

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VISAKHAPATNAM | SUNDAY | 18 APRIL 2021

WEATHER

Max: 36.4°C
Min: 24.2°C
RH: 64%
Rainfall: Trace

Forecast: Haze.
Max/Min temp.
36/24.2°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana

Tithi: Chaitra Suddha Shasti till

10.31 pm

Star: Arudra till 5 am (Monday)

Varjyam: 11.48 am to 1.33 pm

Durmuhuram: 4.49 pm to

5.39 pm

RahuKalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Ramzan 5,1442 AH

PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.05 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 5.00 pm

Maghrab: 6.19 pm

Isha: 8.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.14 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.39 AM

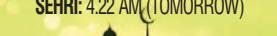
MOONSET TODAY 11.34 PM

MOONRISE TOMORROW 9.56 AM

RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR: 6.17 PM (TODAY)

SEHR: 4.22 AM (TOMORROW)

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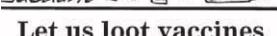
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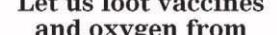
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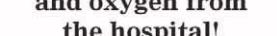
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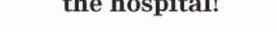
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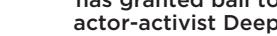
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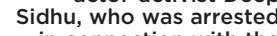
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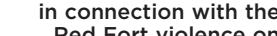
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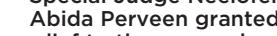
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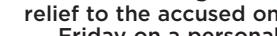
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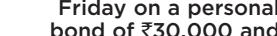
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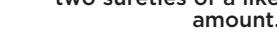
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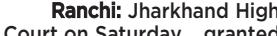
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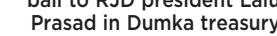
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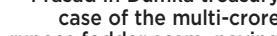
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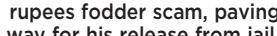
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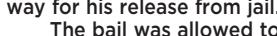
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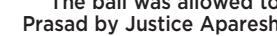
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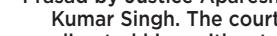
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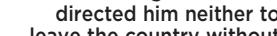
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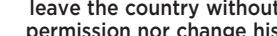
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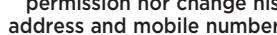
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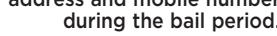
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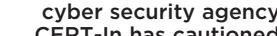
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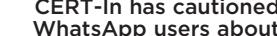
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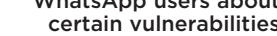
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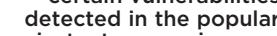
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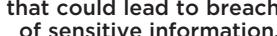
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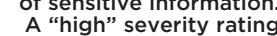
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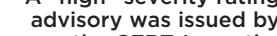
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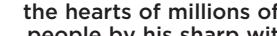
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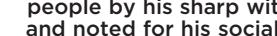
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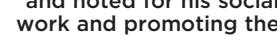
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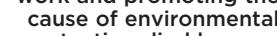
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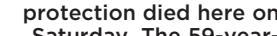
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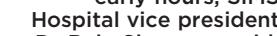
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IN BRIEF
TEACHER INFORMED AIDES OF CONGESTION

FROM PAGE 1

Around 10:45 p.m., Ravi informed his colleagues at the polling station that he felt congestion in his chest. They immediately informed higher officials and shifted him to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead.

Another government staffer was in place of Ravi for smooth conduct of polling.

THREE SENIOR IAS OFFICERS TRANSFERRED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 17

The state government has transferred three senior IAS officers here on Saturday. West Godavari collector Mutyalaraju Revu was transferred and posted as additional secretary to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. Special Secretary to government (Resources Mobilisation and Institutional Finance) Kartikeya Misra was transferred and posted as collector, West Godavari. Secretary to government (Finance) N. Gulzar was posted as Managing Director (full additional charge), AP State Finance Corporation.



Mohammed Jani

FORMER MINISTER PASSES AWAY IN GUNTUR

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 17

Former minister and YSRC senior leader Mohammed Jani passed away in Guntur on Saturday after a prolonged illness. Jani belongs to Guntur city and won as MLA from Guntur several times. He was also elected as MLC and worked as deputy chairman of the AP Legislative Council. Jani worked as a minister in the cabinets of chief ministers Marri Chenna Reddy, N. Janardhan Reddy and Kotla Vijayabaskar Reddy.

Jani was a staunch supporter of the Congress from the beginning but left the Congress after AP State bifurcation and joined the Telugu Desam. He joined the YSR Congress before the elections in the presence of Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and continued as a senior leader in the YSRC till his last breath.

Former MP Rayapati Sambasiva Rao and ex-MLC R. Srinivas expressed grief over the sudden demise of Jani and praised his services as an MLA, MLC, deputy chairperson and minister.

HC SERVES NOTICE TO SREEVANI AND OTHERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 17

The Andhra Pradesh High Court served notices to Deputy Chief Minister P. Pushpa Sreevani and others in a case.

Single judge bench Justice M. Satyanarayana Murthy heard a petition filed by retired teacher K. Mani on Friday, seeking its direction to the Election Commission of India to obtain the opinion of the Governor's secretary to disqualify her as she was elected as an MLA from the ST reserved Kurupam Assembly segment from Vizianagram district in the last election by submitting the caste certificate issued by the tahsildar of Buttaigudem in West Godavari even though she does not belong to ST community.

The court served notices to Chief Secretary, Secretary to Governor, Secretary General, ECI, collector, West Godavari, and tahsildar, Buttaigudem, and posted the next hearing after a week.

TD harassed voters: Peddiredy

Minister charges TD with launching smear campaign against YSRC for political gains

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 17

Panchayat Raj minister Peddiredy Ramachandra Reddy has fumed at Telugu Desam leaders for accusing the ruling YSR Congress of casting bogus votes using fake Electoral Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) in the Tirupati (SC) Lok Sabha byelection.

Speaking to the media here on Saturday, he accused opposition parties, including Telugu Desam and media members supporting it, of going to polling booths and intimidating voters. Ramachandra Reddy said he had already complained to the Election Commission about such harassment of voters.

"They (opposition) not only intimidated voters at polling booths, but intercepted pilgrims and passengers, especially women travelling in buses from far-off places, and terrorised them. The TD leaders have conspired to obstruct the polling process, which had been continuing on a peaceful note," he remarked.

Ramachandra Reddy said Telugu Desam complaining about bogus voters using fake EPIC is just a drama. He said TD is making false allegations against the ruling party, as its defeat in the Tirupati LS bypoll is imminent.

"Lokesh described me in his tweet today as Andhra Veerappan."

In fact, it is TD that joined hands with former chief minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy in smuggling precious red sanders. Prove me a smuggler and I'll quit politics," the minister said.

He charged Telugu Desam of launching a smear campaign against the ruling YSRC for political gains.

"We will complain to Election Commission about Telugu Desam's conspiracies and irregularities committed during the bypoll," he added.

VOTERS REFUSE TO BUDGE ON PARTIES' PLEA

FROM PAGE 1

"We all depend on farming and dairy animals. We are not in a position to pay taxes to municipalities. Despite several appeals, officials did not resolve our issues," villagers said. They questioned why Renigunta, which is a town, has not been merged in Srikalahasti municipality.

Though officials and leaders of various political parties tried to convince villagers into voting, they did not budge.

Meanwhile, there have been reports of electronic voting machines (EVMs) malfunctioning at a few polling stations, which resulted in a brief delay in starting the polling process.

"Outsiders who were brought from neighbouring places were given bogus voter ID cards and voter slips by the ruling party and they cast fake votes. This has resulted in hundreds of genuine voters, who came to exercise their franchise, to return as their votes were found already polled", she alleged.

"Instead of taking action against the violators caught by BJP activists



Paramilitary forces personnel help an elderly woman at a polling booth during the byelection for the Tirupati (SC) Lok Sabha constituency on Saturday.

Naidu demands repoll in Tirupati Assembly segment

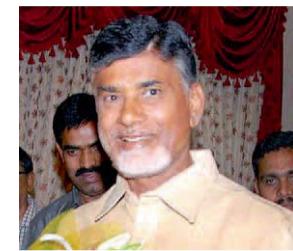
DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 17

The Telugu Desam has demanded cancellation of election process and re-polling in Tirupati Assembly segment of the Tirupati parliamentary constituency due to gross violations of model code of conduct, booth-capturing, rigging and bogus votes.

TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday alleged severe violation of norms in the byelection by the YSRC and inaction against violators by the poll panel. He demanded the Election Commission to immediately cancel the election in Tirupati Assembly segment and order re-polling.

Addressing a press meet here, Naidu recalled that the EC had assured 2,200 central forces, 800 micro-observers but it did not take any action against ruling party violators.

Further, Naidu also wrote a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner explaining violations by the YSRC.



N. Chandrababu Naidu but there was no action from the police and officials.

Naidu said that democratic principles were thrown out of the windows as police, volunteers and the YSRC leaders were colluded and turned the elections into a farce. He stated that police are behaving like henchmen of the ruling party.

Further, Naidu also wrote a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner explaining violations by the YSRC.

TD secretary and MLC Beeda Ravichandra alleged that the ruling party leaders have ridiculed democracy by resorting to rigging in the Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll.

Addressing the media in Nellore on Saturday, the TD MLC accused the ruling party of resorting to irregularities by creating bogus voter ID cards and shifting people from other constituencies to cast bogus votes in the Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll.

YSRC WRITES TO CEO FOR ACTION ON NAIDU, AIDES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 17

The YSR Congress on Saturday lodged a complaint against Telugu Desam president N. Chandrababu Naidu and TD leaders from the Tirupati parliamentary constituency for allegedly "disturbing the peaceful polling process" during the byelection.

YSRC general secretary Lella Appi Reddy lodged the complaint with the Chief Electoral Officer and sought action against Naidu and other leaders for "creating disturbances in the poll process."

