. There is no other reason for bodies to be kept in such a manner, he explained.

Dr Raja Rao also said that it takes some time to take pictures of the deceased and print them so they can be tacked to the covering on the body to ensure that there is no confusion in terms of identification of the deceased by the families.

The Gandhi Hospital mortuary can hold 12 bodies at a time and the GHMC is working efficiently in helping families get the bodies or in disposing them, he added.

THE REASON why sometimes we have to keep bodies in a room near a ward is to ensure availability of a power source to run the ECG machine, said Dr Raja Rao.

Rail wail

Passengers at the Secunderabad Railway Station wait for police assistance after the start of the night at 9 pm imposed by the Telangana government from Tuesday. — *S. SURENDER REDDY*

Metro last service at 7.45 pm during curbs

Authorities urge passengers to follow Covid norms

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited on Tuesday revised train timings in view of the night curfew imposed from Tuesday night till May 1 by the government to contain the spread of Coronavirus cases.

HMRL said the last train will begin at 7.45 pm so that people can return home before the curfew takes effect at 9 pm. The first train will start form 6.30 am till April 30, it said.

Metro Rail which is functioning on its three corridors said that it had been strictly following Covid protocol from when services were re-started with easing of the lockdown.

HMRL authorities urged passengers to strictly follow Covid-19 safety guidelines including maintaining physical distancing on its stations and in its trains, wearing of face masks and regularly sanitising hands.

It said all passengers would be thermally screening before entry into the premises. Passengers were requested to cooperate with security personnel and staff of Hyderabad Metro Rail in their efforts towards keeping their journey safe.

DGP tells cops, be strict, not rude during curfew

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Director General of Police M. Mahendar Reddy held a video conference with inspectors-general, police commissioners and superintendents of police and asked them to strictly enforce night curfew.

The DGP said that the police should follow all the points mentioned in the government order on the night curfew issued by the state government. "Any violation of the aforesaid instructions shall result in prosecution under Sections 51 to 60 of Disaster Management Act 2005 and Section 188 of IPC as well as other applicable laws," the orders said.

Mahendar Reddy asked the police officials not to behave rudely with the residents of the state and ensure that all commercial establishments and shops were closed by 8 pm.

ANJANI KUMAR said that with public cooperation, the virus chain can be broken.

"Those who are exempted must show their identity cards to get the waiver. The police will not stop any goods vehicles and will create awareness among the people about the rules of the night curfew. I urge the civil society organisations to hold awareness programmes on the imposition of the night curfew," he said.

Hyderabad city commissioner, Anjani Kumar said that with public cooperation, the virus chain can be broken. "We will be following the guidelines and making sure that the curfew is maintained properly. Officials are deployed throughout the city and patrolling staff will ensure that the public is following the orders," he said.

Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat said that all the offices, shops and establishment to be shut down by 9 pm in the commissionerate with exceptions given to e-commerce delivery executives and staff of petrol stations, power, water and cold storage units and private security employees. "Those travelling to and fro from the airport should show tickets and other essential workers must show ID cards. Public transport should be stopped and those carrying essential workers will be allowed to operate. We need the public cooperation in making this a success," he said.

V.C. Sajjanar, Cyberabad police commissioner, said that with the experience they had from last year, officers had been briefed and deployed to monitor different areas. "The on-duty cops are also asked to be careful while engaging with the public," said the official.

Movie theatres change timings to suit Covid curfew schedules

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The night curfew imposed on Telangana will not impact the screening of movies in cinema theatres but what will change are the show timings. The changes are done in a way as to enable viewers reach their homes before 9 pm.

Movie exhibitors said that, for instance, the shows scheduled at 11 am would begin at 10 am while the 6pm shows will now start at 5 pm.

Balgovind Raju, representing the single-screen theatre owners of Telangana, said, "There were rumours in the social media that theaters will be closed. We will keep them open and follow safety protocols."

MOVIE EXHIBITORS said that, for instance, the shows scheduled at 11 am would begin at 10 am while the 6pm shows will now start at 5 pm.

He said the real challenge for the exhibitors are the postponement of release of big-ticket films such as the Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi-starrer Love Story, which was to be released on April 16 but put off.

Similarly, the release of Chiranjeevi's 'Acharya' too has been postponed. "Content is more important for the theatres to run and if big movies are not released, then people will not opt to come and watch movies," he said.

However, the surge in Covid-19 cases did have its impact on the turnout at theatres. The latest Pavan Kalyan starrer Vakeel Saab that opened to full houses for three consecutive days saw attendance dip since April 12.

Theatre owners say any decision on closing of cinemas will be a collective one. Sunil Narang, of Asian Cinemas said, "There are very few audiences now and the only movie generating some revenue is Vakeel Saab. So we will continue with that."

While it is expected that some screens may be shut because of lack of patronage, cinemas showing this movie are expected to stay open, at

RTC OFFICIALS SAY BUSES TO BE BACK IN DEPOTS BY 9 PM DAILY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The TSRTC halted its services at 9 pm on Tuesday and resumed them from 5am on Wednesday. A similar suspension will continue till May 1, while other intercity and interstate services will operate as usual.

The decision was taken after the state government imposed night curfew in the wake of a surge in cases of Coronavirus. The city services of RTC used to start at 4am each morning and the last bus used to be rolling out of stations at 11.45 pm.

RTC is the most-important transportation mode for the common man. It is incurring huge losses from the time of the nationwide lockdown last year.

The government-owned corporation buses have regained collections by 80 per cent in the rural service and 75 per cent in the Urban areas as soon as the schools and colleges resumed last month.

Speaking to the *Deccan Chronicle*, TSRTC managing director Sunil Sharma said, "The buses will be back at their depots by 9pm and resume the services from 5 am as per the government order. Intercity and interstate services will continue as usual."

RTC IS incurring huge losses from the time of the nationwide lockdown last year.

Masjid managements unhappy with curfew

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Managements of masjids have expressed dismay over imposition of night curfew in the state from Tuesday saying they interrupt their Ramzan prayers. They have sought that curfew be imposed from 10 pm, so that Muslims could complete their Isha Salah (night prayer) and Taraweeh prayers.

According to superintendent of Macca Masjid Moulana Abdul Qadeer Siddiqui, Isha prayers have been advanced from 9 pm to 8 pm in view of the night curfew. Masjids have thus announced that they will henceforth perform Isha prayers at 8:00 p.m. followed by Taraweeh. This will enable worshippers reach their homes before imposition of curfew.

AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi too has requested Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar to amend the government order, so that curfew starts at 10 pm, instead of 9 pm and people can make their way back home after work. He wanted milk and other staple food items to be included in the list of exempted services.

The Hyderabad MP pointed out that the state government had decided to impose night curfew from Tuesday soon after Telangana High Court ordered the government to decide on the matter within 48 hours. Owaisi felt court deciding on policy matters is unfortunate. "This harms our constitution mandated separation of powers," he underlined.

In a series of tweets, the Hyderabad MP said, "Last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued a farmaan imposing lockdown with 4 hours notice. It had a devastating impact on India's poor. It also violated exclusive powers of states. This year, we are seeing a different kind of encroachment on powers of state government. It's not a healthy sign."

The MIM president said a lockdown is harmful to the vulnerable. "Let's not compel poor people to make a choice between hunger and Covid," he remarked.

Owaisi referred to the hasty lockdown in Delhi which, he said, has led to re-enactment of last year's humanitarian crisis, as many workers have thronged bus stations and railway stations to leave for their native places.

SCR to continue services, opens its waiting rooms

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

South Central Railway will continue its services as scheduled and the night curfew which has been imposed by the state government will not affect train schedules.

Passengers who arrive in the city during the night curfew hours, when transport to go home will not be available, will be accommodated in waiting rooms till dawn when the restrictions end.

SCR would coordinate with pre-paid autorickshaws in bigger stations to ensure that passengers reach home safely, said Ch Rakesh, chief public relations officer of South Central Railway.

The movement of trains has restarted after the lockdown of last year was eased in stages. Railway stations which shut their doors to regular passengers are operating with standard operating procedures issued by the Centre.

Railway officials said only 60 per cent of express trains were being operated, and there were no waiting lists. Only passengers with a confirmed ticket or on RAC were being allowed to travel.

As there is a surge in Coronavirus cases, the SCR hiked the platform ticket price to ₹50 to discourage families from crowding the platforms.

PANDEMIC | PRESSURE

Top civic body staff are considering 'work from home' option

GHMC offices under Covid threat

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Offices of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) have been working under tremendous pressure following many of their staff getting affected by Coronavirus.

After the second wave of pandemic began, 40 officials of just the civic body's headquarters at Tank Bund have tested positive. Though general public are not being allowed to interact with officials since past few days, two officials from engineering wing, one from revenue, two from town planning, one from sports, three from IT, two from administrative wing, an engineer sitting on the ground floor, and officials of electrical wing have contracted the virus.

As many as five persons tested positive on Tuesday alone, three on Monday, two on Sunday and two on Saturday. Many officials at the zonal offices too have been similarly affected by Covid-19.

Because of high incidence of virus among staff, top officials of GHMC are actively contemplating to give corporation personnel the work-from-home option. Another option could be 50 percent of staff working from home and the rest from office. Officials who hold digital keys and have super fast internet connectivity at home could work from their residences.

MEANWHILE, THE corporation has advised people to call 040 21111111, 9154686549 or 9154686558 in any case of emergency or Coronavirus-related queries.

There are also certain officials at the level of additional commissioners and chief engineers, who have co-morbid conditions. They too could work from home by holding virtual meetings with field staff of GHMC who, however, have no option but to attend duties throughout the city, particularly during emergencies.

