

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VIJAYAWADA | MONDAY | 19 APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Max: 37.0°C
Min: 24.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Clear.
Max/Min temp.
37/24 °C

WORLD | 5



Israel relaxes rule to wear mask in public

SPORTS | 6



ABD, Maxwell fire RCB to third win

TABLOID



'False Positive' costs archery team dearly

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ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Saptami
till 11.57 pm
Star: Punarvasu full day
Variyam: 5.55 pm to 7.39 pm
Durmuhuram: 12.40 pm to 1.30 pm; 3.10 pm to 3.59 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am

HILJARI CALENDAR

Ramzan 6,1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.35 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 5.15 pm

Maghrib: 6.25 pm

Isha: 8.15 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.49 AM

SUNSET TODAY 6.23 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 11.01 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 00.33 AM

RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR: 6.29 PM (TODAY)

SEHRI: 4.28 AM (TOMORROW)

COUNTER POINT



You used to hoard pulses and onions? I am hoarding Covid vaccines and medicines!

SHORT TAKES

India, Pak FMs crossover in UAE

Dubai: The foreign ministers of India and Pakistan made crossover visits to the United Arab Emirates this weekend, after it was revealed the Gulf nation has been mediating between the hostile neighbours. "Good to be in the #UAE," Pakistan's Shah Mahmood Qureshi tweeted late Saturday. His Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

APRIL EDITION OF JEE-MAINS POSTPONED

New Delhi: Engineering entrance exam JEE-Mains scheduled to be held from April 27-30 has been postponed in view of the Covid-19 situation, Union education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said on Sunday. According to an official order by the National Testing Agency (NTA), "looking at the present situation of COVID-19 pandemic and also taking into account the safety and well being of candidates and examination functionaries, it has been decided to postpone JEE-(Main) April session". "The revised dates will be announced later on and at least 15 days before the examination," the order said. — PTI

CLEAN CHIT

Evidence on record ignored in Ashok Babu's favour

AP tax staff helping TD MLC

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 18

Senior officials of the AP commercial taxes department (CTD) have gone all out to safeguard the interests of Telugu Desam MLC P. Ashok Babu, a bitter critic of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. Ignoring all evidence available on record, the CTD gave a clean chit to Ashok Babu in a Lokayukta case. State GST commissioner Peeyush Kumar

even wrote to its registrar to drop further action on a complaint filed against the MLC.

Making things more embarrassing for the ruling dispensation, the CTD on Saturday illegally transferred the complainant in the case, B. Meher Kumar, GST officer and president of the AP Commercial Taxes NGOs Association. Meher approached the Lokayukta against the TD MLC after the YSR Congress took the reins of the government.

"Transfer of the complainant along with four others is a clear case of witch hunting because he questioned the previous inquiry conducted by senior officials into Ashok Babu's case and approached the Lokayukta against them," alleged K.R. Suryanarayana, president of the AP Government Employees Association. The transfer of Meher Kumar and others to any district other than Krishna is a clear violation of the Presidential Order,

he pointed out. Inquiries revealed that Ashok Babu had applied for voluntary retirement just before filing his nomination paper as MLC during the Naidu regime. There were allegations about his wrong claims of education qualification and pending criminal cases but the then inquiry officer looked the other way and gave a clean chit to Ashok Babu.

■ Page 2: Clean chit facilitated retirement

Cops see ex-DGP 'ploy' on CM

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 18

AP police have alleged that under suspension IPS officer A. B. Venkateswara Rao, once Director General of Police, had pressurised his subordinates into falsely implicating Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and his family in the Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy murder case.

Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, DIG (technical) Pala Raju charged that for 15 days after the murder of

● **PALA RAJU, DIG (technical)** charged that for 15 days after the murder of Vivekananda Reddy, former DGP Venkateswara Rao was monitoring the entire investigation.

● **HE DIDN'T** pass on to then Kadapa SP and others important information he had on the murder

Vivekananda Reddy, Venkateswara Rao was monitoring the entire investigation. During the period, he did not pass on to then

Kadapa SP and other officials important information he had on the murder, despite playing an important role in the investigation.

The DIG said the under suspension former DGP now writing a letter offering information on Vivekananda's murder to CBI amounts to holding back information and not passing on the same to his succeeding officer, nor giving it to Special Investigation Team that investigated the case. This is in violation of All India

Service rules, Pala Raju told the assembled media.

It may be recalled that Venkateswara Rao had recently levelled allegations against top brass of AP police as well as top government officials with regard to murder of Jagan Mohan Reddy's uncle. The suspended officer further wrote a letter to CBI about reluctance of officials in receiving information regarding murder of Vivekananda Reddy.

■ Page 2: Why 2 years to part with info, ask cops

5 lakh frontline staff in AP to get jab

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 18

State administration has geared up to vaccinate almost half a million healthcare and frontline workers against Coronavirus from Monday.

Andhra Pradesh Covid nodal officer Dr. Arja Srikanth pointed out that already five lakh workers have been vaccinated. Vaccination of all the remaining people in this category will start from Monday.

A user-friendly application has been developed to online monitor and capture individual vaccination data from every corner of the state.

AP GETS SII'S 2 LAKH VAX SHIPMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 18

AP government received two lakh Covishield vaccine doses from Serum Institute of India (SII). The state has eight lakh vaccine doses and from Monday the doses will be administered across the state through PHCs, CHCs, area hospitals and

district Covid hospitals and a few designated private hospitals.

AP has kept the essential stocks handy following the surge in cases. The stocks include 4,75,331 VTMs, 8,07,562 PPE kits, 6,34,580 N95 masks, 23,89,050 triple-layer masks, 13,41,215 gloves, 4,26,096 home isolation kits and 46,565 remdesivir injections.

will use the latest application to enter details of individuals getting vaccinated.

■ Page 3: Unvaccinated FLWs, HCWs to be listed

SURGE IN NORTH COASTAL AP, SRIKAKULAM TOP

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 18

North coastal Andhra is witnessing a surge in Covid-19 cases, with Srikakulam district registering 912 cases, the second highest in AP after Chittoor with 1,171 cases in the last 24 hours. Visakhapatnam saw 551 cases and Vizianagaram 349.

■ Page 3: Officials urge curbs to contain Covid

BJP enters Mum. row on remdesivir

BHAGWAN PARAB and SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 18

The conflict between the Maharashtra government and the BJP over the supply of the Remdesivir drug reached a flashpoint after the Mumbai police, in a late Saturday night drama, detained a director of the Daman-based pharma company for allegedly storing a huge quantity of the drug. Furious BJP leaders have accused the state government of harassing the Remdesivir suppliers.

The Mumbai police detained and questioned the director, whose identity has not been revealed, of Daman-based Bruck Pharmaceuticals, after it got information that thousands of vials of Remdesivir used in Covid-19's treatment were to be flown out of the country.

Denying allegations levelled by the BJP leaders, the police said it only "questioned" the pharma firm executive because of rampant black marketing of the drug. The director was questioned for about 45 minutes at the Vile Parle police station.

DCP Manjunath Shinge clarified in a statement: "We got information from our network that a huge quantity of Remdesivir made in Daman is being stored in Mumbai and will be transported out of

CENTRE PLANS CRACKDOWN ON HOARDING

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 18

The Union home ministry is coordinating with police departments of all states and Union Territories to crack down on those indulging in hoarding and over-pricing of essential medicines like remdesivir, Covid vaccines, and oxygen cylinders.

Source said a team of officials has been set up in the ministry, which is in constant touch with all state police forces. The ministry has also assured states that paramilitary forces can also be provided for their assistance to check misuse of medicines and vaccines.

■ Page 3: Pandemic's scale is massive, say officials

the country by air cargo."

He added: "There is a shortage of this medicine and its export was stopped. Hence, we acted and called the owner of the pharma firm to question him about where the medicine has been stored in the city. We acted in good faith for the larger interest of the public." — PTI

RAHUL CANCELS HIS RALLIES TO FIGHT COVID

New Delhi, April 18: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday cancelled all his public rallies in poll-bound West Bengal following a rapid rise in Covid-19 cases in the country.

He also advised all other politicians to think about the consequences of holding large public rallies.