Appi Reddy alleged that under Naidu's directions, former MLA Sugunamma, former Tirupati urban Development Authority G. Narasimha Yadav and other TD leaders attempted to disrupt the polling to mislead voters.

He claimed that a group of devotees who were on the way to Tirumala in private buses had stopped near the PLR convention centre in Tirupati for breakfast. When they were about to leave, a group of persons accompanied by Sugunamma and Narasimha Yadav created a scene by alleging that the devotees were bogus voters.

Appi Reddy alleged that the pro-Telugu Desam TV channels telecast the incident and levelled false allegations and tried to create fear in the minds of the public that the YSRC had brought bogus voters from outside to cast their votes in the byelection. If there was any truth about the TD's allegations, polling agents would have spotted them, the YSRC leaders said.

Appi Reddy sought action against Naidu and TD leaders for stopping the devotees, branding them as bogus voters and creating a ruckus.

Appi Reddy alleged that the pro-Telugu Desam TV channels telecast the incident and levelled false allegations and tried to create fear in the minds of the public that the YSRC had brought bogus voters from outside to cast their votes in the byelection. If there was any truth about the TD's allegations, polling agents would have spotted them, the YSRC leaders said.

Speaking to media persons, Srinivasa Rao alleged that YSRC leaders have indulged in rigging by bringing in thousands of outsiders from Kadapa, Kurnool and Chittoor districts.

"The YSRC agents and leaders have threatened other party booth agents in the polling stations and cast bogus votes", he alleged while demanding the Election Commission of India to inquire into the issue.

CPI(M) leaders, led by party central committee member V. Srinivasa Rao, raised slogans against the YSRC, accusing them of resorting to large-scale bogus voting.

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alleged that YSRC leaders have indulged in rigging by bringing in thousands of outsiders from Kadapa, Kurnool and Chittoor districts.

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YSRC resorted to bogus voting: TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 17

Telugu Desam leaders accused the YSRC of indulging in large-scale rigging in the polling held on Saturday for the Tirupati (SC) Lok Sabha seat. They alleged that a large number of fake votes were cast by outsiders, brought in by the ruling party, in the Tirupati Assembly segment.

The party candidate Panabaka Lakshmi, who visited a polling station in the 74th division in Tirupati, claimed to have caught three persons, who tried to cast votes with fake voter cards. Panabaka Lakshmi said that she had alerted a constable on duty at the polling station and he shifted them to the station for resorting to irregularities.

On the other hand, the TD leaders from Tirupati, including former MLA M. Sugunamma, Tirupati Parliamentary in-charge G. Narasimha Yadav, Sridhar Varma and others, staged protests at different locations in the city. They alleged that the YSRC leaders kept the 'outsiders' at a private convention centre.

Sugunamma and Narasimha Yadav also claimed to have intercepted some buses and cars, which were bringing outsiders into the city. The urban police took Yadav into custody when he staged a protest in front of the convention centre.

Telugu Desam on its official Twitter tweeted: "YSRCP is making a mock-



Panabaka Lakshmi ery of democracy and elections. Thousands of their Karyakartas from other regions have come to Tirupati to rig elections with fake votes. These photographs which were shot today morning at PLR Function Hall demonstrate their audacity and disregard of the law and code of conduct during elections".

Meanwhile, Congress contestant Dr Chinta Mohan along with party activists also intercepted a bus, which allegedly brought outsiders, near the DBR hospital. He complained to the election authorities, alleging that the ruling party has brought nearly 10,000 outsiders from neighbouring places like Punganur, Madanapalle in Chittoor district and also from Kadapa district to cast bogus votes.

Special prayers



Tourism minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao offers special prayers at the Kappu Stambam of Simhachalam temple during his visit, in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

BJP asks EC to conduct repoll in Tirupati city

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 17

K. Ratna Prabha

● Speaking to media persons, Srinivasa Rao alleged that YSRC leaders have indulged in rigging by bringing in thousands of outsiders from Kadapa, Kurnool and Chittoor districts.

police are mute spectators to this subversion of democracy. Request @ECISVEEP to order repoll in all such booths," he tweeted.

Alleging irregularities and bogus voting, Left parties staged a protest in front of the Gandhi statue here.

CPI(M) leaders, led by party central committee member V. Srinivasa Rao, raised slogans against the YSRC, accusing them of resorting to large-scale bogus voting.

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Class 10 Telugu textbook praises Naidu and Amaravati capital

Amaravati capital still Class 10 lesson

NAGABHUSHAN HOSKOTE | DC ANANTAPUR, APRIL 17

chief minister and the Amaravati capital.

The lesson is being continued for the 2021-22 academic year. It traces the history of Amaravati from the time of Lord Buddha and has been in place for two years.

In its current version, the lesson praises the Amaravati capital and the state government has embarked on a plan to downsize the Amaravati capital and include two other capitals at Visakhapatnam and Kurnool, a lesson in the Class 10 Telugu text book still praises the former

According to new lesson Amaravati would be a world class capital. It states that PM Modi initiated the project by performing pooja and bringing holy water and sand from various rivers for the construction of the capital.

Class 10 lessons are started a month in advance. The appearance of the lesson took teachers and stu-

dents by surprise, given the initiatives of the YSRC government with regard to the capital. The lesson says N. Chandrababu Naidu as Chief Minister made efforts to develop Amaravati as capital of AP and says that nine locations would be developed for different sectors like health, administration, judiciary and others," said N. Anjali, a student from a private school. She said she had been given assign-

ments to describe the Amaravati capital. According to the lesson, the new Amaravati would be a world class capital. It states that Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated the project by performing puja and bringing holy water and sand from various rivers for the construction of the capital. There was no fresh information about the shifting of capital or the creating of two more capitals.



IN BRIEF
Kisan rail flagged off to Delhi

VISAKHAPATNAM: The first Kisan Rail from East Coast Railway left for Adarsh Nagar, New Delhi with 220 tonnes of mangoes, loaded at Vizianagaram (Waltair Division) on Saturday. Waltair Division made consistent efforts for the uninterrupted supply of essential commodities during the pandemic. In the last financial year, despite odd situations, the Division has run timetabled parcel specials across the country and mangoes were transported in 20 special trains from Vizianagaram, the nodal point in North Andhra, Divisional Railway Manager Chetan Kumar Srivastava said. The Central Government has started the concept of running Kisan Rails for boosting income to the farm sector.

VCTPL SETS PRODUCTIVITY RECORD

DC CORRESPONDENT
 VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 17

Visakha Container Terminal Private Limited, premiere container terminal functioning under the aegis of Visakhapatnam Port Trust, set a new ship productivity record of 110 moves (containers loading and discharge put together) per hour using 4 Quay Cranes while handling the CHX service vessel Mexico, thereby completing a total of 2,113 Containers Loading and Discharge put together in just 19.4 hours on April 16, with average gross crane productivity of 28.8 moves per hour.

The latest achievement of 110 moves per hour exceeded the terminal's earlier productivity record, achieved in December 2019, of 108 moves per hour. These achievements underscore the commitment of VCTPL to provide consistent and reliable best-in-class services to the shipping lines.

With the enhanced operational efficiency at the terminal, VCTPL is facilitating faster ship movements, thereby reducing the cost of logistics and improving the effectiveness of the supply chain for the EXIM trade. VCTPL's strategic location, hinterland connectivity and on-dock rail facilities are attractive to shipping lines globally.

Extending the rebates for vessel-related charges, VPT's efforts for accommodating container vessels of 390-metre Length Over All (LOA) and developing an empty container yard are some of the recent initiatives taken to facilitate the trade.

AP logs 7,224 Covid cases, 15 deaths

Chittoor tops in fresh, cumulative active cases & deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT
 VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 17

Andhra Pradesh registered 7,224 fresh Covid-19 cases and 15 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported on Saturday that out of 30,907 samples tested, 7,224 persons were infected with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,56,42,070 samples tested so far in the state, 9,55,455 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 9,07,598 were recovered while 40,469 are still active with the virus.

Out of 13 districts in the state, 12 districts reported 200 or above daily cases while West Godavari recorded 96. Chittoor district was the worst hit with 1,051 followed by 906 in East Godavari, 903 in Guntur, 662 in Sriku-kulam, 624 in Nellore, 588 in Prakasam, 507 in Kurnool, 493 in Krishna, 470 in Visakhapatnam, 420 in Anantapur, 304 in Vizianagaram and 200 in Kadapa.

With regard to the cumulative active cases, Chittoor topped the state with 7,155 followed by 4,301 in Guntur, 4,121 in East Godavari, 3,875 in Krishna, 3,804 in Visakhapatnam, 3,661 in Sriku-kulam, 2,890 in Kurnool, 2,820 in Prakasam, 2,594 in Nellore, 1,950 in Anantapur, 1,436 in Kadapa, 1,345 in Vizianagaram and 517 in West Godavari.

Among daily deaths, Chittoor registered four followed by three in Nellore, two each in Kurnool and Visakhapatnam. The state health authorities discharged 2,332 Covid-19 patients after recovery.

AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 29,923 samples per one million population and recorded a positive rate of 6.11.

Among daily deaths, Chittoor registered four followed by three in Nellore, two each in Kurnool and Visakhapatnam.



Health centre officials affixed a "no vaccine" notice at the Urban Health Centre near the Red Circle in Vijayawada on Saturday.

— C. NARAYARAO

57 parks closed due to cases surge

DC CORRESPONDENT
 KAKINADA, APRIL 17

With surge in Covid-19 cases, Kakinada Municipal Corporation has closed 57 parks in the city. Even morning or evening walks will not be allowed. The decision has been taken after the city reported more than 200 new cases of Coronavirus.

KMC commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar appealed to people that they refrain from moving out of their houses. Even if they do, they must compulsorily wear masks and maintain social distancing.