A senior GHMC official told *Deccan Chronicle*: "We have been keeping a close watch on every official. If s/he comes to office late, we have been asking them to produce Covid-19 test document, even though they have taken the vaccine. We trust none because it will be risky for other staff working from the offices," the official informed. He said apart from young IAS officers, senior personnel are being advised to work from home to minimise Covid-19 risk.

Meanwhile, the corporation has advised people to call 040 21111111, 9154686549 or 9154686558 in any case of emergency or Coronavirus-related queries.

Over 40 sanitation workers belonging to Charminar zone staged a dharna against inadequate safety measures for them. They are demanding manual attendance since they fear biometric devices are transmitting Coronavirus to those in the field.

SHORT TAKES

KCR CONVEYS RAMA NAVAMI GREETINGS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Tuesday conveyed his greetings to people in the state on the occasion of Sri Rama Navami.

The Rama Navami, which occurs on Chaitra Shudda Navami in the Vasantha Rithu (spring season), is celebrated on a large scale every year. But the celebrations have been scaled back due to the coronavirus pandemic, the CM said.

The CM urged the devotees of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita to watch the celebrations online to be held at the Bhadrachalam temple in the presence of a limited number of priests and officials.

The CM said the relationship between Lord Rama and Goddess Sita is holy and the sacrifices they made for the welfare of mankind should be the ideal for the present and future generations. The CM prayed to Lord Rama and Goddess Sita to shower their blessings on the people in the state and help the people to lead comfortable lives with peace, satisfaction, and prosperity.

FARMERS SHOULD AGITATE AGAINST TRS: KOMATIREDDY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Congress Bhongir MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy on Tuesday asked farmers to protest against the TRS government for not setting procurement centres in villages. He said that till they launch an agitation on par with the one that farmers have organised in New Delhi, the state government would not start the procurement centres.

Venkat Reddy said that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had promised to set up procurement centres and procure every last grain of paddy from the farmers. However, after the Nagarjunasagar bypoll, the government had ignored the promise. In an open letter to the Chief Minister, the Congress MP reminded him of the promise made in the Legislative Assembly to purchase paddy from the farmers through procurement centres.

TRS, BJP IN SECRET PACT FOR POLLS: CONGRESS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The Congress on Tuesday accused the TRS and the BJP of entering into a secret pact for the Nagarjunsagar Assembly and Lingojiguda GHMC bypolls. The friendly ties between the two parties was evident from the understanding on the Lingojiguda bypoll, AICC secetary S.A. Sampath Kumar.

He pointed out that the TRS had announced that it would not contest against BJP in Lingojiguda. The BJP had fielded a weak candidate in Nagarjunasagar.

Congress veteran V. Hanumanth Rao said the Congress had been saying that TRS and BJP were two sides of the same coin. He said BJP former MLC N. Ramchander Rao approaching TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao to withdraw from Lingojiguda and the latter agreeing was a clear sign of their friendly ties. "All this looks like a high intense political drama between the two parties. If the TRS is true in its claim that BJP is a rival party, then why has it TRS not booked any cases against Bandi Sanjay for targeting Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao with unparliamentary language," Sampath asked.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The public at general are hereby informed that my clients are negotiating for the purchase of premises bearing Municipal No. 5-9-323, 5-9-323/A & 5-9-323/B admeasuring approximately 1100 sq.yds., with residential structures thereon situated at Gunfoundry, Hyderabad from its owner and possessor Mr. Wilfred J. De. Souza S/o. John De. Souza.

Any Person / Persons, Banks, Financial Institutions, Government Departments / Authorities etc., having any claim, right, title, interest, charge or mortgage in respect of the above described property shall submit such objections / claims to the under signed with all documentary proof within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which my client shall proceed to finalize the negotiations and complete the sale transaction and any objections / claims etc., thereafter shall be deemed to have been waived.

Sd/- **Ram Joshi Advocate**
Off: 4-1-1240/1/A, Beside Indian Overseas Bank, King Koti Road, Abids, Hyderabad
Ph: 040-24752154 / 40156716
Cell: 9849790990

Praying for KCR's speedy recovery

Home minister Mohd Mahmood Ali offers a chaddar at the Yusufain dargah for the speedy recovery of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, at Nampally in Hyderabad on Tuesday. — *S. SURENDER REDDY*

Centre okays TS' new zonal system for jobs

50,000 jobs to be notified in various departments of the state

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The decks have been cleared for the release of job notifications to fill over 50,000 vacancies in various departments soon with the Centre approving the state government's new zonal system for job recruitments.

The Union ministry of home affairs issued a gazette notification late on Monday approving the two new districts — Mulugu and Narayanpet — and amendments made to zones (shifting of Vikarabad district from Gadwal zone to Charminar zone) by the state government.

The new zonal system was approved by taking 33 districts into consideration as against 31 districts approved in 2018.

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had on December 13, 2020, announced the decision of the government to fill over 50,000 posts within three months. However, it has not made headway due to a delay in Centre's approval to new districts and zones.

The CM had increased 10 districts in Telangana to 31 in 2016, besides augmenting the two zones into seven zones. He also created two multi-zones in 2017, all of which decisions the state government sent to the Union home ministry for approval.

Post the approval from the ministry of home affairs, it was sent to President Ram Nath Kovind for his final approval. President Kovind approved the zonal changes in May 2018, after which, the Centre issued a gazette notification immediately.

However, the CM decided to create two more districts (Mulugu, Narayanpet) in 2019, taking the total districts to 33. It was done to fulfil a poll promise ahead of the 2018 Assembly polls, due to strong demands from local people.

This effected changes in zones by shuffling districts. The state government submitted revised proposals and districts and zones to Centre for approval in 2019 but they were lying with the Centre since then. It had halted recruitment drives in TS as the state government has to issue job notifications by distributing among all districts, zones and multi-zones, without which the process would land in legal tangles.

The Chief Minister brought a new zonal system in Telangana in 2018, according to which, 95 per cent of all government jobs sanctioned for a given zone are reserved for locals.

This local status of a candidate is decided based on her or his school study from Class I to VII. Based on these certificates, a candidate is considered a local for jobs. Those who have studied for four years in a particular district/zone from class I to VII are treated as a local of that particular district/zone.

WHY ONLY NIGHT CURFEW, ASKS EX-MP VIJAYASHANTI

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD APRIL 20

BJP leader and former MP Vijayashanti has asked Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao what was the use of the night curfew when no restriction is in place in the state during the day-time. "The government is failing in taking adequate preventive steps to control the second Covid wave," she said.

On Tuesday, she and some other BJP leaders shared a statement on social media, saying the government imposed the curfew only after the high court exerted pressure on it. Otherwise, the TRS government would not have acted, they said.

She accused the state government of completely failing to control the second wave of Covid. "The state government is not learning any lesson from the first wave of Covid and continuing with the same negligent attitude to the pandemic's spread in the second wave," she said.

The ex-MP said the Chief Minister had conducted review meetings and public events without wearing masks and such meeting photos had circulated in the social media. Several ministers and senior leaders are also following in the footsteps of Chandrashekar Rao and adding to the health concerns of the state, she said.

SHE ACCUSED the state government of completely failing to control the second wave of Covid. "The state government is not learning any lesson from the first wave of Covid and continuing with the same negligent attitude to the pandemic's spread in the second wave," she said.

Marri: SEC, govt took unilateral decision on polls

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Marri Shashidhar Reddy, chairman of the state Congress Election Commission Coordination Committee, has asked the State Election Commission (SEC) to postpone the April 30 civic polls due to the Coronavirus situation and night curfew imposed on Tuesday,The curfew would affect the right of the candidate to campaign with the voters, he said in a representation given to State Election Commissioner C. Parthasarathy.

The Congress leader said that the elections could be super spreaders of Covid-19, and the polls should be postponed for the sake of safety of the people. "Or else the SEC and government will be held responsible for any harm caused to the people", he added.

He said the state government had taken a unilateral decision to conduct civic body elections without taking into consideration the opinion of political parties, representatives of employees and others.

He said that the High Court had said it would not intervene in the poll process but the court in another petition had come down heavily on the state government for not taking steps to reduce the gathering of the people in public places. The court had threatened to do so if the government did not, he pointed out.

Shashidhar Reddy pointed out that even Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and several others who were part of the Halia public meeting had tested Covid-19 positive. He said that he had petitioned the Election Commission against the meeting but it had said that it could go ahead with Covid protocols. This, he said, is impossible to follow.

THE CONGRESS leader said that the elections could be super spreaders of Covid-19, and the polls should be postponed for the sake of safety of the people. "Or else the SEC and government will be held responsible for any harm caused to the people", he added.

BJP seniors deny role in ex-MLC meeting KTR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Bandi Sanjay, state president of the Bharatiya Janata Party, has categorically stated that the party leaders who called on Telangana Rashtra Samiti working president K. T. Rama Rao to discuss the Lingojiguda GHMC division polls had done so without consulting or informing the state or the national leadership.

This was a severe blow to the efforts of senior party leader N. Ramchander Rao, a prominent leader in the delegation that met Rama Rao, to drag senior party leaders into the controversy in an apparent bid to wriggle out of trouble.

After the meeting, he sought to portray in party circles and the media that the meeting had taken place with the approval of the party leadership. However, with the prospect of disciplinary proceedings hanging on him, Ramchander Rao passed the buck to the Ranga Reddy district party unit. He is likely to meet the party inquiry committee on Wednesday and offer his explanation.