"In view of the Covid situation, I am suspending all my public rallies in West Bengal. I would advise all political leaders to think deeply about the consequences of holding large public rallies under the current circumstances," he said on Twitter.

"One has seen such a crowd of the sick and the dead for the first time," he said in another tweet in Hindi, apparently referring to the large crowds at Bengal rallies of BJP leaders.

The Congress has been critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah for holding rallies amid the rise in coronavirus cases in the country.

Senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram has accused the PM of shocking callousness for holding big rallies in poll-bound Bengal amid the rise in Covid-19 cases. — PTI

Singh's tips to PM on fighting Covid

Invoke CL to let more firms make vaccine

New Delhi, April 18:

Former prime minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggesting five measures to battle the Covid-19 crisis, including ramping up vaccination and boosting the supply of medicines.

In a letter to the prime minister, the veteran Congress leader said one must not look at absolute numbers but the total percentage of the population that has been vaccinated.

Invoking compulsory licensing provisions for drug manufacturers and giving some flexibility to states to define categories of frontline workers who can be vaccinated even if they are below 45 years are some of the steps mooted by him. "The key to our fight against Covid-19 must be ramping up the vaccination effort. We must resist the temptation to look at the absolute numbers being vaccinated, and focus instead on the percentage," he said in his letter.

He said some states may want to designate school teachers, bus, three-wheeler and taxi drivers, municipal and panchayat staff,

VSP liquid oxygen to reach Maha, MP

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 18

The Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited will be sending 97 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) to Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, now facing severe shortage of the life-saving gas due to the abnormal increase in Covid-19 positive cases.

"We have received an indent for 97 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen, which will be sent

through road tankers placed on the flat wagons. Initially, we will be sending for 10 days and later the quantum will be decided based on our stock position," said a senior RINL officer. The wagons would be arriving in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

He said the supply would not be stopped to AP government, a pre-condition before agreeing to supply to Maharashtra.

■ Page 3: VSP biggest oxygen producer in AP

and possibly lawyers who have to attend courts as frontline workers, and they can then be vaccinated even if they are below 45 years. "I believe this is the time to invoke the compulsory licensing (CL) provisions in the law so that more number of companies are able to produce the vaccines under a

licence. This, I recall, had happened earlier for medicines to deal with the AIDS disease," he said.

Citing Israel's example, which has invoked the compulsory licensing, he said there is a case for India to do so as well.

■ Page 2: Be transparent on Covid orders, says Singh



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SHORT TAKES

SEER'S APPEAL
TO AP, TS ON
RAM NAVAMIDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 18:

Seer of Sarada Peetham Swami Swaroopandendra Swami has appealed to the governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to stop public celebrations of Ram Navami in all the Ram temples in both states beginning from April 21 in view of the surge in the Covid cases across the two states.

He appealed to the chief ministers to regulate the village festivals celebrated in a big way after the Ugadi through the endowment departments.

BOGUS VOTES
USED FOR BIG
MARGIN: CONGDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 18

P. Naveen Kumar Reddy, Rayalaseema Porata Samiti convener and Congress senior leader, said that the YSRC had gained national attention, as the Chief Minister had wanted, by bringing thousands of outsiders to cast bogus votes during the Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency byelection in an effort to garner a record victory margin.

Speaking to mediapersons, Naveen Kumar said the whole country was shocked to see thousands of people flocking in buses to Tirupati with fake voter ID cards and casting bogus votes on Saturday.

KAKANI BLAMES
TD, BJP FOR LOW
VOTER TURNOUTDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 18

YSR Congress's Nellore district convener and Sarvepalli legislator Kakani Govardhan Reddy blamed the leaders of Telugu Desam (TD) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the steep decline in voter turnout in the Tirupati Lok Sabha by-election held on Saturday.

The YSRC MLA slammed the TD and BJP leaders for intimidating voters standing in the queue line at polling stations.

CLEAN CHIT
FACILITATED
RETIREMENT

FROM PAGE 1

The clean chit facilitated the retirement of P. Ashok Babu from service and contesting the Legislative Council elections.

Meher Kumar approached the Lokayukta stating that Ashok Babu had wrongly claimed that he was a graduate and had mentioned in his election affidavit his pending criminal cases while the department had concluded that there were no pending cases. Meher Kumar also produced evidence to establish that Ashok Babu was engaged in political activity including campaigning for the Congress against the BJP in the Karnataka Assembly elections.

BE TRANSPARENT
ON COVID ORDERS,
SAYS SINGH

FROM PAGE 1

Singh said the Centre should publicise vaccine dose orders placed and accepted for delivery over the next six months. He said the government should indicate how vaccine supplies are to be distributed to states.

"If we want to vaccinate a target number in this period, we should place enough orders in advance so that producers can adhere to an agreed schedule of supply," he noted.

The former PM said the government should indicate how this expected vaccine supply will be distributed across states based on a transparent formula.

He suggested that the central government could retain 10 per cent for distribution based on emergency needs, and states should have a clear signal of likely availability so that they can plan their roll-out. Noting that India has emerged as the largest vaccine producer in the world, he said at this time of a public health emergency, the government must proactively support vaccine producers to expand their manufacturing facilities.



Members of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant employees union and JAC members take part in a rally in protest against the privatisation move on Visakhapatnam Steel Plant and new farm laws by Central Government during Rythu Karmika Sankaravam on the beach road in Visakhapatnam on Sunday.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

BKU's Tikait backs protest
against VSP privatisation

Modi govt is working for a few private industrial houses: Farmer leader

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 18

National president of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) Ashok Dhawale and Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) spokesperson Rakesh Singh Tikait have pledged support to ongoing agitation against privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

Addressing a press conference in Visakhapatnam, both the leaders, who are here to address a public meeting at RK Beach, said it is time trade union leaders of Andhra Pradesh protected the

steel plant, failing which Modi government will gain courage to privatise major industries across the country.

Ashok Dhawale accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of being on a mission to privatise all public sector undertakings, including ports, airports, educational and health institutions. "Even during Covid pandemic period, the top 140 corporate houses made 596 billion dollars. People in all states are agitating against Modi's policies that enrich private players," Dhawale stated. Speaking on the occasion,

● Ashok Dhawale accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of being on a mission to privatise all public sector undertakings, including ports, airports, educational and health institutions

● AIKS Punjab president Balkaran Singh charged that Narendra Modi is out to privatise even water, air and land

for minimum support price, have strongly opposed privatisation of VSP and other PSU industries in the country. He said Visakhapatnam Steel Plant belongs to people of Andhra Pradesh, as it came into existence on lands given by local farmers. "Modi government is working for a few private industrial houses and has no interest in the welfare of people," Tikait remarked.

AIKS Punjab president Balkaran Singh charged that Narendra Modi is out to privatise even water, air and land. "Modi is run-

ning the government on lines of East India Company, which exploited the nation for centuries," Singh pointed out.

Former minister and farmers' leader Vadde Sobhanadeeswara Rao said the Prime Minister has sold 23 public sector undertakings for serving just Ambani and Adani families in the country. He asserted that privatisation of VSP will be stopped with firm determination of people. Trade union leaders Ch. Narsinga Rao, Mantri Rajasekhara and D. Adinarayana were present on the occasion.

Fishing ban



Fishing harbor seen packed with huge numbers of mechanised fishing vessels as they were anchored in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. The two-month ban on fishing off the sea on mechanised boats was imposed by the state government a few days ago.

— DC

FATE | SEALED

Central armed police forces would safeguard the strongrooms: Giridhar
EVMs shifted to strongrooms in Tirupati
BJP demands repollingDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 18

The Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) and other units pertaining to Saturday's Tirupati Lok Sabha byelections received from Chittoor district polling stations were kept in the strongrooms at S.V. Arts College here on Sunday.

Although polling ended by 7 pm on Saturday, it was only by Sunday morning that some of EVMs and VVPATs reached Tirupati. The machines were kept in strongrooms in the presence of candidates and representatives of various political parties. They

were sealed in the presence of election observer Dinesh Kumar Giridhar Lal, district election officer and collector M. Harinarayanan and AROs. Giridhar Lal also reviewed the scrutiny of the polling process with the DEO, municipal commissioner P.S. Girisha, SPs S. Senthil Kumar and Ch. Venkata Appala Naidu and joint collector Veerabrahmam, polling officials and representatives of contestants.