The commissioner inspected on Saturday private hospitals, which have been permitted to treat Covid-19 patients. He instructed managements of hospitals, including Hope, Sunrise, Sanjeevani and Seven Star, to arrange sufficient beds with oxygen supply and ventilators.

He also inspected fire equipment in these hospitals.

KMC additional commissioner Ch. Naga Ramasimha Rao too visited hospitals including Sai Sudha, Lakshmi, Siddardha, Trust, Pulse, Safe, Indoya and others.

He said a report will be submitted to district collector on conditions of various hospitals in treating Coronavirus cases.

CORONA CUTS TIME OF FIRST VMC MEETING

DC CORRESPONDENT
 VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 17

The surge in Covid-19 cases put a huge impact on the first general body meeting of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation which was held on Saturday after the VMC elections as it failed to discuss many important subjects due to time constraint.

The officials decided to conduct the council meeting for less time due to the Covid-19 cases reported in the city and state.

Rajamahendravaram Municipal Corporation commissioner Abhishikth Kishore announced that several places where crowds gather, like parks, Sri Venkateswara Anam Kala Kendram and others, will be closed from April 19.

Rajamahendravaram sub-collector Anupama Anjali disclosed that as per government instructions, a fine of ₹500 in villages and ₹1,000 in cities will be imposed if persons are found on roads and streets without masks.

MINISTER LAUDS VOLUNTEERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
 VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 17

The minister for tourism and culture, Mr. Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao felicitated and presented the village volunteers at a function held in Anakapalle on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said the village volunteers system strengthened the local administration at the grass root level rendering good service to the people.

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Water shortage looms large as reservoirs dry up

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
 KURNOOL, APRIL 17

Water shortage seems to be on the horizon as storage levels in major reservoirs of Andhra Pradesh have fallen drastically.

Level of Srisailam reservoir has touched 808 ft against full reservoir level of 885 ft. Water availability is just 33.59 TMC, only 15 per cent of total storage capacity. Nagarjun-asagar, downstream of Srisailam, has storage of just 191.05 TMC against 312 TMC capacity. Priyadarshini Jurala and Tungabhadra each have mere 3.98 TMC of water.

Srisailam superintendent engineer M. Srinivas Reddy said as of now there is nothing to worry about. But if the level falls below 780 ft, then it will be a problem to discharge water downstream or through Pothireddy-padu head regulator. Krishna water is being drawn into Penna through Okw and Mylavaram reservoirs and also through Kundu

River to take it to Nellore district's Somasila reservoir. But Somasila too has 56.63 TMC feet of water against its storage capacity 78 TMC.

Dowleswaram circle irrigation superintendent engineer R. Shivarama Krishna said the current storage in barrage is 2.2 TMC against the total capacity of 3 TMC. There is no problem in supplying drinking water to Rajahmundry city as it requires just 0.22 TMC.

Kurnool Municipal Corporation (KMC) area depends on Sunkesula reservoir for drinking water. Corporation executive engineer Surendra Babu said the reservoir has storage of 1.07 TMC, which will be sufficient till the end of May. He reassured people that water could be tapped from Gajuladinne project too, which is presently having a storage of 2.61 TMC.

He said normally rains fall even in April and May months. But if there is a dry spell even in June, then it may lead to water scarcity in the city. But that would be a rare case, he felt.

However, river beds of Tungabhadra, Kundu, and Handri have dried up. In the absence of alternative drinking water sources, villagers are digging up "chalimalu" (water pits) on river beds in search of water.

For residents of Mantralayam, Yammanur and Kodumur Assembly constituencies, River Tungabhadra is the only source of drinking water. Alur, Pathikonda, Nandi-kotkur, Srisailam and Adoni Assembly constituencies are dependent on KC canal, Handri Neela and low-level canal, which are not able to supply water regularly. In Kosigi, Aspari, Pedakadubur, Chippagiri, Nandavaram, Tuggali, Belagal, Guduru, and Kothapalli too, water supply has gone down drastically. Tubewells are either not working or giving water that is unfit for human consumption.

1.3 KG GOLD MISSING FROM ANDHRA PRAGATHI BANK, CUSTOMERS RESTLESS

DC CORRESPONDENT
 KURNOOL, APRIL 17

Breaching the trust of customers, 1.3 kg of gold was found missing in the bank at Uyyalawada of Kurnool district. The suspiciously missing gold was deposited by farmers who took loan under the gold mortgage scheme at

the bank.

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DECCAN Chronicle

18 APRIL 2021



Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

Being a sport! The story of my fitness journey

After you reach a certain age and size, in my case at least, your thoughts turn to another age and size, largely imaginary. For instance, when I was little, I was very thin. This is true. I have photographic evidence. I also had no actual talent as an athlete, but I was athletic enough to be made to run various races, jump over sandpits and poles and once, with luckily no major casualties, chuck a javelin. The third leg of the "house" team, if you will, and this carried on over three "houses" in three schools and two cities.

Once I was pushed into a race outside my training or comfort zone — 400 m, because there was no one else to make up the numbers. My preferred race was the 100 m sprint. The school's sports consultant, of whom we were in awe because he had been to the 1976 Montreal Olympics and wanted Nadia Comaneci in person, said that my hamstring muscles were not long enough for my legs, so I had a funny stride. Not good for longer runs. Anyway, desperation made the house hamstrung. And in I went. After 300 metres, my heart burst out of my 13-year-old chest and I am not ashamed to say that a friend's sister (in a similar situation for another house) and I, walked the last 100 m together, chatting. Since we finished the race, we were not disqualified. Heads, um, held high!

The one thing I could not do was swim except for an ungainly life-saving dog paddle. Luckily then no one ever threw me into a swimming pool for some greater sporting glory. The swimming coach, whom we called Bumblebee because he had a large yellow and black motorbike and kept bellowing at us in the CCI swimming pool in Bombay (1970s, that was its name then) managed to hammer a mediocre breaststroke into me before we buzzed off to a new school in Calcutta.

School finished and thus finished organised exercise. You may not believe it now but in the 1980s, hardly no one dedicated their lives to treadmills, yoga mats and smoothies. Plus, we were undefeated. We worked hard and played harder. There was no time for dumbbells.



You may not believe it now but in the 1980s, hardly no one dedicated their lives to treadmills, yoga mats and smoothies. Plus, we were undefeated. We worked hard and played harder. There was no time for dumbbells.

As it turned out, the dumbbells were us. All that confidence was highly misplaced. And by the time you realized that time and hormones were against you, the tyres on the cars on the roads had nothing on you and your stomach, arms, thighs, hips et cetera. That's when you wake up at the crack of dawn and walked all over Aarey Milk Colony where the best exercise was running away from laughter clubs. I tried a few gyms. A friend found an excellent place in Ahmedabad where all you had to do was lie on a series of moving tables which exercised different parts of your body. Don't laugh. It was brilliant and actually worked.

A couple of close friends and I, in our mid to late 40s, signed up for an exercise regime. This was zeal plus hubris. Also, when your vision goes a bit, you can't really focus on the mirror any more and you miss all those wrinkles. So having scoffed at middle-aged ladies in salwar kameezes and sneakers huffing and puffing in suburban Mumbai's parks, we joined a gym. Not the treadmill sort. But the calisthenics and exercise sort. Why humans put themselves through this is one of life's mysteries. Anyway, we mountain-walked and pulled long rubber bands and cross-trained and then hobbled out after an hour with not one part of our bodies working.

The zeal was such that we were horrified when we attended an afternoon "old ladies" class — all the old ladies were at least five years younger than us — and saw that they spent all their time lying on their mats flirting with the young male instructors. We shuddered in self-righteous wrath as we finished all our exercises, and never went to an afternoon class again. Instead, we sacrificed lunch and went straight from yoga to the gym. Plus, we walked all over suburban Mumbai scorning every hopeful passing auto.

At the end of the year, all we had to show for it were collapsed muscles, dodgy knees, sprained ankles and broken toes. The only worthwhile part of this exercise was the yoga.

In between I did walk up and down some hills around my parents' home, full of self-righteousness.

Now when 60 stares at you in the face and the tyres cannot be dislodged and who the hell wants to carry those dumbbells, and the hills are so pretty to look at, technology comes to the rescue! You install some free fitness app on your phone. You carry your phone everywhere. It counts every useless step you take. From refrigerator to chocolate cake to sofa to put the plate in the sink and at the end of the day, you have walked 5 km, used up 2,500 calories and done 9,622 steps. Or some such nonsense. You are happy. You smile beatifically at the phone. The phone is thrilled at the attention and you reset for the next day. I did away with the "heart points" or whatever because I never collected any.

When my sister and I were younger, teenagers, we used to watch Jane Fonda exercise videos and eat chips.

I am not so callous nor so arrogant now. I don't eat while I watch those exercise ads on Instagram. I just switch to the food pictures after 10 minutes of fit young people contorting into some rebel poses.

Let my fingers do the walking?

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.

Subhani



Second wave gives the lie to Modi's 'decisive' image



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

The time has come to call a spade a spade. And, this spade is about the government's spectacular unpreparedness in anticipating the second wave of the pandemic, and the woeful absence of strategy and planning to cope with it. It is not as if the unexpected happened. Global experience shows that a second wave — more vicious and infectious than the first — was to be expected. A responsible government, not lulled into complacency by its own propaganda of how well it had handled the pandemic, would have — beyond dramatic gestures — diligently prepared for it. The truth is that the government did not.