Sanjay in a statement on Tuesday said that the party had taken serious note of the BJP leaders meeting Rama Rao without informing the leadership, leave alone consulting it. Neither he nor senior leaders like Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy, party vice-president D.K. Aruna, BJP OBC Morcha president Dr K. Laxman and former general secretary Muralidhar Rao had any knowledge of the meeting, Sanjay said adding that the leadership was of the strong view that the meeting with Rama Rao had severely damaged party interests. Sanjay made a specific reference to Ramchander Rao and other leaders ignoring discussing the issue with Kishan Reddy and Dr Laxman though they were available in Hyderabad. The three-member committee under the chairmanship of former legislator Y. Lakshminarayana will go deep into the reasons for meeting Rama Rao without intimating the leadership.

The state BJP president said the party won all the divisions in the LB Nagar Assembly constituency and was confident of repeating it in Lingojiguda where the death of corporator-elect A. Ramesh Goud had forced a bypoll. It was the TRS that proposed to facilitate unanimous polls, he said.When contacted, the former MLC said the meeting with Rama Rao was a coincidence and was not planned by him. He said BJP Ranga Reddy district party president Sama Rangareddy approached him with a proposal to meet D. Sudheer Reddy, ruling party MLA from LB Nagar.

"The district president told me that he had informed all senior leaders about a meeting with the MLA and KTR. We met Congress MP A. Revanth Reddy also to seek his support for the unanimous election," Ramchander Rao said.

Meanwhile, the RR district party leaders and a few corporators met Lakshminarayana and offered their explanation that they too were unaware of the meeting with Rama Rao till they met the local MLA.

Candidates to spend ₹50L on Khammam polls

RAVINDRA SESHU I DC
KHAMMAM, APRIL 20

Elections in Khammam Municipal Corporation may as well turn the costliest polls, as candidates of all political parties are readying to spend between ₹30 lakh to ₹50 lakh in each division.

Party sources say ruling party told its candidates, who sought party tickets, whether they are prepared to spend this amount as election expenditure. The party made it clear that it will not extend any monetary support to candidates and they should pay for everything from their own pockets.

Upon this, some of the ruling party aspirants backed out from contesting. However, there were enough aspirants ready to bear the expenditure. About 10 TRS candidates spent ₹3 lakh each only on taking out massive processions for filing their nominations. Candidates of various parties have already commenced campaigns in their respective divisions. Transport minister P. Ajay Kumar is seeking votes for the ruling party in various divisions of KMC by pointing to projects that TRS has implemented in Khammam since last two years. "People of Khammam should vote for TRS as it has brought IT Hub-2 to the town. Three tanks around Lakaram have been beautified. Greenery has been developed along the NSP left canal and walking tracks established at various places," Ajay Kumar pointed out.

In 50 percent of divisions that it is contesting, Bharatiya Janata Party has fielded financially sound candidates. It has gone to the town exposing failure of the TRS government in checking the spread of Covid-19 in the district. In addition, it says Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has done great injustice to youth by not issuing any job notifications. BJP is fighting the KMC elections in alliance with Jana Sena, which has been given 12 seats in the corporation.

Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka is looking after elections in Khammam municipality on behalf of his party. He pointed out that vexed with the ruling party, 500 families from TRS have joined the Congress. The party candidates are focusing on door-to-door campaigns, detailing the corruption going on under the TRS rule.

SHRADDANJALI

SRI MAIDAVOLU NARASIMHAM
With profound grief we share the passing of our dear father,
MAIDAVOLU NARASIMHAM H/O LATE SHANTHY NARASIMHAM
An outstanding central banker and macro-economist. "Chairman Emeritus ASCI,"Former Governor RBI"Though sorrows of his departure linger in our minds, pleasant are the memories that he has left behind.
In grief **Radhakrishna (Sasha) Narasimhan (Son)**
Renu Lal Narasimham (Daughter-in-Law) and
Sonya Narasimham (Grand Daughter) &
SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN FAMILY

FIRST ANNIVERSARY
HEARTFELT REMEMBERANCE

SIDDAMSETTY KRISHNA RAO
DOD: 21.04.2020
"you never stop loving him"

Fondly Remembered by
Sons - Daughters in law
Ramesh - Krishnaveni
Sunil - Lakshmi
Kishor - Gayithri
Grand children
S. Vikram - Sanjana
S. Santosh - Riha
S. Nitin
Bhavna - Chetan Bharat
Madhuri - Rohit Bhardwaj
S. Vaishnavi
Great Grand children
Ranvir - Om - Aanvi - Vidhaan

SHRADHANJALI

Sri. PATHI SREERAMULU GARU
Retd GHMC Food Inspector & Advocate.
Date of Death 20-04-2021
Inserted By:
ACHAN SUNIL & FAMILY
(S/2122/D00070)

10th DAY CEREMONY

PASPU SAVENDER
28.06.1958 - 13.04.2021
Although you left us your memories remain in our hearts forever.
"**10th day ceremony** on Thursday (22.04.2021) at Malti Naik Plaza, Abids. From 1PM on words."
Inserted by:
Paspu and Burgula families

10th Year Death Anniversary
In memory of
Late Neil Joseph Rasheed

D.O.D: 21-04-2011
Those we Love don't go away, they walk beside us every day, unseen, unheard but always near, so loved so missed, so very Dear.....
Inserted By: **Grieving Sister**
Racheal Reddy & Family Members
(S/2122/D00073)

MEMORIAL SERVICE
"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7

DOB: 20-08-1965 DOD: 17-04-2021
O.S.Vilasini
Office Superintendent, Sr.DPO/SC.
Memorial Service will be held
TODAY (21-4-2021) at Her Residence.
Inserted by : **Family Members**

18th ANNIVERSARY

SMT. USHA NATESHAN
Mother your memories will never fade.
Warmth of your hug continues to give us strength.
We seek your blessings wherever you are.
Inserted by:
Sons, Daughters & Grand Children

SHRADHANJALI

Sri. PATHI SREERAMULU GARU
Retd GHMC Food Inspector & Advocate.
Date of Death 20-04-2021
Inserted By:
Smt. Uma Devi Isarapu (Daughter)
Mr. Amarnath Rao I.G. (Son in Law)
Vandan Isarapu (Grand Daughter)
Ashwini Patti (Grand Daughter)
Rohini Isarapu (Grand Daughter)
(S/2122/D00069)

SHRADHANJALI

Sri. PATHI SREERAMULU GARU
Retd GHMC Food Inspector & Advocate.
Date of Death 20-04-2021
Inserted By:
Pathi Raghunath (Son)
Pathi Amar Kumar (Son)
Pathi Sridhar (Son)
(S/2122/D00071)

శ్రద్ధాంజలి

కీ॥శే॥ శ్రీమతి లింగా చిరంజీవి నాగమణి గారు
జననం 24-11-1950 మరణం 17-04-2021
మీ అకాల మరణానికి చింతిస్తూ దైవ సన్నిధికి చేరిన మీ దివ్య ఆత్మకు శాంతి చేకూరాలని భగవంతుని ప్రార్థిస్తున్నాము.
ఇట్లు
కుమారుడు **లింగా ప్రదీప్**
కోడలు **లింగా సుస్మిత**
కూతుర్లు – అల్లుండ్లు.
మనుమలు, మనుమరాండ్లు,
మునిమనవలు, మునిమనుమరాండ్లు మరియు కుటుంబ సభ్యులు
చిరంజీవి అవార్డ్‌మెంట్, వెస్ట్ మారెడ్‌పల్లి.
సికింద్రాబాద్. సెల్ 7993727303
(S/2122/D00074)

OBITUARY

Sri Prabhat Kumar Malpani
(S/o Late Radhelal ji Malpani)
DOB: 16-10-1946 DOD: 20-04-2021
We all miss you and you will always remain in our heart. May your soul rest in peace.
Inserted by: **Smt. Alka Malpani** (Wife)
& All Family Members - **9848766330**

REST IN PEACE
"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:" - 2 Timothy 4:7

PASTOR BASHAPAKA ASHEERWADAM
Zion Prayer Hall, IPC, Pamkunta
DOB: 27/11/1950 DOD: 20/04/2021
Funeral will be held at
Pamkunta Village, Rajapet Mandal
on 21/04/2021 at 1.00 PM
In Grief:
Wife & Sons. Ph:9885859933.

SHORT TAKES

FORMER SP LAUNCHES BOOK VIRTUALLY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD APRIL 20

A book by Chilukuri Rama Umamaheswara Sarma, retired superintendent of police, named 'Nenu Shanthakuda', a memori was released on Tuesday virtually. He joined the force as sub-inspector in 1985 and worked in various posts before retiring as deputy commissioner of police, Malkajgiri. The author in the book discusses three decades in service, and his personal life. His daughter Sindhu Sarma is an IPS officer and is superintendent of police at Jagtial.

TWO KILLED IN ROAD MISHAP AT CHADERGHAT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Two persons were killed in a hit-and-run mishap early on Tuesday morning at Chaderghat. The victims, Sunil and Maruthi, were on a motorcycle when it was hit by an unknown vehicle on the Mahbubgunj market road.

Chaderghat police said that Sunil succumbed to his injuries on the spot, Maruthi was rushed to the Osmania General Hospital by locals where doctors declared him brought dead. A case has been booked and efforts are on to identify the vehicle involved in the accident. The bodies were shifted to Osmania General Hospital morgue for the post-mortem examination.

IIT-H, SWINBURNE LAUNCHES JOINT DOCTORAL PLAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IIT-H) entered into an engagement with Swinburne University of Technology, launching a joint doctoral programme in a new format with an enrolment of 10 PhD students. The programme is expected to commence in July 2021.