Addressing officials, Giridhar Lal said that the central armed police forces would safeguard the strongrooms. He said the byelection process on Saturday went on smoothly and the arrangements

were good, as he himself had inspected 15 polling stations. He also said scrutiny with sectoral authorities was mandatory to secure EVMs in strong rooms.

He inquired into the complaints received in the last 48 hours. Assembly segment-wise AROs Chandramouliswar Reddy (Tirupati-), Srinivas (Srikalahasti) and Chandra Sekhar (Satyavedu) presented records from their respective sectoral authorities.

EVMs and VVPATs from Sullurpeta, Gudur, Venkatagiri and Sarvepalli segments were kept in strong rooms at D.K.W. Government college in Nellore. Returning officer

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 18

BJP demanded the cancellation of Tirupati MP by-election and conduct a re-poll due to the sheer violation of norms in various forms. BJP AP president Somu Veerajaru on Sunday said that YSR Congress pressed bogus voters into action in Tirupati by-election polling and ministers violated election code and the Election Commission

and Nellore collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu, assistant returning officer

State govt acts
against former
intel chief ABVDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 18

Andhra Pradesh government has on Sunday initiated disciplinary proceedings against suspended IPS officer A.B. Venkateswara Rao. Orders to this effect have been issued by Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das through GO RT: 767 under Rule 8 of All India Services (Discipline & Appeal) Rules, 1969.

The GO directed Venkateswara Rao to submit within 30 days a written statement of his defence and state whether he desires to be heard in person.

If no written statement is filed or he does not appear in person before competent authority or otherwise fails or refuses to comply with provisions of Rule 8, action will be taken against him based on the material available on record on ground that he has no explanation to offer. The order stated that the IPS officer violated norms by choosing to comment on the state of departmental proceedings against him, which are pending as of today,

stating that during the course of investigation, ACB threatened witnesses, reports have been submitted with false information, and forged e-file created to implicate him in the case with a mala fide intention.

The GO further said that under Rule 7 of AIS (Conduct) Rules, 1968, no member of the service shall anonymously, pseudonymously or in his own name or in name of any other person or in any communication to press or in any public utterance make any statement of fact or opinion, which has the effect of an adverse criticism of any current or recent policy or action of the central or a state government.

The order said the act of Venkateswara Rao is totally unbecoming of a government servant and amounts to misconduct under Rule 3 of the All India Services (Disciplinary & Appeal) Rules, 1969, and is in violation of rule 7 of the AIS (Conduct) Rules, 1968. Hence disciplinary proceedings have been started against Venkateswara Rao.

‘Why 2 years to
part with info?’

FROM PAGE 1

Pala Raju, former Kadapa SP Rahul Dev Sharma, superintendent of police when Vivekananda was murdered, and Ammireddy, a representative of IPS officers' association, have refuted these allegations of the former DGP.

The DIG (Technical) said for 15 days after the murder, Venkateswara Rao was running the entire investigation. "Why didn't he use important information that he had on the murder when he was an active part of the investigation? While leaving the investigation, it is mandatory for any officer to disclose every single detail to his successor. Why didn't he do that? For three months after the murder, the then government was in power. The case had been with us for nine months after the present government took over. Since the last one year, it has been with the CBI. What made Venkateswara Rao take more than two years to come out with this information," Pala Raju asked. Questioning the manner in which the former DGP's letter has been made public and its tim-

ing, the DIG alleged that when Venkateswara Rao was investigating the case, he pressurised then SP Rahul Dev Sharma and other officers to implicate the then Leader of Opposition and present CM and his family in Vivekananda murder case. "Even today, if he (Venkateswara Rao) actually wants to provide evidence, he could do so in a sealed cover to the CBI. Why has he approached media," Pala Raju asked indicating that the former DGP's intentions are suspect.

Pala Raju pointed out that Venkateswara Rao's allegations against IAS and IPS officials in an earlier case related to illegal purchase of protection equipment later turned out to be baseless.

LOKESH WRITES TO JAGAN SEEKING
CANCELLATION OF SSC EXAMSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 18

Telugu Desam sought cancellation of SSC and Intermediate exams in AP. TD national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Sunday wrote a letter to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan

Mohan Reddy to cancel the exams in view of spurt in Corona cases.

Mr Lokesh in his letter said that India and AP are well in the middle of a second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic with mortality rates on the rise, hospital beds filling up.

objected to the wandering of minister Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy in Tirupati during polling and further conducting of press meet terming it as violation of election code of conduct. Mr Veerajaru alleged that the police department showed bias towards ruling YSR Congress as they never responded to the polling violations in Tirupati. He said that BJP lodged a complaint with ECI.

Harendira Prasad were present when the strong rooms were being sealed.

SHORT TAKES

VONTIMITTA
BRAHMOTSAVAMS
IN EKANTAMDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 18

The annual Brahmotsavams in Sri Kodanda Ramalayam at Vontimitta in YSR Kadapa district will be celebrated from April 21 to 29 in Ekantham in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. As the Covid-19 cases are on the rise, keeping in view the safety of the devotees, TTD has decided to conduct the Vontimitta Sri Kodandarama Swamy Brahmotsavams in Ekantham this year also.

UNVACCINATED
FLWS, HCWS
TO BE LISTED

FROM PAGE 1

The nodal officer pointed out that once each medical officer logs in with his or her user name and password, list of unvaccinated FLWs and HCWs will be available to them, along with their names and mobile numbers. SMS alerts will be sent to each such frontline and healthcare worker's phone to arrive for vaccination as per the date and time allotted.

Dr Srikanth said this is part of the state government's initiative to take care of its frontline workers, so that the second wave of Coronavirus pandemic can be dealt with effectively.

OFFICIALS URGE
CURBS TO
CONTAIN COVID

FROM PAGE 1

Senior medical officers and a few NGOs appealed to the government to impose restrictions to contain the spread of the virus in the region. They said fishing harbours, shopping malls, cinema halls and tourist spots were seeing huge gatherings with many not using masks and sanitisers nor maintaining social distance.

As a measure to contain the rush at the fishing harbour, the department of fisheries has offered ₹10,000 to country boat owners to stop fishing. This is on par with what is paid to motorised and mechanical boats during fishing holiday period.

"This would prevent crowding in the market as well as improve the breeding of fish in the sea," said joint director Phani Prakash. He said not many people were seen in the fishing harbour on Monday as most of the boats were anchored due to the two-month fishing holiday that came into effect from April 15.

Elected representatives also announced that they would not be meeting people physically. Anakapalle MP Dr K. Satyavati and MLA Gudivada Amaranath on Sunday appealed to the people not to visit their camp offices or homes due to the spread of Covid. Both the leaders announced that the petitioners could call them over phone for redressal of grievances or send mails.

Visakhapatnam West MLA and TD leader P.V.G.R. Naidu (Ganababu) also announced restrictions. He said a box has been kept at his main gate where people could drop their petitions and call him for urgent matters.

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Traders shut their shops at One Town main bazaar following a call from the the Chamber of Commerce, to control Covid cases in Vijayawada on Sunday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

Cloistered classrooms
exposing kids to virus

Kurnool district reports 729 positive cases, three deaths

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, APRIL 18

The sudden spike in Covid-19 cases in the district, particularly among schoolchildren, can only be addressed by the district administration if they devise newer and more workable containment strategies. On Sunday, 729 positive cases and three deaths have been reported.

Health minister Alla Nani directed district medical and health officer Ram Giddayya to monitor Corona cases in Kasturba school at Adoni where 53 students tested positive while a school in Kodumur reported six more cases. The school was closed for a week and students have been quarantined, said the DMHO.

The DMHO said most of the positive cases are reported from urban areas like Nandyal, Adoni and Kurnool and that too from educational institutions. The spread of the virus is very fast among students as schools are not maintaining physical distance norms due to cramped classrooms.

In private colleges run by Chaitanya and Narayana managements, it has been noticed that class sections have been canceled and all students of a particular class are accommodated in a single lecture hall. Lack of teaching staff and cost-reduction initiatives are mak-

Authorities identify 11 pvt
hospitals for Covid-19 careDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 18

Health authorities of Kadapa have identified 11 private hospitals in the district for treating patients contracting Coronavirus.