A key difference between the first and second waves is that now we have vaccines as a significant weapon to fight the onslaught of the virus. The government itself made much of the fact that India is the vaccine capital of the world. What then led to the deplorable condition that when we needed the vaccines the most, they were — and are — in short supply? The government squandered away the natural advantage India had by exporting or gifting millions of vaccines. It did not give the required monetary support in time to indigenous producers like the Serum Institute of India so that they could ramp up vaccine production, even when it had an earmarked budgetary allocation of Rs 30,000 crores to handle the pandemic. And, it unforgettably delayed the introduction of new vaccines like Sputnik and Johnson &

Johnson, by not speeding or abridging trials and approvals. Where imports were planned there are reports of major mess-ups leading to cancellations of major contracts. What we are now seeing is incoherent and improvised action when the crisis is upon us, rather than a planned anticipation that was the need of the hour.

Contrast this with what other governments like the UK and the USA have done. In America the government not only gave credit liberally to vaccine producers, but guaranteed them an assured buy-back at remunerative prices so that they could pay back the loans extended to them. The result is there to see. One-third of Americans are vaccinated, and the entire country will be vaccinated by the middle of the year. The UK, too, imported vaccines from every source that it could. We, on our part, gave away what we had, and did precious little to boost production at home for which we had the capacity.

There is a shortage, too, of oxygen, ventilators, testing kits and hospital beds. While it is true that the demand has gone up exponentially, a wise

It begs all rational thinking why the EC is not agreeing to club the balance three phases of the Bengal Assembly elections and hold them on one day. Mamata Banerjee endorses this proposal. Why doesn't the PM do so, too?

Shri Krishna in the Bhagwad Gita tells Arjuna to do his duty irrespective of consequences. Our theory of dharma also includes a particular category — aapad dharma — which kicks in times of crisis or emergency...

government would have prepared for the demand in anticipation of the inevitable by increasing production and capacity prior to the second wave hitting us. There is little accountability in this bureaucratic muddling, and total opacity in how the money has been spent thus far in the PM Care Fund.

The administrative listlessness of the government can be seen in its inability to take stern measures even in the face of the second wave. Why else would have permission been given to the Kumbh Mela celebrations at Haridwar, where some 40 lakh sadhus and devotees took the plunge in the long-suffering Ganga? All norms of social distancing or masks were thrown to the wind, even as our netas smiled at the devotion of what they assume is their "vote-bank". Hinduism certainly does not sanction this abdication from duty. Shri Krishna in the Bhagwad Gita tells Arjuna to do his duty irrespective of the consequences. Our theory of dharma also includes a particular category — aapad dharma — which kicks in times of crisis or emergency and allows individuals and leaders to take hard decisions for survival. The Modi government likes the label of a "decisive" government, but its actions are quite to the contrary.

The same lackadaisical approach holds true for the government's defence of political rallies in the

ongoing state assembly elections. Both leaders and the crowds they want so desperately to get seem to believe that Covid does not exist. The Prime Minister lectures to the nation about "do gaz ki doori" and "mask hai zaroort", but when it comes to electioneering all such advice is thrown out of the window. There is no point in saying that other political parties do the same. If you are in the hot seat you have to set the benchmark for Covid-appropriate behaviour and uphold it through your actions. It also begs all rational thinking why the Election Commission is not agreeing to club the balance three phases of the Bengal Assembly elections and hold them on one day. Mamata Banerjee endorses this proposal. Why doesn't the PM do so, too?

The EC should take extraordinary decisions when a Goliath-like pandemic is unfolding! The WB CM's suggestion to club the remaining phases of polls was extremely pragmatic to avoid super-spreading. Even parties should go for e-electioneering. It's not the time to win elections but save the precious lives of voters. How can Modiji be so hard and immune to loss of lives caused by the second wave? Shouldn't he appreciate his adversary's pragmatism and go for it? The editorial is right (*Bengal: EC misses chance to curb Covid during vote*, DC, April 17).

LETTERS

WHY ONLY TEMPLES?

In a pandemic, people of all religions are infected. The AP government must implement protocols on war footing to curb Covid at all religious places (*All temples in AP may bar entry of pilgrims yet again*, DC, April 16).

People are habituated to listen under intimidation and force. If protocols are not followed, we will have nothing but remorse.

Dr Syed Sarmad
Kurnool

The government has to have proper plan for paying temple staff as hundi collections will be nil. Apart from temples all other religion prayer houses also to be closed completely to stop spread of virus. **Panchakarla Govardhana Rao**
Kankipadu, Krishna

POLITICAL TREND

Trying to demolish the entire Opposition may be an achievement for the ruling party in AP but it will be dangerous for democracy as there will be no one to question the ruling party and it would further give good scope to non-regional parties to play politics as we have witnessed in so many states. Political legends in the past were not foolish to suggest respect and protection of dignity of Opposition parties. Leaders and people of AP must understand this.

Paidi Visweswar Rao
Srikakulam

COURT STAYS

Ample proof was submitted by the CID (*HC asks CID not act against TD boss for 3 weeks*, DC, April 17). Yet the accused "manages" to obtain stay on further proceedings. This could as well be described as the power of politics. India has become notorious for this delay tactics when the accused are politicians. In this case I wonder why the HC is granting stay after stay. The message is loud and clear. Have connections and enjoy, come what may.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

EC FAILED

The EC should take extraordinary decisions when a Goliath-like pandemic is unfolding! The WB CM's suggestion to club the remaining phases of polls was extremely pragmatic to avoid super-spreading. Even parties should go for e-electioneering. It's not the time to win elections but save the precious lives of voters. How can Modiji be so hard and immune to loss of lives caused by the second wave? Shouldn't he appreciate his adversary's pragmatism and go for it?

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

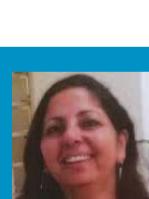
Bangla Desh becomes Republic

KUSHTIA (BANGLA DESH), APRIL 17

The Sovereign Democratic Republic of Bangla Desh came into formal existence today with a historic proclamation of independence by the new nation's acting President, Syed Nazrul Islam.

The proclamation was read out by Mr. Islam for the President, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, at a simple and solemn ceremony under a mango tree at Baidyanathatala in Meherpur sub-division of Kushtia district.

Anita Katyal
Political Gup-Shup



Modi's 'Didi' jibe offends women; what AAP shares with Owaisi

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was personally reluctant to impose a lockdown but he was later

ally pushed into doing so by his bureaucrats who did some plain speaking to him about the need for drastic measures given the alarming spike in Covid-19 cases in the state. Though Mr Chouhan did go by the advice of his officers, informal instructions were conveyed to the lower rung bureaucracy that the lockdown need not be implemented strictly and that people moving out should not be penalised. And the Damoh constituency where a bypoll was held last week, was deliberately exempted from adhering to the lockdown to allow political parties to organise their election rallies. They were helped in this effort by the local election commission officials who went to town with the slogan, "Corona se nahi darenge, matdan hum zaroor karenge", urging voters to come out in large numbers on polling day. Incidentally, while Mr Chouhan was battling the alarming rise in infections, his health minister Narottam Mishra was busy overseeing the Assembly poll in West Bengal. Mr Mishra reached his home state a few days before the bye-election in Damoh which happens to

be his stronghold.

Delhi chief minister and Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal has a lot in common with AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi. Either it is deliberate or inadvertent, but the leaders end up helping the Bharatiya Janata Party by entering an electoral fray resulting in the weakening of the Congress. Mr Owaisi did so in Bihar and Mr Kejriwal in the Gujarat local elections. In fact, there is talk that the two parties even receive covert funding from the BJP. Currently, AAP is focusing on expanding its footprint in Uttarakhand. To that extent, it has initiated a vigorous recruitment drive and is positioning itself as a credible alternative in the hill state. Interestingly, Mr Kejriwal is concentrating on the Kumaon region, which is where the Congress has strong roots, and not on Garhwal which is known to be the BJP's fiefdom. Given the anti-incumbency against the BJP in Uttarakhand, the Congress has a chance of coming back to power here. But Mr Kejriwal could well

end up playing spoilsport, much to the BJP's delight.

There appears to be no end to the raging battle in the upper echelons of the prestigious India International Centre even four years after eminent jurist Soli Sorabjee was forced to step down as the Centre's president though he retains his position as life trustee on the IIC board. Mr Sorabjee's tenure was cut short in 2017 following a spate of allegations of financial impropriety and bungling in the admission of members. A fresh attempt was made recently at the IIC annual general meeting to debar Mr Sorabjee and Justice Srikrishna from holding any office. It is not clear why this matter was raised after four years. The resolution was, however, not approved as several members pointed out that such a drastic action could not be taken in the absence of the two trustees and without giving them an opportunity to have their say. It must be mentioned that an enquiry committee was set up to probe the charges against Mr Sorabjee but little

known about its report. The surprise victory notched up by the Tripura scion Pradyot Kishore Deb Barman's fledgling party in the recent election to the Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, proved to be a major embarrassment for the Congress. Not only did the party finish fourth but Mr Barman who had been the Tripura Congress president left following differences with the party's Northeast in-charge Luizinho Paleiro. Apparently, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had got in touch with Mr Barman last year when he was in the US and asked him to rejoin the Congress. Mr Barman was willing to do so but was unable to get in touch with Rahul Gandhi as he had changed his phone number on his return from America and his staff was not very helpful in organising a meeting with the Nehru-Gandhi scion. Mr Barman then decided to float his own party.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

IN BRIEF
**ARMY POSTPONES
COMMANDERS
CONFERENCE**

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 17

Indian Army has postponed its crucial Commanders Conference and cancelled retiring officers conference in April due to rising Covid-19 cases.

Indian Army's bi-annual Commanders Conference, which is attended by its top commanders from all over the country, was scheduled to be held from April 26, has been postponed. The Conference which was to be chaired by Chief of Army Staff Gen MM Naravane would have discussed emerging situation at the line of actual control (LAC) with China in Ladakh and the continued friction at other points in the sector.

It would have also discussed the strategy for summer at LAC with troops from both sides expected to move to forward positions. The ceasefire with Pakistan at Line of Control was also likely to be discussed during the meeting.