The students admitted to the JDP will have an opportunity to spend up to one year at SUT, Australia, supported by Swinburne University Postgraduate Research Awards scholarship from SUT.

These students will receive a fellowship as per the ministry of education norms while at IIT Hyderabad. Besides, students will receive a top-up scholarship (150 AUD) from SUT while at IIT-H. While at SUT, they will receive a scholarship identical to the Swinburne University Postgraduate Research Awards (SUPRA) from SUT for up to 12 months.

Further details can be obtained from https://www.iith.ac.in/iar/IITH-SUT/.

VETERAN SCRIBE AMARNATH PASSES AWAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Noted journalist Kosuri Amarnath passed away on Tuesday due to Covid-19 at the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS), where he was admitted a few days ago. He was 69. He is survived by his wife and son.

Amarnath was one of the leading figures in the journalists' union movement and contributed immensely to issues concerning the profession, the rights and welfare of journalists, and freedom of the press.

He started his career as a staff member of UPSC in Delhi, quit that job after 10 years and joined 'Andhra Bhoomi' and retired in 2010 as News Editor.

He was twice member of the Press Council of India from the Indian Journalists Union during which time he made out a case for the necessity of enacting a separate legislation for the safety of working journalists. He was also Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ) president for one term and secretary of the IJU thrice.

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy led the two states in condoling the death of Amarnath.

Caught in the downpour

Due to a sudden downpour on Tuesday evening motorists take shelter under a stretch of the Metro rail in Secunderabad. — *GANDHI*

Court refuses to allow polluting units to stay

Court satisfied with eviction notices by GHMC

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Making it clear that any polluting commercial unit wouldn't be spared in the residential areas of Shastripuram and Tatanagar at Rajendranagar, the Telangana High Court on Tuesday rejected the pleas of owners of several units that they be either allowed to continue operations or allotted another place.

GHMC HAD issued the notices even during the lockdown last year, folllowing which the owners had got some relief from the court as they could not shift at that time.

The High Court expressed satisfaction with the work done by the GHMC, following court orders, in evicting the polluting industries from the two areas. It suggested that the GHMC give some time to the owners to shift their machinery or infrastructure from the premises but no work should go on.

The GHMC had issued closure notices to 160 units recently after getting an earful from the court which was dealing a PIL filed in 2012 seeking directions to shift polluting units.

The GHMC had issued the notices even during the lockdown last year, folllowing which the owners had got some relief from the court as they could not shift at that time.

Withdrawing the earlier notices, the GHMC issued fresh closure notices which were upheld by the High Court.

UGC-NET EXAMS POSTPONED YET AGAIN FOR COVID

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Tuesday announced the further postponement of the December 2020 cycle of UGC-NET, earlier scheduled to be held in May, in view of the second wave of the surge of Coronavirus in the country.

Every year, the UGC-NET is held twice – in June and in December. The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the 2020 academic year and the December session could not be conducted on time. Instead, NTA decided to conduct the session from May 2 to 17, 2021.The NTA said that the revised dates for the UGC-NET December 2020 cycle (May 2021) exams will be announced later, at least 15 days before the examination. Candidates are advised to keep visiting the official websites of NTA (www.nta.ac.in) and (ugcnet.nta.nic.in) for updates.

According to a public notice issued by the NTA on December 1, a total of 2,59,734 candidates had registered for the post of assistant professor. Out of the total registered candidates, 1,40,479 candidates appeared for the examination.

A total of 6,01,242 candidates registered for the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) and assistant professor posts. Out of the total registered aspirants, 3,86,228 candidates appeared for the exam. The same number of candidates were expected to appear for the examination in May 2021.

TOTAL OF 6,01,242 candidates registered for the JRF and assistant professor posts. Out of the total registered aspirants, 3,86,228 candidates appeared for the exam. The same number of candidates were expected to appear for the examination in May 2021.

Bad hygiene: Mayor suspends civic staff

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Following the directions of K.T. Rama Rao, municipal administration and urban development minister, Mayor Gadwal R. Vijayalakshmi on Tuesday inspected the progress of the special sanitation drive in Hyderabad. She inspected LB Nagar and Secunderabad zones and suspended a few officials for not maintaining sanitation despite repeated warnings.

Vijaylakshmi toured King Koti,Ram Koti, Kacheguda station road where at Nimboliadda she noticed that sanitary field assistants (SFAs) were inactive despite numerous complaints from the residents. She instructed zonal commissioner S. Srinivas Reddy to initiate stringent action on the officials after suspending sanitation worker Bhumesh. Later, the Mayor visited colonies in LB Nagar zone, Saroornagar, Lingojiguda, Champapet, Hastinapuram, Vanasthalipuram, BN Reddy Nagar, Mansurabad, Nagole, Uppal, Nacharam and Mallapur divisions. She instructed zonal commissioner Upender Reddy to set up a mobile common treatment plant (CTP).

After interacting with the locals, the mayor assured to solve the drain and road damage issues in and around 30 colonies of Mansoorabad. Later she inspected the newly established CTP plant in Devendernagar, beautification works of Mallapur cemetery and the biogas burning machine set up at Autonagar cemetery along with inspection of bicycle track and walking track at LB Nagar main road and beautification works on Nagole Bridge.

The Mayor urged sanitation staff to work effectively and informed them that there would be strict action against them if they fail to keep up the sanitation or cause inconvenience of any sort to the residents. She stressed sanitation workers, SFAs and excavators, who have been working in the same place for many years to face changes shortly, said the Mayor.

₹4 CRORE WORTH PROPERTY GUTTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Fire broke out at the Lotus Plastics unit in Nacharam on Tuesday morning which required four fire engines to douse. No casualties were reported in the fire which broke out at 10.30 am on Tuesday. Fire services were alerted at 10.43 am and reached the spot in minutes. Durga Prasad, station fire officer, Moula Ali, said, four fire engines and 25 fire fighters were pressed into action. Property worth ₹4 crore was gutted.

IMD: STATE MAY FACE STORMS FOR FOUR DAYS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Some sudden sharp showers, accompanied by thunder and lightning, turned the weather pleasant in the city on Tuesday evening with several areas in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits experiencing some rain.

The highest rainfall of 2.05 cm was reported by the Telangana State Development Planning Society at Gandipet mandal in Ranga Reddy district.

Several other locations across the state witnessed some rain, even as the Indian Meteorological Department predicted some thunderstorms accompanied by gusty winds in isolated places in the state till Saturday.

However, most of such weather is likely to be moderate rain or thundershowers but some locations might experience the more severe weather, the IMD said.

THE HIGHEST rainfall of 2.05 cm was reported by the Telangana State Development Planning Society at Gandipet mandal in Ranga Reddy district. Several other locations across the state witnessed some rain.

Keerthy Suresh unveils the exclusive 'Parampara' collection for Jos Alukkas on Tuesday. Also seen are Varghese Alukka, Paul J. Alukka and John Alukkaa. —*DC*

Keerthy Suresh is new Jos Alukkas ambassador

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 20

Jos Alukkas, one of the leading jewellery brands in India, announced their association with the national award-winning actress Keerthy Suresh, who will take over as their next brand ambassador.

Jos Alukkas believes that the actress' popularity and acceptance among the younger generation will help the brand reach a new set of customers and build a strong bond with them. Keerthy Suresh on Tuesday unveiled the exclusive 'Parampara' collection for Jos Alukkas.

Jos Alukkas believes that the actress' popularity and acceptance among the younger generation will help the brand reach a new set of customers and build a strong bond with them. Brand is expected to open in South India.

The brand has expansion plans for the year and is expected to open more stores in South India as part of its next phase of growth. Managing directors of the Jos Alukkas group, Varghese Alukka, Paul J. Alukka and John Alukka, and Keerthy Suresh said that they look forward to a long-term relationship.

HELP AT | HAND

Promotion of agriculture will create jobs

Farmers get ₹128cr Jagan sops

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 20

Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday credited ₹128.47 crore directly into accounts of 6,27,906 farmers under "YSR Zero-Interest Crop Loan Scheme" for 2019–20 Rabi season.

The scheme benefits those who have taken loans up to ₹1 lakh and have repaid the same within the stipulated time.

Addressing beneficiaries and officials through video conference on the occasion, the CM pointed out that 60 per cent of world's population is dependent on agriculture. In other words, promoting agriculture creates employment for 62 per cent of population in Andhra Pradesh. He stated that ever since his government came to power in June 2019, total ₹1,132 crore have been so far paid to 61,22,585 under zero-interest subsidy scheme. The YSRC government had even paid arrears left unpaid by the previous government.