These will be in addition to four government hospitals, apart from Fatima Medical College, Kadapa RIMS, Proddatur District Hospital and Pulivendula Area Hospital, which are already treating Covid-19 patients.

The 11 private hospitals identified had treated Corona patients last year too when instances of the virus had peaked. The private Covid hospitals include Madan Multi Specialty Hospital, Harsha, Shreyan Hospital, and Specialty Hospitals in Proddatur, Mohan Hospital, Komma Super Specialty Hospital, Rama Srikara Hospital, Thirumala, Palla Hospital, City Care, and Kadapa Hospital in Kadapa.

ing schoolchildren vulnerable, district education officials said. The DMHO who spent most of Sunday on video and phone conferences with medical and

● A total of 1,000 beds have been set apart for Coronavirus patients in all these hospitals

A total of 1,000 beds have been set apart for Coronavirus patients in all these hospitals. Further, five Covid Care Centres have been set up at Haj House in Kadapa, AP Carl in Pulivendula, Government Polytechnic College in Proddatur, Minority Polytechnic College in Rayachoti and Covid Care Centre in Horticulture University at Anantharajupeta near Railway Koduru.

District collector Chevuru Harikiran has put district authorities on high alert following a surge in cases during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

Last year, persons diagnosed with Coronavirus exhibited symptoms of fever, cold, cough, loss of taste and odour, apart from respiratory issues.

There are cases wherein no symptoms are being exhibited in the second wave till the situation gets worse. The severity of corona disease is increasing day by day as compared to last year. Cases had increased by 2.3 per cent last week. But these have now risen to 6.2 per cent.

Harikiran advised people to remain vigilant and take all precautions. Relatively healthier persons who contract the virus can remain in home isolation while taking medications. The collector said chances of recovery in home isolation are more than 90 per cent. However, if the fever does not go down for 4-5 days, oxygen saturation is less than 94 per cent, and there is difficulty in breathing, such people should immediately go to the nearest Covid hospital. Doctors will immediately put them on the required Coronavirus regimen, the collector added.

some surgical measures to protect children."

A total of 39,500 doses of Covishield and 6,500 Covaxin have arrived, he said.

Covid-19 cases in Chittoor
district cross 1-lakh markDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 18

The Chittoor district, which has been witnessing a steep spike in the number of Covid-19 positive cases for the past few days now, had crossed the 1-lakh mark with the addition of 1,171 fresh cases, reported in the last 24 hours as on Sunday.

According to the health bulletin released by the district administration, the tail-end district of AP had so far recorded 1,00,254 cases, out of which 7,856 are active after the discharge of

● 7,856 are active after the discharge of 91,480 patients and 918 deaths till date

● 33,000 cases added in August last year

91,480 patients and 918 deaths till date.

The virus spread in the district was rather slow initially, but it picked up pace in the mid of July and further skyrocketed in the month of August, last year. The district had recorded its first positive case on March 24, 2020 and it took nearly four months

to add 10,378 patients and breach the 10,000 mark on July 31 last year and later it took only 17 days to come near the 25,000-mark.

The district witnessed its worst-ever spike in cases in August last year, which added nearly 33,000 cases to the total. After a brief lull, now the case load reached the 1 lakh mark. The temple city of Tirupati has been continuously taking the top spot in the district and it has recorded 373 cases in its urban limits and 160 cases in rural limits in the last 24 hours as on Sunday.

FRUITS OF LABOUR

Price of palm fruit had shot up to ₹17,000 per tonne in April

Farmers happy as oil palm prices shoot up

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 18

Oil palm farmers are a happy lot this season as a tonne of fruit is fetching ₹18,000. The price hike is being attributed to increase in prices of crude palm oil, which has touched ₹113 per kg. Price of palm fruit, which was ₹8,000 per tonne last year, went up to ₹9,000-₹10,000 in January this year. The same had shot up to ₹17,000 in the first week of April. Andhra Pradesh pro-

duces 15 lakh tonnes of palm fruit per year. Palmolin factories in the state purchase the fruit from farmers depending on international market prices of crude palm oil. Palm gardens in the state are spread over more than two lakh acres, majority of them being in East and West Godavari districts.

While palm farmers are a happy lot currently, they had faced great hardships from 2014 to 2019, as the Central government had lifted import duty on palm oil products. Prices of the

● The had lost ₹100 crore due to variation in prices of the fruit. However, after YSRC came to power, Chief Minister Jagan released ₹84 crore to palm farmers for recouping their loss to an extent

fruit had thus decreased drastically. However, the Central government has now imposed import duty on palm oil. This is helping farmers in getting a good price for their produce.

Fear of another
lockdown loomsMD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 18

People across the state are in the grip of fear about another lockdown due to the huge surge of Covid-19 positive cases. Business associations like the Chamber of Commerce have already imposed self-restrictions on trade timings by reducing business hours and closing shops by 6 pm with a complete closure on Sundays.

Government officials have started measures like closing parks, walking tracks, gymnasiums and swimming pools to contain the spread of a second wave.

However, these restrictions are worrying the public about a possible lockdown in the state.

There has been a steep hike in positive cases for the past 10 days. What earlier was around 200-300 new positive cases every day has now increased to a staggering 5,000 to 7,000 cases every day. As many as 6,582 new positive cases and 22 deaths were registered on Sunday reflecting the grim situation in all 13 districts.

As a precautionary measure, the Vijayawada Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Guntur Chamber of Commerce have decided to close all affiliated entities by 6 pm till April 30. Other associations and chambers in the state are likely to follow suit.

Presidents of the two chambers K. Vidyadhara Rao and A. Aanjaneyulu said that the Covid-19 situation is very alarming. They conducted meetings with business, commerce and trade organisations and decided to cut business timings.

Locals in several villages are imposing lock-

● Self-lockdown was imposed in villages of Kollipara mandal, Pedaravooru, Angalakuduru and Kathevaram and all shops, hotels and restaurants downed shutters.

down restrictions voluntarily. For instance, self-lockdown was imposed in villages of Kollipara mandal, Pedaravooru and Angalakuduru and Kathevaram and all shops, hotels and restaurants downed shutters. The task force committee meeting approved the appeal of locals and imposed lockdown restrictions till April 27 and shops would be allowed to open only from 6 am to 11 am.

Guntur Municipal Corporation commissioner, Ch. Anuradha said that parks, gymnasiums and swimming pools would be closed from Monday. She attributed the rise to people's neglect of Covid norms.

Private employees Purini Vijayabhaskar and Sk. Rahim said that many are in the grip of a lockdown fear. Several officials, requesting anonymity, opined that total lifting of restrictions and allowing cinema halls, malls, bars and liquor shops to stay open till night has worsened the situation. They opined that restricting business timings and closure of public gathering places could help avoid lockdown situations.

Officials said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy during a review meeting on the Corona situation recalled the impact of lockdown on society and called for an increase in vaccinations, testing, tracing and containment measures.

Surge in Corona
cases continuesDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 18

IN 24 HRS

6,582 infections 22 deaths

TILL DATE IN AP

9,62,037

Total cases;

7,410

Total deaths

The huge surge in the Covid-19 new infections continues in AP State as 22 new deaths due to Covid-19, the highest daily toll since October, with 6,582 new infections registered on Sunday. Chittoor's cumulative infections tally has crossed the one-lakh mark and it was the second district after East Godavari to witness one-lakh Covid infections in the pandemic.

The total Covid-19 cases of the state increased to 9,62,037 and the toll reached 7,410. As many as 2,343 patients have recovered in the past day and the number of active Covid-19 cases were 44,686. The recovery rate further dropped to 94.58 per cent and the number of recoveries stands at 9,09,041.

As many as 35,922 samples were tested in the past day and their positivity rate was 18.32 per cent while the overall positivity rate of the 1.567 crore samples was 6.14 per cent.

The Chittoor district registered five new deaths, while Krishna and Nellore reported four deaths each. Kurnool district reported three, Anantapur and Guntur reported two each and Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram reported

one death each in the past 24 hours.

The Chittoor district reported the highest single-day tally of 1,171 new infections, followed by Srikakulam with 912, Guntur 804, Kurnool 729, Nellore 597, Visakhapatnam 551, Krishna 465, Vizianagaram 349, Prakasam 314, Anantapur 305, Kadapa 203, East Godavari 100 and least number of 82 new cases registered in West Godavari on Sunday.

