

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 11 MARCH 2020



WORLD | 9
US begins pullout from Afghanistan



SPORTS | 14
Vardy nets brace as Leicester beat Villa

TABLOID
Art inspiring fashion



WEATHER

Max: 34.7°C
Min: 21.3°C
RH: 54%
Rain: Nil
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Mist or haze likely. Max/Min temp. 34/21.9C

ASTROGUIDE

Vikari: Uttarayanam
Thithi: Phalguna Bahula
Dwitiya till 3.36 pm
Star: Hasta till 7.01 pm
Varjyam: 5.22 am to 6.46 am, 2.07 am to 3.32 am(next day)
Durmuhurtam: 12.02 pm to 12.49pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Rajjab 15,1441 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.27 am
Zohar: 12.36 pm
Asar: 4.44 pm
Maghrib: 6.30 pm
Isha: 7.38 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.25 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.26 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.11 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 7.44 AM

IN BRIEF

Putin seeks to end limited term

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday backed a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow him to seek re-election after his current term ends in 2024, ending uncertainty about his future. Mr Putin gave his support to the amendment put forward by Soviet cosmonaut turned lawmaker Valentina Tereshkova.

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DC CORRESPONDENT
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Page 2: Kerala family's infection creates alarm

Couple returning from Dubai tests positive for virus

MICHAEL GONSALVES | DC
PUNE, MARCH 10

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"They were quarantined at Naidu Hospital," Pune divisional commissioner Deepak Mhaisekar told this paper.

He said the patients returned to Pune and went to their home.

However, only one of them developed symptoms and both were rushed to the hospital on March 6, Mhaisekar said. Their samples were first tested at the hospital and then sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune city.

NIV Pune confirmed on Monday that the duo tested positive for coronavirus, Dr Ramchandra Hankare, Chief Health Officer at Pune Municipal Corporation said.

Politicos grab market for masks amidst Covid scare

VIKRAM SHARMA | DC
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Page 3: Masks stockpiled at house of TRS leaders

Scindia to join BJP, meets Modi, Shah

MP government in ICU as 19 MLAs resign

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
with agency inputs
BHOPAL, MARCH 10

Jyotiraditya Scindia quit the Congress on Tuesday following a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and is expected to join the BJP as the saffron party set in motion its plan to topple the Kamal Nath government in Madhya Pradesh to capture power there.

Peevied with his marginalisation in the Congress, Mr Scindia met Union home minister Amit Shah and then the two leaders went to the prime minister's residence where they held talks for over an hour.

Soon after his meeting with Mr Modi, Mr Scindia tendered his resignation to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, saying it was now time for him to move on.

Mr Scindia took the decision to sever his ties with the Congress on the day of his father Madhavrao Scindia's 75th birth anniversary.

He is likely to join the BJP in a couple of days, sources said. A source said Mr Scindia may join either in Delhi or Bhopal along with his supporters, including MLAs.

The Congress also announced his expulsion for "anti-party activities" as the crisis looming over the Madhya Pradesh government led by Chief Minister Kamal Nath deepened.

Mr Scindia is likely to be sent to Rajya Sabha, sources said, adding that he may get a berth in the Union Cabinet if his revolt against the Congress leads to the fall of the Madhya Pradesh government, as the BJP expects.

The 49-year-old leader was long upset with the Congress as he believes that Nath and Digvijaya Singh, another party satrap in the state, were working in tandem to marginalise him.

As many as 19 Congress MLAs including six ministers in the Kamal Nath government have resigned from the state assembly.

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However, the Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker said he would examine the matter.

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Apart from 19 MLAs who quit the Assembly, three more have abstained from the party meeting, leading to speculation that they too may shift loyalties.

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Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan celebrates Holi in Bhopal on Tuesday even as his party gets closer to power in his state. — PTI

Cong, BJP MLAs shifted to resorts

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State law minister P.C. Sharma while briefing the reporters after the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting said Chief Minister Kamal Nath was confident of staving off the crisis caused by threat of desertion of some Congress MLAs. "We will go for floor test to prove our majority. We have the number," he said.

The effective strength of MP assembly would come down to 206 if 22 Congress MLAs resigned from the House. The strength of ruling Congress would decline to 92 in the event reducing Kamal Nath government to minority. The BJP has strength of 107 in the House.

The BJP on Tuesday evening shifted all its 107 MLAs to an undisclosed location outside Madhya Pradesh.

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"We are going to celebrate Holi. We are going to the airport in buses. From there we will leave for the location as per the directives of party leaders," he said, without disclosing what their destination would be.

According to sources, the MLAs were being taken to a resort in BJP-ruled Haryana.

The move was taken to prevent the Congress from poaching BJP MLAs to stave off crisis faced the Kamal Nath government.

Meanwhile, MP minister Sajjan Singh Verma, a confidant of the Chief Minister, will fly to Bengaluru and try to woo back the Congress MLAs who are staying there, sources said.