Jagan Mohan Reddy advised farmers of the state to enrol themselves in e-crop database for availing interest subvention from June 2021. He said his government's objective is to prioritise welfare of both farmers and farm labour. He maintained that almost all promises made to farmers have been fulfilled in the 22 months since YSRC came to power, including YSR Rythu Bharosa benefiting 51.59 lakh farmers at an expenditure of ₹13,101 crore. 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.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
e-tender is invited on Behalf of the President of India for the under mentioned work.
1. Name of work with its location : Composite Work (Civil & Mechanical) involving construction of Industrial shed with Pre-Engineered Building (PEB), Service building, Electrification and illumination works. Procurement and commissioning of specified Mechanical Machineries & Plant and other associated Civil, Electrical, Mechanical & Telecom works in connection with Facilities for POH of DEMU/MEMU at C&W Workshop, New Bongaigaon (NBQS), Northeast Frontier Railway." E-tender No. 2020WP/S&T/NBQS/DEMU/WT-04(Open). 2. Approx. Cost of the work : ₹19,61,43,351.26, 3. Earnest money to be deposited : Nil (Bid Security Declaration in lieu of Earnest Money Deposit.) 4. Date and time for closing of tender : 02.06.2021 upto 12.30 hrs. 5. Website particulars and notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen and downloaded. : Tender can be down loaded and Bided from IREPS website : www.ireps.gov.in and detailed can be seen from the notice board at Office of CAO/WP, Chamber Bhawan, J.C. Road, Patna - 800001.
Any e-tenders which is sent by Post/Courier/Fax or by hand will not be accepted. All such manual submission of tender even if it is on firm's letter pad or received in time will not be accepted. The above e-tender document alongwith full information is available on website http://www.ireps.gov.in.
Dy .Chief Electrical Engineer/ Workshop Project/ECR/ Patna
PR/00102/WP/Elec./T/21-22/48

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No. SNT-RE-DANAPUR-120
Dated 17.04.2021
Open e-tenders in single packet system are invited by Dy. Chief Signal & Telecom. Engineer, Railway Electrification, Danapur for & on behalf of the President of India for the work of-
Sl. No.: 01) Name of the work with its Location: Alteration of existing EI, Trenching and Laying of underground Signaling Cable / Power Cable, Supply of equipment / materials, Erection of Apparatus Cases and fixing of Equipment and other related works including Wiring, Testing and Commissioning in connection with Tower Wagon Siding at Jangipur Road and Sabaur station (EI with MACLS) of Malda Division of Eastern Railway.
02) Approximate Cost of Work: Rs.1,13,76,796.62 (Rs. One Crore Thirteen Lakhs Seventy Six Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety Six and Paise Sixty Two only.) **03) Earnest money:** Rs. 0/- (Rs. Zero only) **04) Tender closing date and time:** 03.05.2021 up to 12.00 hrs **05)** Website particular and notice board location where complete details of tender can be seen: **(https://www.ireps. gov.in)**; Notice Board at the office of Chief Project Director, Railway Electrification, Danapur, Near Jagjeevan Stadium, PO Khagaul, District Patna, PIN-801105
Note:- Original/revised bids are to be submitted online up to closing date and time on IREPS website only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be summarily rejected. Tenderer should get the digital signing certificate and register them on this website to participate in the tender certificate and register them on this website to participate in the tender.
Dy. Chief Sig. & Tele. Engineer Railway Electrification, Danapur
PR/00106/RE/DNR/T/21-22/52

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
"e"-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
"e" NIT No.09/ENC(R) MDK/EE(R)/DEE6/AEE/2021 **Dt : 16-04-2021**
1) Online tenders are invited on "e"-procurement platform in Sangareddy, and Medak Districts under Non-Plan (MDR)/FDR 2020-21. (i) Four (4) Road works under Non-Plan (MDR) for 11th call. **(ii)** One (1) Road work under Non-Plan (MDR) for 9th call. **(iii)** One (1) Road work under Non-Plan (MDR) for 6th call. **(iv)** Fourteen (14) Road works under Non-Plan(MDR) for 3rd call. **2.** Tenderers can download the tender schedules from e-market place i.e., **"tender.telangana.gov.in"** The last date of receipt of tenders for road work is 29-04-2021 upto 3.30PM. **3.** Further details can be seen at e-procurement market place i.e., **"tender.telangana.gov.in"**
R.O. No. : 61-DP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22 For Engineer in Chief (R&B), State Road & CRN

TELANGANA STATE INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE CORPORATION LIMITED, HYDERABAD
(Govt of Telangana Undertaking)
5th floor, Parishrama Bhavanam, H.No: 5-9-58/B, Fateh Maidan Road, Hyderabad-04.
Phone:- 23238290-250
e-Procurement Notice
TN.No.0 1: Chief Engineer, TSIIC Ltd., Hyderabad invites bid for Widening of the existing Road from Nagerguda x roads to Hytabad junction ie., upto IP Chandanvally X Roads, RR District. **ECV Rs. 35,32,85,535.00**
Bid download starts date : 23.04.2021. from 03.00 PM
Last date for submission of bids : 29.04.2021 upto 03.00 PM
The details of tender notice and bid document can be downloaded from web site: **www.tender.telangana.gov.in**
DIPR.R.O. No. : 1726-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22 Sd/- CHIEF ENGINEER

KERALA MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD.
(Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Kerala)
THYCAUD P.O., THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695014
Tele: 0471-2945646, 2945600 Fax: 2945647
website: www.kmscl.kerala.gov.in, e-mail: etenders_ep@kmscl.kerala.gov.in
CIN No. U24233KL2007SGC021616
No. KMSCL/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-Various 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 Mandiable, Vaccum Cleaner, Paediatric bed, GC With FID,NPD and ECD Detector, Subcutaneous Bilurubinometer, Binocular Microscope - Various Type, Centrifuge - Brushless Type-8 wells, Semiautomatic Coagulation Analyser, Hot Air Oven Various Type, 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 (R)/ 2021	Test kit for new born screening programme (ImmunoFluroscence Method)	26.04.2021 11.00 a.m.	03.05.2021 05.00 p.m.
		Reagent Rental Contract - Fully Automated Immuno Hematology Analyser, SPET CT Scanner	N.A.	
6.	T403(R)/ 2021	Implant Kit Physio Dispensor Ultrasonic Scalar, 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, Materials for the setting up of LIMB fitting centre, Digital Dental X-ray Unit (Pediatric), T-Piece Resuscitator, Goniometer 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 Osseous Gun, Homogenizer, Lab Blender, Vertical Horizontal Shaker	N.A.	03.05.2021 05.00 p.m.
7.	T404(R)/ 2021	Green Laser with Slit Lamp and Indirect Delivery System (Multispot), 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 Homogeniser 5L, 10L, Polarimeter, Tympanometer, Setting up of IVF center on turnkey basis, OT Table fully automatic, Trauma Accessories, ENT and Ophthalmic Examination Head, Ausculation Trainer, AV Fistula, Platelet Aggregometer, Portable Ventilator for ALS Ambulance, Laser unit (Dental), Pulse oxymeter Baby & Adult, Biosafety Cabinet Various types, Point of Care Ultrasound with echo probe, Oto acoustic Emission Screeners Type B, Laminor Flow Cabinet, Live 3D(4D) Echocardiography system, Transport Ventilator	N.A.	03.05.2021 05.00 p.m.

State Public Sector undertakings and MSMEs registered in the State or registered outside the state satisfying the policy of Government of India are exempted from remittance of tender document cost and EMD subject to the submission of valid documents, provided all the offered products are manufactured by them. Tender documents and all other information related to tender and bidding process can be downloaded from the website www.etenders.kerala.gov.in.
Sd/- Managing Director (Tender Inviting Authority)

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.

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

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 *Perseverance* 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.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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K. SUDHAKAR
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Subhani

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

Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay

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.

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 baulk 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 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 nationalistic 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 politics 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

FIGHT COVID

Today's Covid-19 pandemic situation across the country is alarming. We have no one to blame but ourselves. If we go into the streets, we see so many people without masks. From the time the lockdown was lifted the government should have continued to have a strict watch over people's behaviour and not wait for things to grow out of hand. The government should swoop down on violators.

N.B. Stephenson
Hyderabad

VIP CORONAVIRUS

Several Chief Ministers including K. Chandrasekhar Rao have tested positive for Covid-19. Many Central and state ministers, IAS and IPS officers have also tested positive. However, these VIP Covid-19 patients don't face problems like finding beds in hospitals and and high-end medical attention round the clock. These are the problems of the general public. Coronavirus is the "leveller" that treats both the haves and the have-nots the same way, but our leaders have made the virus look biased.

M. Somasekhar Prasad
Hyderabad

CLUB POLL PHASES

The CEC must combine all pending multi-phase elections and conduct them on one day across the country. This is the only way of avoiding frequent election rallies inviting lots of people thus increasing the virus cases.

G. Murali Mohan Rao
Secunderabad

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 Suvendu 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 movement 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 take place outside the polling booth and hardly inside. The question that 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.

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.

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 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.

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

ASSAM ORDERS CLOSURE OF GROCERY SHOPS, MALLS BY 6 PM

MANOJ 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.

SHORT TAKES

FAROOQ, OMAR TEST NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19

DC 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 asymptotic. 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 SPIKE

AKSHAYA 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 Khurdha 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 RESPONSE

SHAHAB 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.

SC stays HC order on lockdown in UP

PARMOD 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 inform the HC within a week about the steps it has taken and to be taken in future to contain and curb the Covid. Issuing notice the court ordered, "Until further orders, there shall be an interim stay of the impugned order passed by the HC. However, the petitioner — state government shall immediately report to the HC about the steps it has taken and proposes to take in the immediate future within a period of one week in view of the current pandemic." The Court appointed senior lawyer P.S. Narasimha as amicus curiae to assist the Court in the matter. The court appointed Narasimha as amicus curiae after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told SC that HC had passed the lockdown order in a suo motu proceedings, thus there is none to receive notice being issued by SC on an appeal by UP government.

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

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

SHORT TAKES

MAMATA CALLS CENTRE'S COVID NORMS 'HOLLOW'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, APRIL 20

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday described the Centre's Covid-19 vaccine policy as "much-delayed," "hollow" and "without substance" in her second letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi within two days.

Lashing out at Modi, the Trinamul Congress supremo also alleged at a poll campaign rally in Murshidabad, "the Chief Election Commissioner has been infected by Covid-19. Another EC member has contracted it too. They are working from home. You can well understand that working from home means the BJP will do the job. The PM earlier sent 64 per cent essential medicines for Covid-19 abroad. That means we will not get the medicine now even if we die."