The East Godavari district is on top with a total of 1,29,312 cases followed by Chittoor with 1,00,254, West Godavari 95,139, Guntur 86,570, Anantapur 71,453, Visakhapatnam 67,935, Nellore 67,600, Kurnool 66,125, Prakasam 65,985, Kadapa 58,313, Krishna 55,131, Srikakulam 51,788 and Vizianagaram is on the last place with a total of 43,537 Covid-19 cases.

encouraging. He hoped the same price trend will continue during the peak season too. He pointed out that in the past, Central government used to announce market intervention prices, but it is no more doing it.

A palm garden owner Bikkina Visweswara Rao recalled that white fly disease had infested palm fruit gardens during the past four years, which led to the yield falling to nearly one-fourth. This was the other reason palm farmers were getting low prices.

SHORT TAKES

RAIPUR HOSPITAL
FIRE: PROBE
ORDERED

Raipur, April 18: Authorities have ordered an investigation after five Coronavirus patients died in a fire at the Covid-19 ward of a private hospital in Chhattisgarh's capital city Raipur, police said on Sunday.

Raipur collector Dr S. Bharathi Dasan has ordered an investigation into the incident. Officials have been directed to conduct safety check at Coronavirus hospitals in the city.

The fire broke out at Raipur's Rajdhani hospital on Saturday, police said. "Five Coronavirus patients died in the incident. One was charred to death and the others died due to suffocation," a police official said, adding a case of negligence will be registered against the owners of the hospital.

A supervisor saw smoke coming out of the ward and informed the hospital authorities, who alerted the police. The fire brigade and hospital staff rescued the other patients. "The fire broke out in the Covid-19 ward of Rajdhani Super Speciality Hospital located at Pachpedi Naka under Tikrapara police station at 4.30 pm and was brought under control by the firefighters in 20 minutes," tikrapara station house officer Sanjeev Mishra said.

When the fire broke out, there were around 30 patients in the ward, Mishra said. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel expressed grief over the incident and announced a compensation of ₹4 lakh each to the families of the deceased.

CENTRE NOD TO
BOOST MEDICAL
OXYGEN SUPPLY

New Delhi, April 18: The Centre has sanctioned installation of 162 pressure swing adsorption (PSA) plants in public health facilities in all states, the health ministry said on Sunday, as demand of medical oxygen goes through the roof amid spiralling Coronavirus cases in the country.

The PSA plants manufacture oxygen and help hospitals become self-sufficient in their requirement for medical oxygen, while also reducing the burden on the national grid for its supply of medical oxygen.

A total of 162 PSA oxygen plants have been sanctioned by the government for installation in public health facilities in all states, the ministry tweeted. "These will augment medical oxygen capacity by 154.19 MT."

Thirty-three of the 162 PSA plants have been installed — five in Madhya Pradesh, four in Himachal Pradesh, three each in Chandigarh, Gujarat and Uttarakhand; two each in Bihar, Karnataka and Telangana; and one each in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra, Puducherry, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, it said.

Fifty-nine more PSA plants will be installed by April-end, while 80 more will be installed by May-end.

BSY IN HOSP FOR
COVID, STABLE
AND RECOVERING

Bengaluru, April 18: Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa who is undergoing treatment for Coronavirus at a private hospital is now stable and recovering, his office said on Sunday.

"The Chief Minister who was admitted in a hospital on Friday for Covid treatment is being monitored by a team of expert doctors. The health of the Chief Minister is stable and he is recovering," the office of the Chief Minister tweeted on Sunday.

Yediyurappa is spending his time in the hospital reading his favourite books and is in touch with officials to give them necessary directions, the tweet further said.

The Chief Minister had fever on Friday and when he got himself tested, the report came positive for Coronavirus. Accordingly, he got admitted to the hospital.

This is the second time Yediyurappa contracted Coronavirus.

This was despite the fact that the Chief Minister took the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine.

He was supposed to chair an all-party meeting on Sunday to take a stringent measure in view of rising Coronavirus cases in Bengaluru.

However, the meeting has been postponed to Monday and revenue minister R. Ashoka will now preside over the meeting.



City streets wear a deserted look during weekend lockdown to curb Covid-19 cases in Agra on Sunday.

— PTI

With 2.71 lakh new cases,
India sees highest ever rise

States running out of beds, oxygen, drugs; govts scrambling to save lives

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, APRIL 18

With 2,71,204 new cases, India saw the highest ever daily spike of Covid-19 on Sunday. The daily positivity rate in the last 12 days has doubled from 8 per cent to 16.69 per cent and the death in the last 24 hours due to the virus was 1,570. As states are running out of hospital beds, medical oxygen, and several life saving drugs, the union and state governments are scrambling to save lives.

Railways is gearing up to transport Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) and Oxygen Cylinders through "Oxygen Express" via green corridors to ensure fast movement of these trains. This came after Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra state governments approached the Ministry of Railways to explore whether Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) tankers could be moved through it.

In Delhi, the weekend curfew ends on Monday but traders in Chandni Chowk have decided to pull the shutters down till Sunday. Delhi government has filed FIR against four airlines under DDMA Act

BIHAR IMPOSES
NIGHT CURFEW
ALL OVER STATE

NAYYAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, APRIL 18

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday imposed new restrictions including a statewide night curfew from 9 pm to 5 am to control the surge in Coronavirus.

According to the state government's directives, all educational institutions, religious places, malls, cinema houses and parks have been shut till May 15.

Offices and shops have also been asked to follow strict Covid-19 guidelines and close after 5 pm.

The decision to impose new restrictions was taken after a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Briefing reporters after his meetings with the health ministers and administrative officials, Kumar said "the decision has been taken to control the surge in Coronavirus cases.

Government and private offices will be open till 5 pm. Market places and mandis have also been asked to close after 5 pm. Bihar government has also decided to provide one month salary as a bonus to all health workers who have been working for the safety of people across the state."

Officials said that the steep rise in cases across the state has prompted the Bihar government to impose new restrictions in the state.

Delhi oxygen quota given
to other states: Kejriwal

New Delhi, April 18: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said Delhi is facing an "acute shortage" of oxygen for Covid-19 patients and alleged that the quota of the city has been diverted to other states.

The Chief Minister's remarks came hours after he wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his help in enhancing the number of hospital beds and immediate oxygen supply for patients in Delhi.

A central government

official has rejected Kejriwal's claims as "blatant lies" and said there was no panic situation in industries minister Piyush Goyal urging him to ensure "uninterrupted" supply of 700MT of oxygen on daily basis and restore supply of 140MT of oxygen by a supplier INOX.

The output of INOX, one of the major suppliers to Delhi hospitals, has been "diverted" to other states which has already started causing "critical shortages", he charged in the letter.

TN imposes night curfew from
April 20, full lockdown Sundays

R. MOHAN &
D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 18

It's back to basics again in the fight against Covid-19 in Tamil Nadu. Curfew at night (10 pm to 4 am) and a total Sunday lockdown have been ordered to kick in from Tuesday, April 20. The decision to try and clamp down was taken after a lengthy meeting at the Chief Minister's residence on Sunday.

In a statement released late evening, the government spelt out the measures it will be putting in place to try and stem the tide of the Coronavirus that has been infecting close to 8,000 people a day in its second wave before exploding past the 10,000-mark

on Sunday when 10,723 new cases pushed the caseload to 9.91 lakh and total fatalities to 13,113.

Ahmedabad, April 18: Gujarat deputy chief minister Nitin Patel on Sunday admitted that the present requirement of beds and other healthcare facilities in the wake of the spike in Coronavirus cases is more than the state administrations' capacity.

Patel, who handles health portfolio, said though the state government is adding more facilities and beds at regular intervals to accomodate

TN imposes night curfew from
April 20, full lockdown SundaysSTALIN URGES MODI TO SUPPLY 20L
DOSES OF VACCINE FOR TAMIL NADU

Chennai, April 18: DMK president M.K. Stalin on Sunday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to direct officials to send 20 lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses "requisitioned" by the Tamil Nadu government immediately and ensure supplies commensurate with the state's population.