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Mr Anand Reddy reportedly loaned an amount of ₹1.20 crore to Mr Pradeep Reddy.

Page 7: One accused is still absconding

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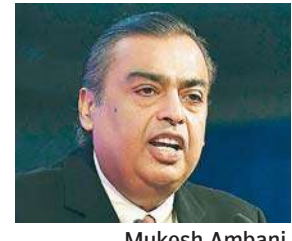
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Mr Ambani, whose fortune ballooned on the back

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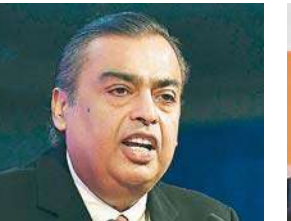
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Nellore student in isolation ward

Nellore: A student from Nellore was admitted to the isolation ward established for Covid-19 patients at Government General Hospital in Nellore late on Monday evening. He had returned from Italy, which has been badly affected by the virus, two days ago. He was allowed to go from Chennai airport after thermal screening. Though he showed no symptoms of the virus, doctors have kept him under observation as a precautionary measure and sent his blood sample to SVIMS in Tirupati for examination. District Medical and Health Officer Dr Rajyalakshmi said that it is only a suspected case, and made it clear that there are no positive cases.

TWV prez in 5-day NIA custody

Hyderabad: A city court on Tuesday granted five days' custody of Telangana Vidyarthi Vedika (TVV) president Bandari Maddileti to National Investigation Agency. B. Maddileti, was first arrested by the Jogulamba-Gadwal district police in October 2019, and several others for alleged links with Maoists. The Nallakunta police had also registered a case against Maddileti following recovery of incriminating material from his house, and the case was transferred to Central Crime Station of Hyderabad. In December 2019, the NIA has registered a case against Maddileti for the probe. The NIA on March 4, filed a petition seeking seven days custody of accused Maddileti, and the matter was posted to March 10. Sources said that on Tuesday, the court has granted five days' custody of Maddileti to the premier agency for probe.

KERALA FAMILY INFECTION LED TO ALARM

Those in contact with patients must also maintain a distance and use a handkerchief or mask for protection. The Kerala family has infected grandparents and two other relatives, creating an alarm. Dr Mustafa Afzal, senior infection specialist, Care Hospitals, said, "In Kerala, transmission cases are an indication of secondary infection. The contact person from Italy affected family members. They are mild cases but spread has begun. When Kerala, which has one of the best health systems in India, is seeing the spread, it is important that other states remain alert and proactive in contact tracing and containing people. That is the best way to control spread of the disease."

Epidemiologists say that it is still possible to contain as there was no spread into the larger community so far. But there are hubs, like Kerala (15 cases), Haryana (14 cases), Uttar Pradesh (9 cases) and Delhi (4 cases), which have become Covid-19 hotspots.

Delhi is a major hub, but only four cases have been identified as many others are yet to be traced properly, epidemiologists say. There are still 23 positive tests from different states of India, but awaiting confirmation from the National Institute of Virology.

A senior health official said, "in South Korea and Iran, the doubling effect took one day while in Italy it took three days. Both these countries had super spreaders, which led to wide-spread movement of virus. India underestimated the transmission possibility from Italy and Iran. There was a strong mis-belief in that as SARS and MERS virus never made it to India. Covid-19 too would not come."

But the seven-day cycle is an indication that multiplication from contact level has started and people must follow effective personal hygiene, he added.

Total number of cases: 59	
Delhi	4
Haryana (In Jaipur hospital)	14
Uttar Pradesh	9
Kerala	15
Jammu and Kashmir	1
Ladakh	2
Maharashtra	5
Punjab	1
Rajasthan	2
Karnataka	4
Telangana	1
Tamil Nadu	1
Number of people cured	4
Number of active cases	55
First case of Covid-19 in Kerala was reported on January 30.	

Red tape hits screening at airport

Doctors deputed at examination centres in need of training to test for coronavirus

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

More doctors are required for screening passengers at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, but deputing them has got stuck in bureaucratic hurdles. Doctors from city areas who are on duty for state board exams have to be relieved in order to be deputed to the airport. According to sources, they also require training.

With 113 countries affected by Covid-19 and states such as Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala reporting more cases, screening at ports of entry is important and requires more ground staff to avoid long queues.

A senior health official said that there are many screening desks at the airport but "the work load has seen a rise. These are all international flights and passenger forms of self-declaration have to be checked. At the immigration level, too, the passport numbers and data need to be noted for reporting to the centre and also follow up by the state government. These aspects have increased the work load of immigration officials and also the health staff."

The doctors are required for thermal checking, noting of symptoms and also escorting those who need it to the ambulance to ensure that they reach Gandhi Hospital.