In the letter, Banerjee told Modi, "I am informed that the Central government has announced the much-delayed 'universal' vaccine policy on April 19th which appears to be hollow, without substance and a regrettable show of evasion of responsibility by the Central government at the time of crisis. You may kindly recollect my letter dated 24th February, 2021 wherein I had requested your intervention to allow our state to purchase vaccines directly with state resources and give free vaccination to people of the state. No response was received from your end."

LEFT WORKER KILLED IN CLASH WITH TMC

PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC
BERHAMPORE, APRIL 20

A Left Front worker was killed while ten others were injured during a violent clash between the CPI(M) and Congress supporters, on one side, and the Trinamul Congress activists at Hariharpara in Murshidabad of West Bengal, a day before Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee visited the district for her Assembly Election campaign. The victim — Abul Kasem Ali (37) — belonged to the CPI(M).

On Monday night, the workers of the Congress and CPI(M), the two allies of the Sanjukta Morcha, had assembled after attending their poll meeting at Khoshalpur village in Raipur area. A group of TMC workers chanted slogan *Khela Hobe* at them leading to an altercation between the two sides, which however turned violent.

Bombs and bullets flew freely during the clash. Ali and ten other injured were rushed admitted at Murshidabad Medical College Hospital. Ali, who was hit by a bomb, was declared brought dead there. Hariharpara Congress candidate Mir Alamgir Palas alleged, "The armed miscreants of the TMC hurled bombs and fired bullets for ten minutes on our workers to terrorise us."

COVID PATIENT DIES, KIN RANSACK HOSP.

Pune, April 20: A mob of 10-12 people have been booked for allegedly vandalising a hospital and beating up its staff in Pune's Pimpri Chinchwad area after the death of a Covid-19 patient, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place in Cantonment Hospital in Dehu Road area on Monday afternoon, an official said.

"A 28-year-old man was admitted in the hospital on April 16 after he tested positive for Coronavirus. His oxygen level was 87 per cent and the staff at the facility asked his kin to admit him in civic-run Yashwantrao Chavan Memorial Hospital (YCMH) in Pimpri Chinchwad," Sub Inspector Prasad Gowale of Dehu Road police station said.

"The man's kin took him to YCMH but, possibly due to the rush there, took him home. On Monday, his health deteriorated and he was was rushed to Cantonment Hospital again, but by then his oxygen level was just 37 per cent and he died soon after," he added.

Following the man's death, a mob of 20-25 arrived there and some 10-12 of them, led by the deceased's cousin, ransacked a room in the hospital and thrashed the staff present.

"A case has been registered and six people in the mob have been identified. No arrest has been made so far and probe is underway," Gowale said.

Family members of Covid-19 patients stand in queue to take cylinder filled with medical oxygen at a plant as coronavirus cases surge across the country in Prayagraj on Tuesday. — *PTI*

At 12 %, Tamil Nadu tops list of states for vaccine wastage

44L doses were wasted out of 10 crore doses used by states till April 11

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 20

As a result of high Covid-19 vaccine wastage being reported in the state, the health department has now launched strict district and site-wise review to avoid wastage of vaccine doses.

A RTI reply revealed that Tamil Nadu, with 12 per cent, topped the table of States that had reported the highest vaccine wastage till April 11.

According to health department data, the State inoculated a total of 48.07 lakh doses till April 19. Health Secretary J. Radhakrishnan told this newspaper that there was high wastage of vaccines in the State as vaccination centres were not getting enough people to finish the final vial which has at least 10 doses.

"It was difficult for the last set to be quantified with 4,000 vaccine centres across the state. So it became an issue. We are now very strict and started reviewing district and site wise to reduce it," he said.

The health minister Dr Vijay Bhasker explained that it was not possible to keep people waiting for hours for the numbers to fill up for the final vial and that wastage became higher owing to this.

The state kickstarted its vaccine drive on January 16. As per the RTI reply, apart from Tamil Nadu, Haryana (9.74 percent), Punjab (8.12), Manipur (7.8) and Telangana (7.55) topped the list of States with vaccine wastage.

Over 44 lakh doses were wasted out of 10 crore doses used by states till April 11.

For the last few days, many districts in the state had reported a shortage of vaccines. Many states including Maharashtra, Punjab and Delhi had demanded delivery for more doses of vaccines as they were running out of stock.

The demand could intensify with vaccinations being opened to all above 18 from May 1. Dr. Rex Sargunam, President, Tamil Nadu Health Development Association, said that it happened due to lack of planning and implementation by the authorities. The vial-based wastage could have easily been avoided if the people at the centre had taken correct decisions. It's important that the government recruit more people and train them properly to appoint at vaccine centres to avoid such incidents in the future," he said.

Wastage of vaccines is a criminal waste: Delhi HC

New Delhi, April 20: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday said wastage of even a single shot of the Covid-19 vaccine was a "criminal waste" and directed the Centre to vaccinate whomsoever it can to ensure each vial is used fully.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said that according to news reports there is a daily wastage of six per cent of vaccines and till now 44 lakh vaccines out of 10 crore have been wasted, maximum in Tamil Nadu.

"This is a huge wastage. Give it to those who want it. Whomsoever you can vaccinate, please vaccinate. Whether 16 year old or 60 year old, all need vaccination. The pandemic does not discriminate," the court told the Centre.

The bench said the wastage was occurring due to the restriction with regard to age and categories of persons who are entitled to take the vaccine.

It said that the Centre recently announced that from May 1 all above the age of 18 years would be entitled to take the vaccine.

"In our view, wastage of a single dose of vaccine, which has proven to be life saving, is a criminal waste," the high court said. — *PTI*

Kerala badly hit by 2nd Covid wave, faces jab shortage

GILVESTER ASSARY I DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 20

With the second wave of Covid-19 posing a serious threat, Kerala recorded the biggest single-day spike on Tuesday with 19,577 new cases taking the total number active cases in the state to 1,18,673.

Nine of the 14 districts have reported a daily spike in cases ranging from 3,000 to 1,000. The state reported 28 deaths taking the death toll to 4,978.

During the last 24 hours, 1,12,221 samples were tested in Kerala and the test positivity rate was as high as 17.45.

Of the new cases reported on Tuesday, 17,839 got infected through contact while 397 came from outside the state.

Among the districts, Ernakulam continued to report the highest number of cases.

On Tuesday Ernakulam reported 3,212 cases followed by Kozhikode — 2,341, Malappuram — 1,945, Thrissur — 1,868, Kottayam — 1,510, Thiruvananthapuram — 1,490, Kannur — 1,360. Alappuzha 1,347 and Palakkad — 1,109.

As of now 2.89 lakh people are under observation across the state including 2.75 lakh under home /institutional quarantine.

With the huge spike in cases, the health care infrastructure has come under huge pressure. Though there is no major shortage of ICU beds or ventilators at this stage, health experts say if the number of cases increase at the present rate then the situation could turn alarming in the coming days.

The huge spike during the second wave has been largely attributed to the recent campaign for the Assembly elections. All through the campaign, huge crowds gather during the public meetings, road shows of prominent leaders and in most places the Covid safety norms were violated blatantly.

Meanwhile, vaccine shortage has aggravated the problem in the state. People, particularly the elderly, are forced to return disappointed from various vaccination centres across the state following a shortage of vaccines.

The health experts fear that the shortage of vaccines might affect the elderly besides resulting in mortality.

Notwithstanding the huge spike in cases, Kerala has so far managed to keep the mortality rate at 0.44 per cent.

Despite repeated pleas, the centre has not rushed fresh consignments of vaccines yet.

The state authorities had aimed at administering the second dose to 1.22 crore people mainly the elderly population and people with comorbidity till Sunday. But so far only1.51 lakh have been administered the second jab.

Meanwhile, Kerala has launched a mass testing drive by taking samples of over 3 lakh people. The samples that were collected on Friday and Saturday would be tested on Wednesday and Thursday. The mass testing has been undertaken with the objective of ascertaining the scale of spread in the second wave.

Kerala health minister K.K. Shailaja has gone into quarantine after her son and daughter-in- law tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday. The 64-year-old minister said as of now she had no symptoms. Shailaja had successfully led Kerala's fight against the first wave of Covid-19 winning international acclaim. She was featured in many international news magazines and TV networks for her exemplary leadership.

However, the Congress-led opposition UDF had accused her of creating a media hype while the situation on the ground was bad.

With the state awaiting a new government after May 2 when the results of the recent Assembly elections would be declared, at the moment the entire Covid-19 situation is being monitored and healthcare systems are being managed by a Core Committee headed by the state chief secretary.

HC: Industries can wait for oxygen

New Delhi, April 20: The Delhi High Court Tuesday said sufficient oxygen was not being supplied to Covid-19 patients in the national capital and asked the Centre if it can be diverted from industries which can wait for now.

"Industries can wait. Patients cannot. Human lives are at stake," a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said to the central government.

The bench said it has heard that doctors at Ganga Ram Hospital were being forced to reduce oxygen being given to Covid-19 patients admitted there as there was scarcity of oxygen.

"Which are these industries whose supplies of oxygen cannot be curtailed," the court asked central government standing counsel Monika Arora and asked her to take instructions on what all can be done to augment the oxygen supply to Covid-19 patients. With the direction, the court said it will hear the matter post lunch.