In view of rapid increase in the number of people getting infected by

the night curfew will be total with autos and taxis also banned. In normal times, autos and taxis are

expected to ply only for medical emergencies and to serve train and air travel passengers. There will be strict SoPs on public transport on working days. State Board exams for Class 12 have also been postponed and classes can be held only online and summer camps are banned.

Inter-district and inter-state transport will not be allowed either and only persons driving in an emergency will be allowed on the road. Of course, essential services like the carrying of milk and making newspaper deliveries and hospital emergency service vehicles will be allowed to ply.

Transportation of petrol, diesel and LPG will also be exempted.

Refuse to admit patients. Such patients then come to us for treatment. Such queues are not a pleasant sight, but it is our obligation to save each and every patient. Till they are admitted in the hospital, till they are in ambulance, we try to keep them alive by giving oxygen," he added.

Gujarat reported 10,340 cases and 110 deaths on Sunday, the highest one-day case count and death toll for the state since the pandemic began.

— PTI

MP: Row over
death of 10 in
govt hospital

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, APRIL 18

Ten Covid-19 patients died reportedly due to lack of oxygen in a government hospital in Madhya Pradesh, triggering an outcry.

The incident took place in the medical college hospital in Shahdol late on Saturday night.

While six patients died around midnight on Saturday, four others passed away in the early morning.

"Six people admitted in the ICU died last night. The deaths were not due to lack of oxygen. There were 62 patients in the ICU. Overall, there were 255 Covid-19 patients in the Covid hospital last night. Out of them, 155 were on oxygen", Milind Shiralkar, dean of the medical college hospital said on Sunday.

The hospital has its own oxygen plant.

He, however, said the oxygen pressure was going down in the system since Saturday evening. He has reported the matter to the local administration and sought liquid oxygen pillars to resume

14-day quarantine
must for Kumbh
mela returnees

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
with agency inputs
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 18

Apparently worried over the sudden surge in Covid-19 cases across Odisha and Delhi, the state governments on Sunday made 14-day quarantine mandatory for Kumbh Mela returnees.

Several thousands of people, most of them from western Odisha, had visited Kumbh mela at Haridwar in Uttarakhand.

"The whole country is witnessing a surge in the number of Covid-19 cases. Spurt in the number of cases in the neighbouring states specially Chhattisgarh is affecting the border districts of Odisha," said director of public health Niranjana Mishra.

"As Kumbh mela has ended, it is expected that many participants will return to the state and it may worsen the situation. A list of the returnees has been prepared and it has been sent to all the district administrations. All the returnees have to stay in compulsory quarantine for 14 days. Even the quarantine period is mandatory for the returnees with Covid-19 negative certificates," said Mishra.

"If situation gets out of control in these states, the migratory Odias working there will be forced to return to the state. Odisha government is preparing a master plan to deal with any kind of eventualities," added Mishra.

Meanwhile, Delhi residents who have visited the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar or are planning to do so will have to undergo compulsory 14-day home quarantine on their return and upload their details on an official

website, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority said in an order.

The order issued on Saturday said those who visited Kumbh from 4 April onwards or those who plan to do so till end of the religious congregation at Haridwar on April 30 will have to upload their personal details, ID proof and dates of departure and arrival back to Delhi at the website www.delhi.gov.in.

"All residents of Delhi who have visited or are going to visit Kumbh 2021 at Haridwar, shall be required to compulsory home quarantine themselves for 14 days on arrival to Delhi," said the order issued by Vijay Dev, chief secretary and chairperson on executive committee of DDMA.

If a person returning from Haridwar Kumbh fails to upload his particulars on the Delhi government portal, he will be sent to institutional quarantine centre for 14 days by district magistrates concerned, the order said.

Violators of the DDMA order will be liable to be proceeded against under the Disaster Management Act 2005 and other legal provisions, it added.

A total of 1,701 people had tested positive for Covid-19 in the Haridwar Kumbh Mela area from April 10 to 14 confirming fears that one of the world's largest religious gatherings may contribute further to the rapid rise in Coronavirus cases.

A majority of the 48.51 lakh people who took part in the last two royal baths (shahi snan) held on the occasion of Somwati Amavasya on April 12 and Mesh Sankranti on April 14 were seen openly violating norms like wearing of face masks and social distancing.



A Covid patient receives primary treatment outside Kanpur LLR Hospital in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday. — PTI

IN BRIEF

Afghan mosque hit kills eight

Jalalabad, Afghanistan, April 18: Eight members of the same family were gunned down in an attack on a mosque in eastern Afghanistan, officials said Sunday. The shooting happened on Saturday night in the city of Jalalabad in Nangarhar province, and was believed to be over a land dispute, the province's governor Zaiulhaq Amarkhil said.

Five brothers and three of their male cousins were killed. "The incident is under investigation but initial information shows a land dispute has caused the incident," Amarkhil said. Fareed Khan, a spokesman for Nangarhar police, confirmed the attack.

Afghanistan, like the rest of the Muslim world, is observing the holy month of Ramadan, when men gather every night to offer special prayers after fasting for the day.

Syria prez poll on May 26

Damascus, April 18: (AP) Syria's parliament speaker announced Sunday that presidential elections in the war-ravaged country will be held on May 26.

Speaker Hammoud Sabbagh said the window for nominations will be open for 10 days starting Monday. Syrians abroad will vote May 20, he said. The election is widely expected to give President Bashar Assad a fourth seven-year term.

It is unclear whether any candidates will run against him but any such runs would be symbolic.

The United States last month warned Assad that the Biden administration will not recognise the result of its presidential election unless the voting is free, fair, supervised by the United Nations and represents all of Syrian society.

Syria has been in the throes of civil war since 2011, when Arab Spring-inspired protests against the Assad family rule turned into an armed insurgency in response to a brutal military crackdown.

Masks off as Israel vaunts virus win

Marks key milestone as the country vaccinates its way out of a Coronavirus nightmare

Jerusalem, April 18: Israelis stepped into the streets without masks on Sunday for the first time in a year, a key milestone as the country vaccinates its way out of a Coronavirus nightmare.

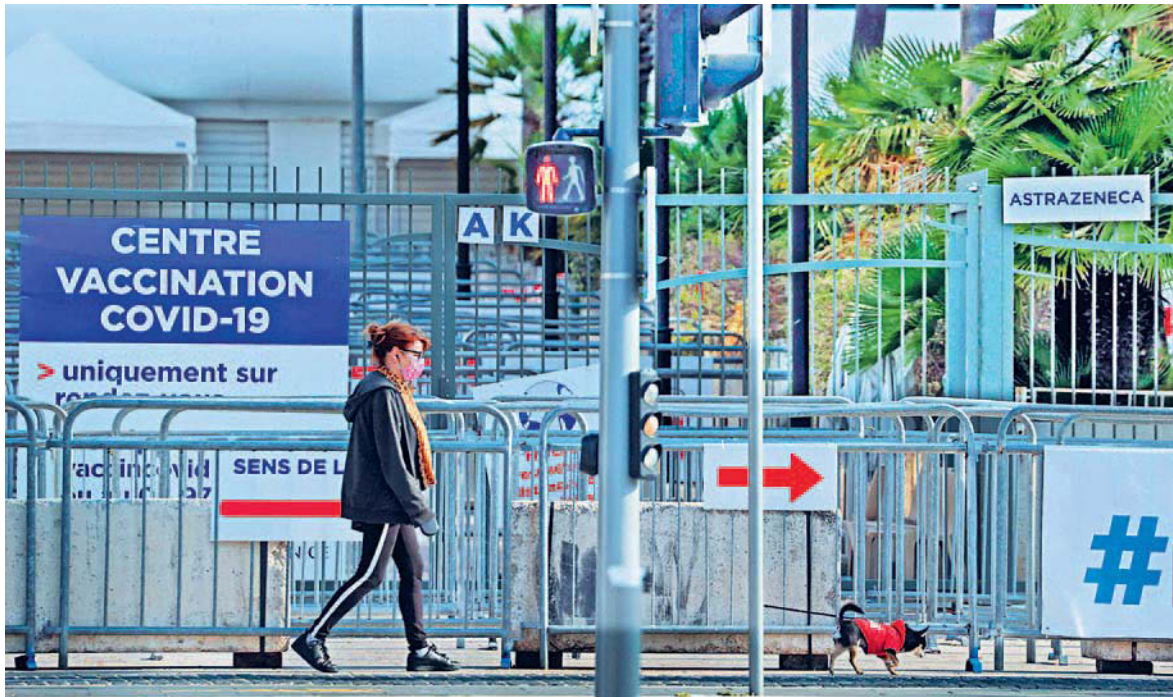
"It's very strange but it's very nice," said Eliana Gamulka, 26, after getting off a bus near the busy Jerusalem shopping boulevard of Jaffa Street and removing her face covering. "You can't pretend that you don't know anyone any more," she smiled.