Indian Army's apex leadership was expected to discuss issues pertaining to organisational restructuring, logistics, administration and human resource management.

Last year also Indian Army had postponed its Army Commanders' Conference in April and later on it was held in May. This time also the conference could be held in May.

Meanwhile, Army has also cancelled its retiring officers conference in April due to rising Covid-19 cases.

Amid drug shortage, Remdesivir stolen from MP govt hospital

17 boxes containing 853 Remdesivir vials go missing; police suspect insider's job

RABINDRA NATH
CHOWDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, APR 17

With the cry for Remdesivir getting louder across Madhya Pradesh, unidentified miscreants on Saturday broke into the storeroom of a government hospital here and decamped with boxes containing the life saving drug, leaving the administration as well as police shell-shocked.

The incident came to light when the medical officers of the hospital found the iron gate of the government-run Hamidia hospital here cut open and some boxes containing vials of Remdesivir missing in the morning.

"The matter was immediately reported to the police", hospital superintendent I D Chourasia said.

Preliminary investigation suggested that it might be an "insider's" job. "It has been found that 17 boxes containing 853 Remdesivir vials were missing. But, no other drugs stored in the store-room were touched by the thieves. This gives rise to suspicion that the theft was committed with mischievous intention", a senior police officer said.



A medic collects samples for Covid-19 tests at KSRTC bus stand, as Coronavirus cases surge in Bengaluru.

- PTI

Joona Akhara ends its participation in Kumbh Mela

Dehradun, Apr 17: The Joona Akhara, one of the largest sects of seers in the country, announced the end of its participation in the Kumbh Mela on Saturday, hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal that participation in the ongoing gathering in Haridwar be kept symbolic in view of the surge in coronavirus cases.

The people of India and their survival is our first priority. In view of the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, we have duly immersed all the deities invoked on the occasion of Kumbh.

This is the formal immersion-conclusion of Kumbh on behalf of Joona Akhara, Swami Avadheshanand Giri, the mahamandaleshwar of the Joona Akhara, said in a tweet in Hindi.

An enclosed note signed by Giri, Joona Akhara

patron Hari Giri and secretaries Mahant Mohan Bharti and Mahant Mahesh Puri said the decision to immerse the Kumbh deities had been taken in public interest after consultations with seers of the Akhara.

"Immersing the deities, we also pray to all 'teertha and siddhaapeeth' and declare the immersion of Haridwar Kumbh Mela, 2021," it said.

The country on Saturday recorded a frightening single-day spike in Covid cases with over 2.34 lakh fresh infections, crossing the two lakh-mark for the third straight day, as demands for increased supply of oxygen cylinders, vaccine doses and Remdesivir were raised by 11 states and Union Territories, including Delhi, where the pandemic situation was described as "worrisome" by the chief minister.

5 killed as fire breaks out in Covid hospital

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAIPUR, APR 17

A major fire broke out in a private Covid hospital here, killing five patients. While one Covid-19 patient succumbed to burn injuries, four others died due to disruption of oxygen supply caused due to the mishap, officials said.

The fire broke out due to a short circuit, preliminary police investigation suggested.

Eyewitness accounts said smoke filled the two storied Rajdhani hospital in Pachpadi Naka in Raipur city when the fire broke out, causing suffocation to the Covid-19 patients.

The fire soon engulfed different wards of the hospital forcing the

patients to run helter skelter. Several patients suffered burn injuries as they tried to escape the fire. Relatives of the patients were seen breaking the glass windows to enter the wards to rescue the patients.

Many patients were brought outside the hospital and administered oxygen. Later, all the patients were shifted to different hospitals in the city. Around 30 Covid-19 patients were undergoing treatment in the hospital when the incident took place. This was the first fire incident in a Covid hospital in Chhattisgarh.

"The fire broke out at around 4.30 pm," special superintendent of police of Raipur district Ajey Yadav said.

Colleagues, leaders mourn TN actor Vivekh's death

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN | DC
CHENNAI, APR 17

The untimely death of popular actor and social activist Vivekh at the age of 59 on Saturday after he suffered a massive heart attack left the Tamil film fraternity and fans in deep grief.

Vivekh breathed his last at 4.35 am. He was cremated with police honours.

The actor, a Padma Shri recipient and who has acted in over 200 films with top Tamil heroes, is known for his work on social issues and the environmental protection front.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister K. Palaniswami, DMK president M. K. Stalin, actor Rajinikanth, Makkal Needhi Maamai leader Kamal Haasan were among those who expressed shock and grief over his death and conveyed their condolences to the bereaved.

He also collaborated with the government in disseminating significant social awareness messages to the public on TV including the latest on preventing coronavirus spread.

It was heart-wrenching to note that his tweets, which he had posted to condole Abdul Kalam's death, going viral. The post of Vivekh, which is in Tamil, roughly translates as, "A simple, selfless and clean life too will end someday. However, many die away! But only

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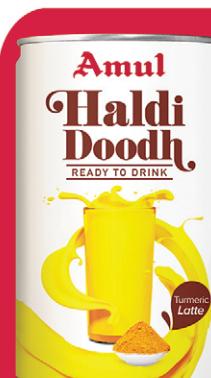
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IN BRIEF

Natanz attack suspect named

Tehran, April 17: (AP) Iran state television has named a suspect in the attack that damaged centrifuges at its Natanz nuclear site and says he fled the country. The report Saturday named the suspect as Reza Karimi. It showed a passport-style photograph of a man it identified as Karimi. The report also aired what appeared to be an Interpol "red notice" seeking his arrest. The arrest notice was not immediately accessible on Interpol's public-facing database.

Raul Castro steps down

Havana, April 17: Raul Castro said he is stepping down as Cuban Communist Party leader, leaving without a Castro guiding affairs for the first time in more than six decades and handing control to a younger generation. The 89-year-old Castro made the announcement in a speech Friday at the opening of the eighth congress of the ruling party, the only one allowed on the island. The reins will now pass to 60-year-old Miguel Diaz-Canel, who has already served as Cuba's president since 2018.

Russia detains Ukrainian consul

Moscow, April 17: Russia detained a Ukrainian diplomat for allegedly receiving classified information from a database of the country's main security agency.

The Federal Security Service, or FSB, said Saturday that Alexander Sosonyuk, Ukraine's consul in St Petersburg, was taken into custody on Friday during a meeting with a Russian in which he received "information of a classified nature contained in the databases of law enforcement agencies and the FSB".

5 workers killed by B'desh police

Dhaka, April 17: At least five people working at a under construction coal power plant being built by a Chinese firm in Chittagong were killed and 20 others injured in a clash with the police following a protest by the workers over wage and allowances, Bangladeshi media reports said on Saturday.

The incident happened when the protesting workers of the plant clashed with the police, prompting them to open fire in which five workers were killed, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

PHILIP LAID TO REST IN ROYAL SERVICE

London, April 17: Britain's Queen Elizabeth II led a small group of senior royals at the ceremonial funeral of her husband and consort Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, at Windsor Castle on Saturday.

The funeral incorporated hymns and readings chosen by the late royal himself and focused on the "unwavering loyalty" of the longest-serving consort in British history to his wife, the monarch, and service to Britain and the Commonwealth.

The ceremony, which began at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle with a national minute's silence at 1500 local time on Saturday, was a religious one though without any sermons, as planned by the Duke - who passed away aged 99 last week on Friday.

"The Order of Service for the funeral was agreed with the Duke of Edinburgh during his lifetime, and reflects the Duke's military affiliations, and personal elements of His Royal Highness' life," Buckingham Palace said in a statement.

Worldwide Covid death toll tops a staggering 3 million

True number is higher because of possible government concealment

Rio de Janeiro, April 17: The global death toll from the Coronavirus topped a staggering 3 million people Saturday amid repeated setbacks in the worldwide vaccination campaign and a deepening crisis in places such as Brazil, India and France.

The number of lives lost, as compiled by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the population of Kyiv, Ukraine; Caracas, Venezuela; or metropolitan Lisbon, Portugal. It is bigger than Chicago (2.7 million) and equivalent to Philadelphia and Dallas combined. And the true number is believed to be significantly higher because of possible government concealment or the many cases overlooked in the early stages of the outbreak that began 16 months ago in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019.

Around the world, the trajectory of the virus and the race to bring it under control vary widely from country to country.

Even as the US and Britain see their vaccination drives hit their stride and they begin to contemplate life after the pandemic, other places both rich and poor — France and India among them — are lagging behind in putting shots in arms and have imposed new lockdowns and other restrictions as cases soar.

Worldwide, deaths are running at over 12,000 per day on average and new cases at more than 700,000 a day. The US toll alone is over 560,000, accounting for more than 1 in 6 of the world's Covid-19 deaths, by far the highest reported by any country. The US is followed by Brazil, Mexico, India and Britain.

This month, the US recommended a pause in the use of Johnson & Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine while authorities investigate extremely rare but dangerous blood clots. — PTI



People take part in a protest in the central Puerta del Sol to protect the national health service during and after the pandemic, in Madrid, on Saturday. — AP

USTR discusses TRIPS waiver proposal for vax

Washington, April 17: US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, in a virtual meeting with GAVI's CEO Dr. Seth Berkley, discussed, among other things, the proposed waiver of certain provisions of the WTO's agreement on intellectual property rules for the manufacture of coronavirus vaccines.

In the virtual meeting with Berkley on Friday, Tai discussed increasing vaccine production, global health issues and the proposed waiver of certain provisions of the

World Trade Organisation Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) for Covid-19 pandemic, the USTR said in a statement.

The TRIPS Agreement is a minimum standards agreement, which allows members to provide more extensive protection of intellectual property if they so wish.

Tai expressed her appreciation for the important role GAVI has played in securing and distributing vaccines for developing countries through COVAX

and other initiatives, it said. Tai highlighted her commitment to using trade policy to save lives in the pandemic and ensure that the United States, and the world, are better prepared in the future.