It may be noted that the direction came during hearing of a disposed of petition, related to Covid-19 tests, that the high court revived on April 19 by noting that the virus has raised its "ugly head" once again and the pandemic is raging with much greater intensity and "it is evident that the healthcare infrastructure is at the stage of imminent collapse". — *PTI*

Students rush to Patnaik's house seeking clarity on Class X exam

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 20

Several students of Class X on Tuesday turned up at the official residence of Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik seeking a clarity on the confusion surrounding the conduct of the Matriculation (High School Certificate) examination.

The move by the students followed after the state government recently postponed all the examinations including the Class X and Plus II in view of the surge in the Covid-19 cases in the state.

As per the official announcement, the Class X (Matriculation) examination which was earlier scheduled to start from May 3 has been postponed. A final decision to hold the exam will be taken after a review of the Covid-19 situation.

As the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) have cancelled the upcoming Board examinations for Class X students, the students in Odisha are also demanding for cancellation of the Matriculation exam.

After failing to meet the Chief Minister, the students later staged a dharna near Forest park. Earlier, the students reportedly had met school and mass education, Samir Ranjan Dash urging him to clear the confusion as it was announced that the state government will take a final call on the conduct of the matriculation after reviewing the Covid situation.

"As already board exams have been cancelled by CBSE, CISCE, we want the Odisha government to cancel the matriculation exam. We are under a lot of pressure as we do not know whether we should study for the Class 10 board exam or prepare for higher studies," said a student.

Another student said, "The Covid-19 situation has aggravated in the state and the new strain is also affecting children and youngsters. We are not feeling safe to appear in the board exam."

Later, school and mass education minister Samir Ranjan Dash said, "Around 20 to 25 students had come and they had submitted a memorandum demanding cancellation of the exam. Already the Chief Minister had announced to take appropriate action after reviewing Covid situation in June. Keeping in view the agony of students, we have decided to review the situation and take necessary measures soon."

Dash added, "The department is reviewing all aspects and all options are open. We will take urgent measures to address the grievances of students."

Odisha which clocked 4,445 new cases on Monday, registered 4,761 fresh Covid-19 positives on Tuesday.

MODI CANCELS PORTUGAL VISIT NEXT MONTH

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has cancelled proposed plans to visit Portugal next month for the India-European Union Leaders' Meeting due to the raging second wave of the Covid pandemic that is battering India. The meeting will now be held in virtual format on May 8.

Modi was expected to visit France too in addition to Portugal. However, the proposed visit was never officially announced as visits are usually announced closer to the date of departure. Due to this, there has been no formal cancellation.

But in a brief statement on the India-EU meeting, the MEA said, "In view of the Covid-19 situation, it has been decided, in consultation with the EU and Portuguese leadership, to hold the India-EU leaders' meeting in a virtual format on May 8 . The India-EU Leaders' Meeting in the EU+27 format, the first time that such a meeting is being held, reflects the shared ambition of both sides to further deepen the Strategic Partnership."

In July last, India and the EU had held their 15th bilateral summit through video-conference in which both sides had agreed to strengthen military-to-military relations and naval cooperation and establish a maritime security dialogue to preserve stability in Indian Ocean.

CURBING | COVID

Second wave is testing emotional and physical strength of the health staff

Indoor games stressbuster for health staff

New Delhi, April 20: Work without leave, no promotions and even pending salaries, some haven't visited their family for over a year. The virus and the stress have taken a toll, but the healthcare workers are fighting on.

They have been talking to their close ones on video calls, cooking, watching television with family, playing indoor games and disseminating information on social media as ways to bust the stress.

The deadlier second coronavirus wave, which is raging like wildfire, are testing the emotional and physical strength of doctors, nurses and paramedical staff, who have been working tirelessly since the pandemic began.

Manjulata, a nursing officer in Delhi, admitted that she had never seen a phase tougher than this in her 30-year career.

The employee at a North Delhi Municipal Corporation-run hospital had an itchy throat, so she went to sleep with her mask on Monday night. "I'm worried that if I catch coronavirus, my son will get infected too," the 50-year-old woman said.

The nursing staff at Kasturba Hospital has been working without salary for the last two months. There has been no promotion that could boost their morale in these tough times, according to Manjulata. "There are many nurses who are the only working members in their family. They keep calling us about their salaries. Still, they come to work to serve the people," Manjulata, who is also the general secretary of the Delhi Nurses Union, said.

Out of the 150 nurses, around 30 are coronavirus positive and 20 are on leave. The remaining have been working for longer hours, sometimes in two shifts, one after another, she said.

"We cannot describe our mental status. At times, we break down," she said, adding that talking to their loved ones, cooking and helping the needy gives her strength to keep fighting. "We keep supporting each other, asking about each other... that makes us strong," she said.

Mukesh Sharma, a lab technician at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, said has skipped family functions and kept away from his neighbours, too, for the fear of spreading the disease.

Amarinder Singh Malhi, a resident doctor at AIIMS Delhi, availed only two leaves over the last one year. "I went home (in Amritsar) in January, after 11 months," he said hurriedly, before picking up an emergency call.

The doctors have been working round the clock. Everyone has to do a mandatory six-hour shift in the COVID ward wearing PPE kits."You cannot eat or go to loo during this period," the 38-year-old doctor said.

Malhi, an assistant professor in the cardiovascular radiology department, utilises his free time by doing video calls to his family, playing indoor games and disseminating information about the virus on social media.

Praveen Gupta, director and head of neurology department of Fortis Hospital, Gurgaon, said he had been working for around 18 hours every day. "My phone won't stop ringing even at 1 am. Even if I'm home I am always talking to someone," Gupta said. — *PTI*

1st woman applies for Prez in Syria

Beirut, April 20 :A woman from the capital Damascus has applied to run for president of Syria, the parliament speaker said Tuesday, making her the first female to make a bid for the country's top job. The largely symbolic election is certain to be won by President Bashar Assad.

The presidential election, the second since the country's civil war broke out 10 years ago, is to be held May 26. Syrians abroad will vote on May 20. Speaker Hammoud Sabbagh said Faten Ali Nahar, a 50-year-old Damascus resident, has nominated herself for the post. Little is known about her. The parliament speaker provided her age, place of birth and her mother's name in the announcement. There were no reports on who she is on social media. *— AP*

On clean drive

A man collects garbage in an effort to clean the environment. *— AFP*

UK extends G7 FMs' meet invite to India

Attendance will bring geographic representation

London, April 20: India is among the guest countries invited to join parts of the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' meeting to be hosted by the UK next month, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said on Tuesday. The meeting in London will be the first in-person summit of the foreign ministers of the Group of Seven countries — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, US and UK as well as the European Union (EU) and will be held in what has been dubbed a COVID-secure way between May 3 and 5. It is also likely to include External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar for parts of the summit, with India included among the guest nations from the Indo-Pacific region.

"The Foreign Secretary has also invited India, Australia, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, and the Chair and Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to join parts of this year's G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' meeting as guests," the FCDO said.

"Their attendance will bring broader experience and geographic representation, and demonstrates the importance of the Indo-Pacific region," it notes. UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab confirmed the plans for the meeting in Parliament on Tuesday, highlighting that the event would be an opportunity for the world's biggest democracies to come together. "The meeting of G7 Foreign and Development Ministers next month is an opportunity to show how the world's biggest democracies work together to ensure equitable access to vaccines, build back better from the pandemic, support girls in the poorest countries get a good quality education and agree ambitious action to tackle climate change," Raab said.

The last G-7 Foreign Ministers meeting took place in April 2019 at Dinard and Saint-Malo in France. For the first in-person meeting in over two years, the FCDO said that organisers will put strict COVID-secure measures in place, including daily testing to ensure the health and wellbeing of all staff, attendees, and the public. All domestic social distancing guidelines will be in force, which places limits on large gatherings under the UK's lockdown easing roadmap.

The Foreign Office said the meeting is a crucial opportunity to revitalise in-person diplomacy and will look to establish a shared approach among the world's leading democracies on equitable vaccine access, to agree global girls' education targets, rigorous goals on climate finance and new measures to prevent famine and food insecurity. It comes as part of the UK's G7 presidency this year, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson set to host the G7 Summit. *— PTI*

Diplomacy sans human touch

Washington, April 20: There will be no hands to shake or backs to slap, no way to look a foreign leader in the eye. The small human moments that define statecraft will be reduced to images on a screen.

President Joe Biden, a most hands-on politician, this week will host a major climate summit with dozens of world leaders — all of them stuck on Zoom. Biden has made clear that he wants to reassert US leadership on the world stage, including on climate change, after four tumultuous, often inward-looking years of President Donald Trump.

But as much as the White House staff has tried to dress up the remote meetings he has held so far, while eyeing the climate summit Thursday and Friday as an important moment, the president has made no secret of how much he misses diplomacy with a more personal touch. "There's no substitute for face-to-face discussions," Biden said Friday as he welcomed Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga to the White House. *— AP*

MERKEL DEFENDS GERMAN/RUSSIAN PIPELINE

Berlin, April 20: German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Tuesday defended her country's ongoing cooperation with Russia on the building of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline amid growing criticism of Moscow's treatment of opposition politician Alexei Navalny and aggression toward Ukraine.

In an online appearance before the Council of Europe, Merkel noted that the Nord Stream 2 pipeline isn't yet completed but Russian gas already flows freely into Europe along other routes, including the existing Nord Stream 1 pipeline under the Baltic Sea to Germany. "I know that there is controversy about Nord Stream 2 and I know the opinion of many member states," she said. "But I would like to point out that the gas delivered through Nord Stream 2, which isn't yet flowing, is no worse than the gas from Nord Stream 1, that which flows through Ukraine, and that which comes across Turkey from Russia." *— AP*

LASCHET IS MERKEL'S BLOC CANDIDATE

Berlin, April 20: Armin Laschet has won his rival's backing to lead Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right bloc into the German election in September, after a bruising power struggle.