With over half the population fully vaccinated in one of the world's fastest anti-Covid 19 inoculation campaigns, the health ministry announced on Thursday that masks would no longer be required in public outdoor spaces.

For Gamulka, a project manager, the good news came at the perfect time: just two weeks before her wedding. It will be "very nice to celebrate with everyone, now without masks," she said. "The pictures will be great! I'm very relieved. We can start living again."

The vaccination of close to five million people has sent Israel's Coronavirus caseload tumbling from some 10,000 new infections per day as recently as mid-Jan., to around 200 cases a day. That has allowed the re-opening of schools, bars, restaurants and other indoor gatherings — although masks are still required in indoor public spaces. And even before Health Minister Yuli Edelstein's announcement came into effect, punters in the popular bars of Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda market were mask-free and smiling on Thursday evening.

Yet on Sunday, office worker Ester Malka said she wasn't quite ready to let down her guard. "We're allowed, but I'm still



A woman walks along a closed vaccination centre in the city of Nice, France, on Sunday, amid the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. The centre closed due to a lack of candidates for the proposed vaccination.

— AFP

afraid, I got used to (wearing a mask)," she said.

"I feel like it's part of my life. We'll see what happens when everyone has taken them off. If it goes well for a couple of months, then I'll remove mine."

Israel just months ago had the world's highest infection rate, a Coronavirus outbreak that left 6,300 people dead among 836,000 cases.

But the Jewish state sent its coronavirus caseload tumbling after striking a deal for a vast stock of Pfizer/BioNTech jabs.

In exchange, it agreed to pay above market price and share data it gathers on the recipients, using one of the world's most sophisticated medical data systems.

Since Dec., some 53 per cent of Israel's 9.3 million people have received both doses of the jab. — AFP

Canada records second case of rare blood clot

Toronto, April 18: Canadian health authorities said Saturday the country has recorded a second case of rare but serious blood clotting linked to AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine, but still recommend the shot for use.

The patient, who lives in the western province of Alberta and received a version of the AstraZeneca vaccine supplied by the Serum Institute of India, "has received treatment and is recovering," Canadian health authorities wrote on Twitter.

Canada reported its first case of blood clotting asso-

ciated with low platelets on Tuesday in a Quebec woman who received the same shot.

Blood clot formations linked to the AstraZeneca vaccine "remain very rare" and Canada still believes that the vaccine's benefits "outweigh the potential risks," Health

Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada said. Canada's health authorities added that they would "continue to monitor the use of all #COVID19 vaccines closely and examine and assess any new safety concerns."

At the end of March Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunisation recommended suspending the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine in people under the age of 55 while it evaluated the risks. Health Canada said that limiting use of the vaccine to certain populations was not necessary. — AFP



Alexei Navalny

'CONSEQUENCES' IF NAVALNY DIES, WARNS U.S.

Washington, April 18: US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan warned Sunday that Russia will face "consequences" if hunger-striking Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny dies.

Jailed opposition leader Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent, was arrested in Jan. upon returning to Russia after recovering from a near-fatal poisoning attack he says was orchestrated by Moscow.

"In terms of the specific measures we would undertake, we are looking at a variety of different costs that we would impose, and I'm not going to telegraph that publicly at this point," Sullivan told CNN.

"But we have communicated that there will be consequences if Mr. Navalny dies." The 44-year-old Russian began a hunger strike on March 31 to demand proper medical treatment for back pain and numbness in his legs and hands.

On Saturday, Navalny's doctors said his health had rapidly deteriorated and demanded prison officials grant them immediate access.

"Our patient can die any minute," cardiologist Yaroslav Ashikhmin said, pointing to Navalny's high potassium levels.

— AFP

FINANCIAL Chronicle

VIJAYAWADA | MONDAY | 19 APRIL 2021

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	48,832.03
Nifty 50	14,617.90
S&P 500*	4,185.47
Dollar (₹)	74.35
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.46
Euro (₹)	89.06
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,431▼
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.82
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.088
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.578

* As of Friday/Saturday

Steel prices may take 2 yrs to cool down: JSPL MD

Steel prices might take at least two years to cool down as its demand is consistently increasing. In the current financial year, the demand for steel in India is also expected to exceed the production numbers, Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) managing director V. R. Sharma told PTL. While the demand in FY22 will be in the range of 140-150 million tonnes, the country's production is expected to be somewhere around 125 mt, he said.



Govt holds 93% stake in Pune-based bank, may sell 51% now BoM seen as first selloff pick

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, APRIL 18

With the bank privatisation process gaining speed, state-owned lender Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has emerged out to be the first strong candidate for the government's proposed disinvestment plan. Weighing in all options, both Niti Aayog and the finance ministry officials have already discussed the pros and cons of privatisation, a top finance ministry source said.

"The government is actively looking for ways to elicit strong interest from investors for state-run banks that are up for privatisation. Though we have shortlisted four public sector banks, initially we received huge response



from the prospective investors for Bank of Maharashtra," the source said.

There is a wide media speculation that the four PSBs shortlisted are Bank

of Maharashtra, Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank and the Central Bank of India. It is also expected that the government is considering mid-sized or small banks for

the first round of privatisation, and may later go with large banks for divestment.

The Bank of Maharashtra stock moved up nearly 70 per cent from mid-February when an agency report named the lender among the privatisation candidates. Last Tuesday, the BoM stock moved up nearly 20 per cent with high volumes on renewed market buzz about its privatisation.

Attempts made by *Financial Chronicle* to reach out to the bank's MD & CEO A.S. Rajeev proved futile. He had earlier told the media that BoM would aim at growing at 10 per cent per annum and that only Rs 1,000 crore loan book now against Rs 15,000 crore in 2016 were required to be restruc-

tured.

The government currently holds 93 per cent stake in the Pune-based BoM. Additionally, LIC holds 4 per cent. The remaining 3 per cent holding is with the public.

The government is likely to divest 51 per cent in the current round and reap the benefits of privatisation in the balance 42 per cent holding in later years.

As per a report by Denofwealth, Pune-based corporate giant Bajaj Group, which has a significant presence in the financial sector, could be a strong aspirant for the BoM buyout. Besides, two other corporates that are also reportedly throwing their hats into the ring are Tata Capital and Catholic Syrian Bank.

Future's board approves debt recast plan

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 18

Future Retail's board has approved a resolution plan to restructure the existing secured financial debt from the bankers. This has been permitted under a Resolution Framework for Covid-19 related stress announced by the Reserve Bank of India.

The resolution plan, already approved by the lenders, is subject to the approval of the expert committee under the chairmanship of K. V. Kamath.

The debt raised through the non-convertible debentures also will be restructured. The company has received the written consent of all the holders of the NCDs to amend the terms and conditions of the NCDs as per the resolution plan.

Debt from 28 banks and financial institutions, including working capital demand loans, term loans, cash credit, short term loans, NCDs, purchase bill discounting limits, other working capital loans and unpaid interest which became overdue will be restructured.

According to the company, the pandemic has deeply impacted the long-term business viability and led to significant financial stress across the industries. "The debt burden has become disproportionate relative to the cash flow generated by the company owing to the multiple lockdowns since the pandemic surfaced, posing sig-




nificant financial stability risks to the business. Hence, the restructuring of the debt is crucial and essential," it said in a stock exchange filing.

As per the plan, repayment of short term loans, term loans, NCDs, overdue working capital loans (converted into Working Capital Term Loans) will be extended up to a maximum of two years. Interest during the moratorium period between March 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021 shall be converted into Funded Interest Term Loan, which shall be payable by December 2021. Cash Credit will be continued at a reduced level based on bank assessment.