She also welcomed Berkley's views on how to accelerate the rollout and distribution of vaccines to developing countries, the USTR said. The virtual meeting comes ahead of a May 5 meeting of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) General Council. — PTI

\$1.7B US network to track virus variants

Washington, April 17: The US is setting up a \$1.7 billion national network to identify and track worrisome Coronavirus mutations whose spread could trigger another pandemic wave, the Biden administration announced Friday.

White House officials unveiled a strategy that features three components: A major funding boost for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state health departments to ramp up Coronavirus gene-mapping; the creation of six centres of

excellence partnerships with universities to conduct research and develop technologies for gene-based surveillance of pathogens, and building a data system to better share and analyse information on emerging disease threats, so knowledge can be turned into action. Even as we accelerate our efforts to get shots into arms, more dangerous variants are growing, causing increases in cases in people without immunity. White House Coronavirus adviser Andy Slavitt said. — AP

Italy health chief stays off from scam

Rome, April 17: The head of Italy's national health institute distanced himself Friday from a scandal over a spiked World Health Organisation report into Italy's coronavirus response, saying he had no means to interfere with the UN agency and had never censored even inconvenient information from the public.

Dr Silvio Brusaferro was drawn into the scandal after a leaked document from Bergamo prosecutors last

week revealed transcripts of WhatsApp chats between Brusaferro and a WHO official, Dr. Ranieri Guerra, who is under investigation for having allegedly made false claims to prosecutors about the report.

The report, published in May last year as a guide to help countries prepare for Covid-19, sparked a nerve because it revealed that the Italian government hadn't updated its pandemic preparedness plan since 2006. — AP

FedEx shooting: Police ID killer

Indianapolis, April 17: Police scoured a FedEx facility in Indianapolis and searched the suspected gunman's home Friday looking for a motive for the latest mass shooting to rock the United States, as family members of the eight victims spent agonising hours awaiting word on their loved ones.

The shooter was identified as 19-year-old Brandon Scott Hole of Indiana, two law enforcement officials said. The officials could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

— AP

23K prisoners let off in Myanmar

Yangon, April 17: Myanmar's junta on Saturday announced it pardoned and released more than 23,000 prisoners to mark the traditional Thingyan New Year holiday, but it wasn't immediately clear if they included pro-democracy activists who were detained in the wake of the military's seizure of power in Feb. 1.

The releases were announced on state

broadcaster MRTV, which said that junta chief Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing had pardoned 23,047 prisoners, including 137 foreigners who will be deported from Myanmar. He also reduced sentences for others.

The move comes as daily protests against the Feb. 1 ouster of the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi continue.

— AP

300 mn-yr-old shark gets formal name

Santa Fe (US), April 17: The 300-million-year-old shark's teeth were the first sign that it might be a distinct species.

The ancient chompers looked less like the spear-like rows of teeth of related species. They were squatter and shorter, less than an inch long, around 2 centimetres.

"Great for grasping and crushing prey rather than piercing prey," said discoverer John-Paul Hodnett, who was a graduate student when he unearthed the first fossils at a dig

east of Albuquerque in 2013. This week, Hodnett and a slew of other researchers published their findings in a bulletin of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science identifying the shark as a separate species.

He named the 6.7-foot (2 metre) monster *Dracopristis hoffmannorum*, or Hoffmann's Dragon Shark, in honour of the New Mexico family that owns the land in the Manzano Mountains where the fossils were found. Hodnett says the area is rife with fossils and

easy to access because of a quarry and other commercial digging operations. The name also harkens to the dragon-like jawline and 2.5-foot (0.75-metre) fin spines that inspired the discovery's initial nickname, "Godzilla Shark."

The formal naming announcement followed seven years of excavation, preservation and study. The 12 rows of teeth on the shark's lower jaw, for example, were still obscured by layers of sediment after excavation.

Hodnett only saw them by

using an angled light technique that illuminates objects below.

Hodnett is now the paleontologist and programme coordinator for the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission's Dinosaur Park in Laurel, Maryland. His fellow researchers come from the New Mexico museum, as well as St. Joseph's University in Pennsylvania, Northern Arizona University, and Idaho State University.

The recovered fossil skele-

ton is considered the most complete of its evolutionary branch — ctenacanth — that split from modern sharks and rays around 390 million years ago and went extinct around 60 million years later. Back then, eastern New Mexico was covered by a seaway that extended deep into North America.

Hodnett and his colleagues believe that Hoffman's dragon shark most likely lived in the shallows along the coast, stalking prey like crustaceans, fish and other sharks.

— AP

Afghanistan: US may up troops before recall

Washington, April 17: The US will likely increase its troop presence in Afghanistan temporarily over the coming weeks and months in order to fulfill President Joe Biden's order to safely withdraw all forces from the country by Sep. 11, the Pentagon said Friday.

Pentagon chief spokesman John Kirby declined to provide specifics and said details are still being worked out.

But he said it's logical to assume that you may need some logistics help, maybe some engineering help, you may have to add some force protection capabilities again temporarily just to make sure that the drawdown goes in a safe, orderly and effective way. Biden announced Wednesday that the US would pull all of its more than 2,500 troops out of Afghanistan by Sep. 11 the 20th anniversary of the al-Qaida terror attack on the US that had triggered the US-led invasion of the country.

Biden, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and others have made it clear that the US is keenly aware of the Taliban threats, and that any attacks on US or allied personnel or facilities would face strong US reaction.

Kirby also said it's not clear if any US contractors will remain in the country. He said that the goal is to get all Defence Department personnel out.

— AP

PIO SCIENTIST IDENTIFIES GENES THAT FIGHT VIRUS

Washington, April 17: US researchers led by an Indian-origin scientist have identified a set of human genes that fight SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes Covid-19, a study that could help in understanding the factors that affect disease severity and suggesting possible therapeutic options.

The study by scientists at Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute in San Diego, California, was published in the journal *Molecular Cell*. The genes in question are related to interferons, the body's frontline virus fighters.

We wanted to gain a better understanding of the cellular response to SARS-CoV-2, including what drives a strong or weak response to infection, says Sumit K. Chanda, professor and director of the Immunity and Pathogenesis Programme at Sanford Burnham Prebys. — PTI

and the emergency refugee situation persists, then a presidential determination may be issued to raise the ceiling.

That set off a deluge of criticism from top allies on Capitol Hill such as the second-ranking Senate Democrat, Dick Durbin of Illinois, who called that initial limit "unacceptable." White House press secretary Jen Psaki said later that Biden is expected to increase the refugee cap by May 15, though she didn't say by how much.

Biden has been consulting with his advisers to determine what number of refugees could realistically be admitted to the US between now and Oct. 1. — AP

Refugee cap to be lifted in May

Washington, April 17: Facing swift blowback from allies and aid groups, the White House said President Joe Biden plans to lift his predecessor's historically low cap on refugees by next month, after initially moving only to expand the eligibility criteria for resettlement.

In an emergency determination signed by Biden earlier Friday, he stated the admission of up to 15,000 refugees set by former President Donald Trump this year "remains justified by humanitarian concerns and is otherwise in the national interest." But if the cap is reached before the end of the current budget year



OUR CRITIC'S RATING Outstanding ★★★★ | Great ★★★ | Good ★★ | Okay ★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

Watch it for Ghaywan and Konkona

Ajeeb Daastaans

CAST: Fatima Sana Shaikh, Jaideep Ahlawat, Armaan Ralhan, Nushrratt Bharucha, Abhishek Banerjee, Konkona Sen Sharma, Aditi Rao Hydari, Shefali Shah, Manav Kaul

DIRECTOR: Shashank Khaitan, Raj Mehta, Neeraj Ghaywan, Kayoze Irani

RATING: ★★★

Releases on Netflix

SUPARNA SHARMA

Ajeeb Daastaans, from Karan Johar's little OTT production baby, Dharmatic Entertainment, tells four stories of people impaled in a life they don't want but can't get out of because of their caste, class, family compulsions or lack of choices. They are all similarly unhappy, seething and searching for something better.

As is the track-record of all Bollywood anthologies, Ajeeb Daastaans diligently follows the template. It has four twisted stories of which two are middling, one is good and one truly fabulous.

All the four films by four different directors are bristling with atmosphere and are marked by powerful performances by actors who are cast in compelling roles and placed in a dramatic situation that draws us in immediately. But three of the four are filmy, drawing a lot from their Bollywood predecessors, and only one seems to be informed by life. They are nice, but feel like stories we have seen or heard before. All except Geeli Puchi.

Directed by Neeraj Ghaywan, Geeli Puchi, that Ghaywan has written with Sumit Saxena, strips down the capricious innocence of caste privilege to its hard-wired mendacity. It also has a powerful and unsettling performance by Konkona Sen Sharma. If it weren't for this film, Ajeeb Daastaans would have been interesting but meh.

Geeli Puchi, the title itself dripping with some afternoon obscenity, levitates Ajeeb Daastaans to a higher level.

It tells the story of Bharti (Konkona Sen Sharma), a factory worker, who wants a desk job and has all the qualifications for it. But she is a dalit and carries her anger and hunger for more in her slightly protruding jaw and her body that is at once thrust forward and withdrawn.

Bharti's curly hair is girly but the clothes she wears when she steps out into the world are manly. They are not a statement about her sexuality but an expression of the power she feels she has. Like the strip of cloth she wraps around her wrist to handle heavy equipment, Bharti's clothes too say that she's ready to take on anyone, anytime, anywhere.

But the power that Bharti thinks she has drains out of her body when she sees pretty Priya Sharma (Aditi Rao Hydari), so fragile and dove-eyed, take up the job she so wants. Bharti is at once repulsed by and drawn to the power that comes in a petite size of feminine fragility.