Markus Soeder said Tuesday that he will back Laschet, the head of Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, after the latter's party leadership gave him majority support. Soeder said that "the die is cast: Armin Laschet will be the chancellor candidate of the Union."

Soeder, the leader of the CDU's smaller Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union, had faced off against Laschet for over a week in a standoff that laid bare deep divisions in Merkel's party. Soeder, whose personal poll ratings are much better than Laschet's, had significant support in the CDU. The Union bloc is the last major party to nominate a candidate for chancellor. *— AP*

ONE KILLED IN SHOOTING AT NY GROCERY STORE

West Hempstead (US), April 20: An employee was killed and two people were wounded Tuesday in a shooting at a Long Island grocery store, police said.

Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder said a person of interest in the shooting had worked at the store and remains at large. The shooting happened around 11 a.m. inside a manager's office upstairs from the shopping floor at the Stop & Shop in West Hempstead, Ryder said.

There were about a "couple hundred" shoppers inside the store at the time. The name of the victims have not been made public. The man who was killed was a 49-year-old store employee, Ryder said.

The two wounded were hospitalised and were conscious and alert. Police identified the person of interest as 30-year-old Gabriel DeWitt Wilson. It was unclear whether he was still employed by the store, Ryder said. Wilson was wearing all black and carrying a small handgun as he fled westbound on Hempstead Turnpike, Ryder told reporters at a news conference in a nearby parking lot.

Video of the aftermath of the shooting showed police cars and ambulances parked in front of the store, officers with long guns and yellow crime scene tape draped across. *— AP*

France urges rebuke for Syria over chemical weapons use

The Hague, Apr 20 (AP) A group of 46 nations called Tuesday on member states of the global chemical weapons watchdog to diplomatically rebuke Syria for using toxic gas and nerve agents in the country's decade-long civil war.

French Ambassador Luis Vassy proposed stripping Syria of its voting rights at the annual meeting of members of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. "We owe this to the Syrian people," Vassy said. The proposal, which has support from countries that include the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia, is expected to be put to a vote Wednesday morning. Vassy said Syria's use of prohibited chemical weapons was "irrefutable," and he urged OPCW member states to back his attempt to strip Damascus of its rights, saying "we cannot let indifference win." Syria, which joined the organisation in 2013 after being threatened with air strikes in response to a chemical attack on the outskirts of the country's capital, denounced the move as a "propaganda tool" and denied using chemical weapons. After joining the OPCW, Syria declared its stockpile of chemical weapons and precursor chemicals, which were then removed from the country. Questions have remained, however, about chemicals and production facilities that may not have been identified. An investigation mechanism set up by the OPCW has twice blamed Syrian government forces for chemical attacks. Last week, the organisation said its investigative team found "reasonable grounds to believe" that a Syrian air force military helicopter dropped a chlorine cylinder on a Syrian town in 2018, sickening 12 people. The team found last year reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air

Before Biden summit, UK set to toughen climate target

London, April 20: The UK government on Tuesday set itself a more ambitious climate target, pledging to reduce carbon emissions by three-quarters of their 1990 levels by 2035.

The goal was announced ahead of a virtual climate summit that U.S. President Joe Biden plans to host on Thursday. The new carbon-cutting goal includes for the first time Britain's share of emissions from international aviation and shipping, as well as the emissions produced in the country. The government says the plan will put the U.K. on course to meet its target of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The government says the new target will be enshrined in law, with legislation introduced in Parliament on Wednesday and expected to be on the statute books by summer. "The U.K. will be home to pioneering businesses, new technologies and green innovation as we make progress to net zero emissions, laying the foundations for decades of economic growth in a way that creates thousands of jobs," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said.

Johnson, who is set to host a major global climate summit, known as COP26, in Glasgow in November. said he hoped other world leaders would "follow our lead and match our ambition." Britain previously pledged to slash emissions by 68 per cent by 2030, one of the most ambitious targets among developed nations. The government's Climate Change Committee recommended the 2035 target last year, and said achieving it would require more electric vehicles, expanded wind power capacity and a reduction in meat and dairy consumption.

Rebecca Newsom of Greenpeace UK welcomed the commitment but said "targets are much easier to set than they are to meet, so the hard work begins now." *—AP*

WH mum on lifting vax raw material India export ban

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

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 get back to you on that, I'm sure. But I don't have anything for you right now, Fauci said.

Let us get back to you. Suffice to say we are taking very seriously the global threat from the pandemic. We've been a leader in the funding of COVAX, have done several bilateral transfers of vaccines, and are looking very hard and taking very seriously all of these complex issues, we'll get back to you on the specifics, Slavitt said.

A similar question was asked during the daily news conference. — *PTI*

Avoid travelling to India, US to citizens over Covid spike

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. — *PTI*

NEWLY FOUND INSECT NAMED AFTER CORONA

Pristina (Kosovo), April 20: Kosovar biologist Halil Ibrahimi 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 Bjeshket e Nemuna national park. — *AP*

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 Securities 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* ,

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 uncertain 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*

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. — *AFP*

DON'T MEDDLE IN OTHER'S AFFAIRS: XI

Beijing, April 20: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday hit out at the United States, saying there should be no "bossing" and "meddling" in the internal affairs of other countries as Beijing is increasingly coming under pressure from Washington and its allies over issues of human rights violations, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

"Bossing others around or meddling in others' internal affairs would not get one any support. We must advocate peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, which are common values of humanity, and encourage exchanges and mutual learning among civilisations to promote the progress of human civilisation," Xi said, without directly referring to the United States.

"What we need in today's world is justice, not hegemony," he said . — *PTI*

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. — *AP*

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 House 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. — *PTI*

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 Europeand the USA prior to Trump', said the former US president. — *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 Latifia 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 Asharf 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.

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 members of President Joe Biden's administration. He emphasised 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." — *AP*

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 two 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 called upon all Sri Lankans to support and join the call of the Archbishop of Colombo in observing the two-minute silence.

We also call upon Muslims to make supplications for these victims in this holy month of Ramadan, said the MCSL statement issued by Vice President Hilmy Ahamed.

It also urged the Government to hasten a thorough investigation on the Easter Sunday attacks and bring the real perpetrators to justice without relying on anecdotal evidence.

The Muslim community condemns the suicide bombers as Islam totally forbids killing of innocents even during a war; hence the Muslim community denied an Islamic funeral for the suicide bombers, the statement added.

The MCSL said the Muslim community has been targeted by some in a hate campaign for the carnage of a few who called themselves Muslims.

Cardinal Ranjith has vowed to take drastic action if the real culprits were not dealt with by the second anniversary of the attacks on April 21. — *PTI*

LIVE RICH
FINANCIAL Chronicle
HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 21 APRIL 2021

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.

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■ 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 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.

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 produces 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. — *PTI*

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 comment.

"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 Endiya Partners and angel investors including Anjali Bansal (founder of Avaana Capital) and Sujeet 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 Akmolda 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 caseload.

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 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.

● 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.

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

Media reports in the UK said that in case it is required, the Rose Bowl in Southampton and it 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*

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*

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 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 been able to take part in the ICC T20 World Cup, to be held in India in October-November. — *PTI*

Dean Elgar

Temba Bavuma

Dane van Niekerk

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 for the Super League, which offers guaranteed spots for its founding members and billions of dollars in payments. Liverpool, Arsenal, 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*

Gianni Infantino

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."

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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 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 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*

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

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 J 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.

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 felt as he can provide solidity to the middle-order, especially after they faltered in three consecutive chases. Going by Wridhhiman 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*

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

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 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 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*

KKR spinners Harbhajan Singh (left) and Pawan Negi.

Live on TV

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

HEAD to HEAD

Matches 22

CSK 14 KKR 8

FOR THE RECORD

- Faf du Plessis who has scored 5,999 runs at an average of 29.99 in 226 innings needs just one run to become the sixth South African and 46th batsman overall to complete 6,000 runs in T20.
- Dinesh Karthik who hit has 596 fours in 278 innings needs just six more to become seventh Indian to hit 600 fours in T20.

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- KKR beat CSK by 10 runs at Abu Dhabi.
- CSK beat KKR by 6 wickets at Dubai

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

CSK skipper MS Dhoni poses with Rajasthan Royals pacer Chetan Sakariya.

DON'T WANT ANYONE TO SAY I'M UNFIT: MSD

Mumbai, April 20: Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni on Monday said it is hard to "keep up" with younger players in the squad but it will be a "big positive" for the 39-year-old if they are not able to point fingers at him over his fitness.

The 39-year-old Dhoni, who retired from international cricket last year, admitted that "getting old and being fit are two difficult things".

"When you are playing, you don't really want anyone to say he's unfit. I have to keep up with the younger guys, they are very fast, it's good to challenge them," Dhoni said after CSK beat Rajasthan Royals by 45 runs in their IPL match.

"Performances are something that's guaranteed. I wasn't guaranteeing performances when I was 24. I can't guarantee when I am 40, but at least if people can't point finger at me that he's unfit then that will be a big positive for me."

Talking about the match, he said he was glad CSK scored 180-plus, though he said they could have got more. "I felt Sam bowled really well. Deepak, there was a bit of miscalculation with the knuckle delivery. So I felt a good start was important. Even the wet ball was spinning." — *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 everybody'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 inspiration leadership, and his own strong performances.

Why someone with such sterling credentials get 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 déja 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?