All securities created on the company's assets shall continue to operate in favour of the lenders in the ranks assigned originally, exception being extension of second charge on movable fixed assets being extended to working capital consortium lenders as a part of the restructuring. All penal interest and charges, default premiums, processing fees unpaid since March 2020 to implementation date will be waived off fully.

ORANGE



Shikhar Dhawan, DC	186
Glenn Maxwell, RCB	176
KL Rahul, PBKS	157

PURPLE



Harshal Patel, RCB	9
Rahul Chahar, MI	7
Avesh Khan, DC	6

Off the field



Robin Uthappa's son Neale Nolan sports a CSK jersey.

Murali undergoes angioplasty

Sri Lankan cricket legend Muttiah Muralitharan, who is part of the SRH support staff in the ongoing IPL, has undergone an angioplasty at a private hospital in Chennai. *ESPNCricinfo* reported that the champion off-spinner "had a stent fitted to unblock an artery, and will rejoin SRH when discharged". He is the leading wicket-taker in international cricket with 1347 scalps. Muralitharan represented Sri Lanka in 133 Tests.

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DHAWAN & ONLY

Shikhar's 49-ball 92 powers Delhi to 6-wicket win over Punjab

Mumbai, April 18: Delhi Capitals beat Punjab Kings by six wickets in the IPL here on Sunday. Mayank Agarwal top-scored for Punjab with 69 off 36 balls while his opening partner and skipper K. L. Rahul made 61 off 51 balls, taking them to 195 for four.

In response, Delhi Capitals chased down the target rather comfortably in 18.2 overs with Shikhar Dhawan scoring 92 off 49 balls.

Dhawan said: "It was a conscious effort from my side to increase the strike-rate and I started taking more risks. I'm not afraid of changes. I'm always open towards changes and I make sure I give it a good try in the nets and then in the games. I've worked on the leg-side shots, coming in the crease, using the pace of the bowler."

Earlier, Mayank and captain Rahul stitched a century-run opening stand to guide Punjab Kings to a challenging 195 for four. Agarwal made 69 off 36 balls, while Rahul scored 61 off 51 deliveries as Punjab made a flying start to their innings.

Delhi Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant's decision to bowl after winning the toss backfired as the opening duo of Agarwal and Rahul took the attack to the opposition bowlers from the onset, hitting boundaries and sixes at will.

While Agarwal was the aggressor of the two initially, Rahul upped the ante after a relatively sedate start.

Agarwal and Rahul adopted an aggressive approach against debutant Lukeman Meriwala and Kagiso Rabada, taking their team to 94 for no loss in 10 overs.

Agarwal was looking dangerous during his 36-ball knock and ended up hitting seven boundaries and four hits over the fence.

But Delhi Capitals dismissed both the batsmen in quick succession to make a comeback into the match.

While Agarwal was the



Delhi Capitals opener Shikhar Dhawan plays a shot during the match against Punjab Kings in the IPL on Sunday.

first to depart, slicing a Meriwala delivery straight to Shikhar Dhawan at sweeper cover in the 13th over, Rahul handed a simple catch to Marcus Stonis at mid-wicket off Rabada.

Rahul's knock was laced with seven boundaries and two sixes.

Chris Gayle (11) failed to make a mark, perishing soon in search of a maximum.

Nicholas Pooran (9) failed yet again but Deepak Hooda (22 not out off 13) and Shahrulkh Khan (15 not out off five) provided the much needed big hits towards the end.

— Agencies

CSK, RAJASTHAN IN BATTLE ROYALE

Mumbai, April 18: Three-time champion Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals would look to build on their first wins and gain momentum when they clash in the Indian Premier League (IPL), here on Monday. The two sides bounced back after losing their opening fixtures with wins, albeit in contrasting styles.

While the MS Dhoni-led CSK had it easy against Punjab Kings, the Royals scraped through against Delhi Capitals in the final

Live on TV

Chennai Super Kings vs Rajasthan Royals
from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

over: Both teams would be eyeing a second win to give their campaign a boost.

CSK hit back superbly after a chastening defeat to Capitals with Deepak Chahar putting his hand up with a four-wicket haul to break the back of the Punjab batting line-up,

SCORECARD

Punjab Kings: KL Rahul c Stoinis b Rabada 61, Mayank Agarwal c Dhawan b Meriwala 69, Chris Gayle c sub (RV Patel) b Woakes 11, Deepak Hooda (not out) 22, Nicholas Pooran c Rabada b Avesh Khan 9, Shahrulkh Khan (not out) 15. **Extras (lb 6, nb 2) 8. Total (for four wickets in 20 overs) 195.**

FoW: 1-122, 2-141, 3-158, 4-179.

Bowling: Chris Woakes 4-0-42-1, Lukman Meriwala 3-0-32-1, R. Ashwin 4-0-28-0, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-43-1, Lalit Yadav 1-0-11-0, Avesh Khan 4-0-33-1.

Delhi Capitals: P. Shaw c Gayle b Arshdeep Singh 32, Shikhar Dhawan b Richardson 92, Steven Smith c Richardson b Meredith 9, Rishabh Pant c Hooda b Richardson 15, M. Stoinis (not out) 27, L. Yadav (not out) 12. **Extras (lb 2, nb 3, w 6) 11. Total (for four wickets in 18.2 overs) 198.**

FoW: 1-59, 2-107, 3-152, 4-180.

Bowling: Arshdeep 3-0-22-1, M. Shami 4-0-53-0, J. Saxena 3-0-27-0, Jhye Richardson 4-0-41-2, Deepak Hooda 2-0-18-0, R. Meredith 2.2-0-35-1.

POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
RCB	3	3	0	0	6	+0.750
DC	3	2	1	0	4	+0.453
MI	3	2	1	0	4	+0.367
CSK	2	1	1	0	2	+0.616
RR	2	1	1	0	2	+0.052
KKR	3	1	2	0	2	-0.633
PBKS	3	1	2	0	2	-0.967
SRH	3	0	3	0	0	-0.483

Virat RCB make it three in three

SCORECARD

Royal Challengers Bangalore: Virat Kohli c Tripathi b Varun 5, Devdutt Padikkal c Tripathi b Prasidh Krishna 25, Rajat Patidar b Varun 1, Glenn Maxwell c Harbhajan Singh b Cummins 78, AB de Villiers (not out) 76, Kyle Jamieson (not out) 11. **Extras (nb 3, w 5) 8. Total (for four wickets in 20 overs) 204.**

FoW: 1-6, 2-9, 3-95, 4-148.

Bowling: Harbhajan 4-0-38-0, Varun Chakravorthy 4-0-39-2, Shakib Al Hasan 2-0-24-0, Pat Cummins 4-0-34-1, Prasidh Krishna 4-0-31-1, Andre Russell 2-0-38-0.

Kolkata Knight Riders: Nitish Rana c Padikkal b Chahal 18, Shubman Gill c sub (DT Christian) b Jamieson 21, Rahul Tripathi c Mohammed Siraj b Washington Sundar 25, Eoin Morgan c Kohli b Patel 29, Dinesh Karthik lbw b Chahal 2, Shakib Al Hasan b Jamieson 26, Andre Russell b Patel 31, Pat Cummins c de Villiers b Jamieson 6, Harbhajan Singh (not out) 2, Varun Chakravorthy (not out) 2. **Extras (w 4) 4. Total (for eight wickets in 20 overs) 166.**

FoW: 1-23, 2-57, 3-66, 4-74, 5-114, 6-155, 7-161, 8-162.

Bowling: Mohammed Siraj 3-0-17-0, Kyle Jamieson 3-0-41-3, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-34-2, Washington Sundar 4-0-33-1, Glenn Maxwell 2-0-24-0, Harshal Patel 4-0-17-2.

buckling Australian counter-attacked in fine fashion and played the big shots with consummate ease.

The in-form Maxwell upped the ante when he cleared his front leg to plonk Shakib Al Hasan over long-on for his first maximum in the sixth over.

The one bowled by Shakib turned out to be a productive over for RCB as they got 17 runs off it.

Morgan's decision to take out both Chakravorthy and Harbhajan at a time when they were bowling well was baffling, but RCB didn't mind at all as they capitalised on the surprising move.

— Agencies

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