"Ajeeb-ajeeb log hote hain aur badboo bhi aati hai," Priya says in a friendly banter to Bharti, inviting her to share her tiffin at her desk and not on the factory floor, thinking Bharti is one of her. Bharti's reaction to Priya's casually racist remarks, prejudices is not visible on her face, but her body registers it as



a hole in her armour.

And then one day, when Bharti suddenly senses that she has some power, she doesn't flinch using it as a gentle but sharp whip that's gripped tightly by her rage.

The film's last shot is so fabulous that I want to watch it again and again on a loop.

Ajeeb Daastaans, which explores women's desire through all its stories and lets them come up for air for a bit before pulling them down again, begins with Majnu, a story about a husband wife trapped in a loveless marriage.

Directed by Shashank Khaitan, it's set in a large mansion in a Hindi-speaking, gun-wielding world where Babloo Bhaiyya (Jaideep Ahlawat) rules. He is married off to Lepakshi (Fatima Sana Shaikh)

for financial and political reasons but on the wedding night itself he tells her that he won't be able to love her but expects her to keep khandaan ki izrat.

Lepakshi's frustration coils

around her everyday and she grabs every opportunity to humiliate Babloo and get some jollies for herself.

The threat of violence looms when Babloo Bhaiyya is around, even when Raj (Armaan Ralhan), the dashing, educated son of the driver, arrives to fan all sorts of desires.

Despite a pair of fried testicles, a cutsey twist that revisits masculinity, and the film's predictable end, Majnu is blessed by excellent acting by all, including Raj's angry motherr. It also has a lovely song — Bagiya mein bhanwara...

Khilauna, directed by Raj Mehta, is a complex story about grey characters that is revealed through a police investigation. But what they are investigating is shared with us later in a dark, gory, stunning moment.

Meenal (Nushrratt Bharucha) is a young, sexy maid who dotes on her little sister Binni (Inayat Verma). Sushil (Abhishek Banerjee) the istri-wallah loves Meenal and Binni but has no power and bristles everytime injustice accosts him. Meenal has a clear worldview — she knows what her place is in

this world organised by caste and class. She knows she has no power except guile and the fact that she is very attractive. She uses both to curry small favours.

Smiling and winking at little Binni as she plays on the emotions of women she works for, bitching out one, pandering to the new officer in town, her circumstances and routine exploitation have brought a hard coldness to her heart that she unknowingly passes on to Binni. And when Binni acts on her own desires and feelings of jealousy, it leaves even Meenal stunned.

The film, also written by Sumit Saxena, is carried by Nushrratt Bharucha's charming but inevitable duplicity.

Ankahi, directed by Kayoze Irani, is the last film in the anthology and tells the story of Natasha (Shefali Shah), a mother who can't cope with husband's disinterest in their daughter who is losing her hearing. And then, a man walks into her life, all sparkles, warmth and sunshine. Though Ankahi is lit by lovely performances by Shefali Shah and Manav Kaul, it felt dull and cliched.

In a special league of dreary, bad films

The Big Bull

CAST: Abhishek Bachchan, Ileana D'Cruz, Sohum Shah, Nikita Dutta, Saurabh Shukla, Samir Soni, Mahesh Manjrekar, Ram Kapoor

DIRECTOR: Kookie Gulati

RATING: ★

Streaming on Disney + Hotstar

SUPARNA SHARMA

Bollywood is a star-driven film industry. What that means and often results in are films like The Big Bull where just the fact that a big star has been engaged is enough, all else be damned. "All else" includes writing — story, screenplay and dialogue, direction, production design, background score.

Star-driven enterprises serve a very significant purpose. Inept writers, directors, production houses remain gainfully engaged by riding on the power of a star.

Abhishek Bachchan is a star who can act. He has just been beset by too many bad choices after a few good ones initially. This time round, however, he signed up with a director and writer who are in a special league of their own when it comes to being bad.

Bollywood has a large, prospering league of bad which ranges from films that are bad in unique, new ways — where it's obvious that some thought, effort went into making it — to woeful, listless films which are bad in ways that many other previous

films have been bad.

The first kind of films can be fun-bad, while the other is dreary.

To illustrate, Ram Gopal Varma's Daud would fall in the fun-bad category, and Department in mournfully bad. Director Vijay Krishna Acharya's Tashan is in the first category, but his Thugs of Hindostan is in the I'd-rather-die-than-watch-this category.

The Big Bull is a pool of mournful stupidity. A life-sucking bad film. The sort that leaves you in need of a cold shower and cold beer to wash it all away.

Leading this turgid enterprise is Kookie Gulati the director. He was set off on this listless path by a story and screenplay that he wrote with Arjun Dhawan.

Mr Kookie had earlier directed an atrocity called Prince (2010) that still feels like a fresh scar on my brain. Now I have two scars courtesy Mr Kookie.

Based loosely and irresponsibly on the life and crimes of Harshad Mehra, The Big Bull opens with reporter Meera Rao (played by Ileana D'Cruz and based on Sucheta Dalal) talking about Hemant Shah (Abhishek Bachchan) to a half full of millennial MBA students.

Cut to flashback in a chawl where Hemant, in full-sleeve printed shirts, used to live with his brother Viren (Sohum Shah), mother (Supriya Pathak) and angst about not being rich. That feeling was made worse by the father of the girl next door he liked, Priya (Nikita Dutta). Her



daddy wanted a well-settled son-in-law.

We are told two things about Hemant. Three, actually.

1. That Hemant had "the world's best bhai aur dost". We meet the bhai, but see the dost fleetingly.

2. Hemant keeps saying, "Mujhe dhere chalna aata hain hai" — and yet the film he is in is an excruciatingly slow crawl.

3. Hemant doesn't drink, but only till he can afford the best daru. Later in life, he drinks.

With these character traits, Mr Kookie & Co, try to stitch together a chronology of the rise and fall of the stock broker, but they remain vague on details and are often incoherent, as if a terrible arts student was suddenly asked to sit for an economics exam.

The film, neither clear nor real-

ly interested in what actually happened, tells us Harshal Mehta's story in the sort of sketchy way that the arts student would try to fill up the answer sheet — with gibberish, throwing in some "economics sounding" words at random.

Hemant wants to become a stock broker and for this he gets a bank receipt in an underhand manner and starts playing the stock market. The amount of the stock receipts increases, and so does Hemant's game.

He then manipulates the price of a company's share price and uses union leader Rana Sawant (Mahesh Manjrekar) to tip him off about which auto plant will be shut so that he can make more money in shares.

This is insider trading and Mannu Malpani (Saurabh

Shukla), chairman of SEBI, doesn't like it. But he can't do much.

The film conveys all this through dull generalities. To show that Hemant was a master manipulator and the king of the share market, it makes him stand, arms akimbo, staring and smiling at the trading floor often. To show that he is always planning his next move, Hemant has to keep tapping his fingers.

In between there is romance with Priya, which means that several songs arrive at frustratingly predictable moments.

Soon Hemant gets very rich, pays Rs 26 cr income tax and the CBI and I-T guys get after him.

Hemant suspects that it is one of his employees and so he invites them all to his house and then asks them to take off their clothes and jump into his pool.

Half-naked office employees covering their man-boobs as Hemant stares down at them with sulky pout is, perhaps, when the film hits the high note of absurdity. Kookie & Co seem incapable of taking facts and then turning them into a screenplay. If they were capable of doing that they would have just binge-watched Hansal Mehta's Scam 1992. They probably did watch it and decided it was all too much and that they'd rather go with a bullshit story and hero's pointless bluster.

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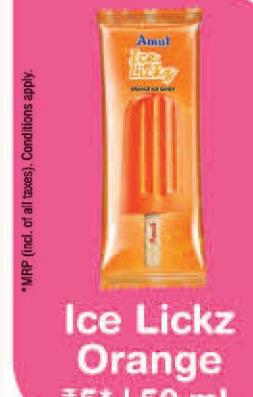
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₹25* | 100 mL



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₹5* | 50 mL



NEW
Tricone Two in One
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Combo Afghan Dry Fruit
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Choco Chips Tub
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ORANGE



Nitish Rana, KKR	137
Sanju Samson, RR	123
Jonny Bairstow, SRH	110

PURPLE



Harshal Patel, RCB	7
Rahul Chahar, MI	7
Trent Boult, MI	6

Off the field



Ben Stokes bids adieu to his Rajasthan Royals teammates as he returns to the UK for a surgery.

— RR

Sams in RCB bubble after negative test

Australian all-rounder Daniel Sams on Saturday joined the Royal Challengers Bangalore's bio-bubble after returning with two negative RT-PCR results more than a week after testing positive for COVID-19. The 28-year-old had arrived in India on April 3 with a negative COVID-19 report but tested positive during the second test on April 7 and was in quarantine since then. "We are pleased to inform that Royal Challengers Bangalore, all-rounder Daniel Sams, has joined the RCB bio-bubble on 17th April 2021 with negative reports for COVID-19," RCB said in a statement.

"RCB medical team was in constant touch with Sams to ensure his safety and declared him fit after all the required examinations as part of the BCCI protocols."

Chahar earns rich praise from Shastri

Deepak Chahar's best IPL performance 4-1-13-4 on Friday earned rich praise from national head coach Ravi Shastri. "Proven fact. Genuine swing both ways with control can undo the best. Super variations. Brilliant," Shastri tweeted.

Chahar recalled how a random fan's social media comment hurt him. "Expectations are high here and you have to perform in every game, so this is for that man, who made the comment, if I would not have played, this performance might have not come," Chahar said.

Padikkal is great talent, says Lara

Devdutt Padikkal needs to "iron out" a few technical things but the legendary Brian Lara is confident that the RCB left-hander would better his performance during this IPL with a few Man of the Match awards. The 20-year-old Padikkal was one of the finds of the last IPL, scoring 474 runs with five half-centuries and contributing handsomely to RCB's campaign.

"A few little things to iron out. I hope he did that in the break and comes back really storming hard for this IPL. What I want to see in 2021 IPL is for him to go on and get a few man of the matches and get a couple of triple figures under his belt. Such a great little player," Lara said.

FIELD DAY FOR MI

Hardik hits bull's eye twice as Mumbai run Sunrisers out

Chennai, April 17: Sunrisers Hyderabad's middle-order continued to misfire as spinner Rahul Chahar and pacer Trent Boult fashioned Mumbai Indians to a 13-run win in their IPL match here on Saturday.

Defending 150, leg-spinner Chahar (3/19) stifled the middle-order before Boult (3/28) polished off the tail as SRH were bowled out for 137 in 19.4 overs.

Opting to bat, MI had a good start but Vijay Shankar and Mujeeb Ur Rahman claimed two wickets each as SRH stemmed the flow of runs in the middle overs.

However, Kieron Pollard managed to lift MI to 150 for 5 with the help of a 22-ball 35 which included two sixes of the last two balls of their innings.

Chasing 151 for a win, Jonny Bairstow smashed a 22-ball 35 to give SRH a rollicking start, while David Warner too managed a 36 off 34 but once the duo were back in the hut, the middle-order again failed to come to the fore.

Back at the top with his opening partner Warner, Bairstow amassed 18 runs from Trent Boult in the third over with the help of three fours and a six.

Adam Milne was then treated with equal disdain, sending him for two maximums and a four as he bled 19 runs.

Krunal Pandya was then handed the ball and the result was the same as he conceded 13 runs with Bairstow and Warner smashing a six and a four respectively as SRH amassed 55 in 5 overs.

Bumrah then bowled a tight over but Warner sent Milne for a six as SRH reached 57 for no loss in powerplay.

Lady luck smiled on MI



Hardik Pandya (second from right) celebrates with teammates after effecting a brilliant run-out to dismiss Sunrisers' David Warner.

DELHI CAPITALS HOLD EDGE OVER PUNJAB KINGS

Mumbai, April 17: Delhi Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant will aim to display better tactical acumen in Catch-22 situations against a 'blow-hot-blow-cold' Punjab Kings in what promises to be a battle of brittle middle-orders in an IPL match here on Sunday.

Both teams are coming into the 'Norther Derby' of IPL after enduring defeats in their previous games but Delhi Capitals are definitely a better side on paper.

Pant, relatively inexperienced in terms of IPL captaincy, lost the plot in the last game where he didn't finish his best bowler Ravichandran Ashwin's quota and instead used Tom Curran's friendly medium pacers.

Punjab Kings, on the other hand, suffered an inexplicable batting collapse against Chennai Super Kings with Deepak Chahar's extra bounce and slight seam movement causing the damage.

This was after a healthy 200 plus total in the opening game. The nature of the Wankhede track is posing a few questions under lights for top-order batsmen as the last two games have shown with underlying moisture aiding quality fast bowling. — PTI

HEAD TO HEAD

Matches 26

PBKS 15 DC 11

FOR THE RECORD

- KL Rahul who has scored 4,938 runs in 141 innings needs 62 runs to become the 11th Indian and 70th batsman overall to score 5,000 runs in T20s.
- R Ashwin who has taken 249 wickets in 246 innings needs just one wicket to become the third Indian and 23rd bowler overall to take 250 wickets in T20s.

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- Delhi beat Punjab in Super over after the match ended in a tie at Dubai.
- Punjab beat Delhi by 5 wickets at Dubai.

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

Live on TV

Kolkata Knight Riders vs Royal Challengers Bangalore from 3.30 pm; Delhi Capitals vs Punjab Kings from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

Amul



Happy Birthday
Milk Chocolate
150 g | ₹ 100*



Best Wishes 55%
Dark Chocolate
150 g | ₹ 100*



I Love You
Fruit 'N' Nut 55%
Dark Chocolate
150 g | ₹ 100*



Dark Cooking
Chocolate
500 g | ₹ 200*



Milk Cooking
Chocolate
500 g | ₹ 200*



Choco Immuno
Chocolate
150 g | ₹ 100*



Ivory Coast
Origin 55%
Dark Chocolate
125 g | ₹ 150*



Choco Poco
10 g | ₹ 5*

BCCI hopeful of domestic season

New Delhi, April 17: The BCCI plans to kick-start its 2021-22 domestic season in September this year with the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament and has also allocated a three-month window to the Ranji Trophy from December after the marquee event had to be cancelled last season due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, the Duleep Trophy, Deodhar Trophy and Irani Cup are not a part of the tentative cal-

endar prepared by the cricket operations team. Apart from this, five women's competitions have also been dropped from the roster.

The 2020-21 season was a severely truncated one with only the National T20 (Mushtaq Ali) and ODI (Vijay Hazare Trophy) championships being held in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Amid a second wave of Covid-19 cases across India, the BCCI is still

hopeful of conducting the domestic season across age-groups in men and women's categories after a curtailed and troubled last season.

With India playing the T20 World Cup in October and the mega IPL auctions in the offing next year, it is understood that all stakeholders want to start off with two white ball tournaments — Mushtaq Ali T20 between "mid-September to October" followed by the

The under-19 women's T20 Challenger Trophy will also not be played. — PTI

Bangalore look to continue fine run

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI, APRIL 17

Royal Challengers Bangalore are riding on a crest of a wave after winning two out of their first two games this season. They would be keen on posting a hat-trick of wins when they lock horns with Kolkata Knight Riders here at the M.A. Chidambaram stadium on Sunday afternoon.

With RCB finding an unlikely bowling hero in left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed and 'million-dollar' Glenn Maxwell ending his five-year drought for an IPL half-century, Virat Kohli's team appear to have the right combination in their playing XI.

Maxwell's dramatic change in IPL fortunes has been credited to Kohli's admirable leadership. Kiwi Kyle Jamieson, who has added teeth to RCB's pace bowling unit, too praised Kohli for helping him adapt to Indian conditions.

"He (Kohli) is such an experienced leader. He is a skilful leader and the way that he approaches the games certainly complements the way I like to go about things. He is competitive, he is aggressive and likes to take the game on, which is something I like to adopt as well," Jamieson said.

The afternoon game (3:30pm start) is expected to change the dynamics at Chepauk which proved to be a nightmare for chasing teams in the previous games. However, spin will

HEAD TO HEAD

Matches 26

KKR 14 RCB 12

FOR THE RECORD

- Eoin Morgan who has scored 6,921 runs at an average of 297 in 297 innings needs 79 more to become the fourth Englishman and 22nd batsman overall to score 7,000 runs in T20 matches.
- Virat Kohli who has scored 5,944 runs at an average of 38.10 in 186 innings needs 56 more to become the first batsman to complete 6,000 runs in IPL.

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- RCB beat Knight Riders by 82 runs at Sharjah.
- RCB beat Knight Riders by 8 wickets at Abu Dhabi.

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

remain the most potent weapon on a slow surface.

Kolkata are coming off a disappointing result after dominating the game for a major part of it. KKR would be eager to see skipper Eoin Morgan hitting the top form. He hasn't touched the double-digit this season. West Indian all-rounder Andre Russell who was brilliant with the ball hasn't performed well with the bat for KKR either.

Having scored back-to-back half-centuries, left-handed opener Nitish Rana is KKR's biggest contributor.

Kolkata's spin trio of Harbhajan Singh, Varun Chakravarthy and Shakib Al Hasan managed to keep the opponent batsmen bay in powerplays.

MIRABAII SEALS AN OLYMPIC SPOT WITH WORLD RECORD

Tashkent, April 17: Former world champion Mirabai Chanu made a splendid return to the weightlifting arena, setting a new world record in clean and jerk while also bettering her own national record en route winning a bronze medal at the Asian Championship here on Saturday.

Chanu also confirmed her Tokyo Olympic spot as she has now competed in the six mandatory qualifying events.

The 26-year-old Indian lifted 86kg in snatch and a world record of 119kg in clean and jerk for a total of 205kg. While the earlier clean and jerk world record was 118kg, Chanu's personal best total in 49kg was 203kg (88kg+115kg) at the National Championship in February last year.

The gold medal went to Hou Zhihui of China who created a new world record in snatch and total weight with an effort of 213kg (96kg+117kg) while her compatriot Jiang Huihua clinched the silver, lifting 207kg (89kg+118kg) in the gold level Olympic qualifier.

The former world champion was off to a shaky start as she failed to lift 85kg in her first two snatch attempts. The diminutive Manipuri then lifted 86kg in her final attempt. However, she finished fourth best, behind Zhihui (96kg), Huihua (89kg) and Asiah Windy Cantika (87kg) of Indonesia. Chanu began her clean and jerk with a 113kg and then lifted 117kg successfully for her personal best. The Indian then bettered her own performance, hoisting 119kg, more than twice her body weight. — PTI

SNAP SHOTS

Sports Minister Rijiju is Covid positive

Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday said that he has tested positive for Covid-19 but is feeling "fit and fine". The 49-year-old posted the development on his Twitter page. "After getting repeated test for Covid-19, today my report has come out positive," Rijiju wrote in his Twitter handle.

"I'm taking the advice of the Doctors. I request all those who have come in my contact recently to be observant, exercise self-quarantine and get themselves tested. I'm physically fit and fine," he added.

Rijiju was in Uttarakhand on Friday to inaugurate a Water Sports and Adventure Institute in Tehri.

Ex-footballer Ahmed Hussain no more
The Telangana Football Association (TFA) condoled the demise of former Indian football centre-back Ahmed Hussain who passed away on Friday, aged 89.

Ahmed Hussain made 11 appearances for India. He represented the national team in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, where India finished fourth. He was also part of the Indian team at the 1958 Asian Games in Tokyo.



Ahmed Hussain