A senior official explained, "There have been instances where passengers who are fine have demanded certificate saying they are free of the virus. These are passengers who take a lot of your time and must be attended to with civility. There are others who are not willing to go to a government hospital and want to go to private hospitals only. These are challenges and they will be sorted if there is enough staff."

While a request has been put in for more doctors, the state government is processing it which means that collectors and district medical health officials have to relieve their staff. A senior official explained, "There are bureaucratic hurdles as approvals, sanction and also training the employee for the new profile is required. It is not possible to move from one place to another without being clear what the staff must do there."

Those who have been deputed to examination centres are trained in first aid, but don't have the required knowledge about infection control or screening methods and a workshop will be held by the state government to teach health staff about infection control methods and the protocols to be followed.

● **THE DOCTORS** are required for thermal checking, noting of symptoms and also escorting those who need it to the ambulance to ensure that they reach Gandhi Hospital.

● **SOME PASSENGERS** virus-free certificates

Jails in AP curb appearance of prisoners in courts due to virus

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 10

Andhra Pradesh Prisons department is planning to cut down the personal appearances of under trial prisoners in courts and is planning to establish video linkage between the courts and prisons in view of the coronavirus scare.

Andhra Pradesh has four central prisons located at Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Nellore and Kadapa, and has around 4,200 prisoners both under trial and convicts.

The Visakhapatnam prison alone has 1342 prisoners, 900 of them under trial prisoners.

"We received an advisory from the government to take certain measures in connection with the coronavirus as a large number



A medic looks on at a patient who has shown positive symptoms for coronavirus (COVID -19) at an isolation ward in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

- PTI

Etala evades CM's 'paracetamol cure' talk

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Health minister Etala Rajendar not only refused to answer a question regarding a comment by Chief Minister K. Chandrababbarao's in the Legislative Assembly that a table of Paracetamol was enough to cure the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) disease, but walked out on the media instead.

Mr Rajendar, when asked here on Tuesday evening if Chief Minister Rao's assertion about Paracetamol cure for Covid-19 being correct, abruptly got up from the press conference he was addressing and walked out of the room. Asked if was unwilling to reply to the question, he did not respond and left the room.

It may be recalled that CM Rao had said during his reply to the debate on Sunday to the Governor's address to a joint sitting of

the Legislative Assembly and Council, had said that taking a Paracetamol tablet was enough to take care of the disease.

Meanwhile, the health minister's office announced that Yashoda hospital had come forward to give Telangana government two lakh masks to overcome mask shortage in the state. The hospital said that it would set aside 60 beds, along with ventilator support, for treating Coronavirus patients if need arises. According to Chief Minister K. Chandrababbarao's in the Legislative Assembly that a table of Paracetamol was enough to cure the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) disease, but walked out on the media instead.

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Man from Singapore goes missing from RGI airport

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

A man from Andhra Pradesh who arrived at Shamsabad airport from Singapore has gone missing after undergoing screening for Covid-19. He took a cab to a railway station and went missing from there.

Following a complaint from his family, the RGI Airport police have registered a missing person case and are searching for him.

According to RGIA police, G. Manikanta, a native of Varigheedu in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, was working as a driver in Singapore. On February



G. Manikanta

28, Manikanta arrived at RGI Airport from Singapore.

Before starting out, Manikanta had reportedly told his family that he would give them a surprise. When he did not

come three days after his expected date of arrival, the family lodged a complaint, on March 2, said the police.

RGIA sub-inspector Venkateswarlu said, "After arriving at the airport, Manikanta went through Covid-19 screening and left the airport."

He took a cab to Umdanagar railway station which is close to the Shamsabad area. After that, he went missing. His movements are not seen on CCTV cameras."

The SI said that Manikanta's mobile phone is switched off. A team is working to trace him, together with the Government Railway Police.

TS free from coronavirus cases, claims Etala

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Telangana is a Covid-19 free state now, announced health minister Etala Rajendar at a news conference here.

"As on Tuesday evening, there are no positive coronavirus cases in Telangana," he said.

A test performed two days ago on the state's only Covid-19 positive case showed negative results. A second test would be per-

formed at the end of his 14-day isolation period and is expected to be released to go home, he said.

The state's only Covid-19 positive case was that of a 24-year-old software engineer, who was believed to have caught the disease during a trip to Dubai.

Mr Rajendar said that with new cases being reported from several states in the country, Telangana was not letting down its vigil and would continue to aggressively monitor all

incoming international air passengers who are landing in Hyderabad.

With respect to international passengers landing in other parts of the country and then taking trains or buses to Hyderabad, or other parts of Telangana, he said, "We expect such individuals would be screened at the airport they land in. Just as we are checking everyone at international airport here, we believe other airports too will check all

incoming passengers," the minister said.

He said that he had discussed the issue with Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Tuesday, wherein, he was assured that all passengers bound to the state but landing at other airports would be screened for their health.

"We have stepped up screening at the airport here. The state government has placed an order for two standing thermal

scanners that can monitor body temperatures to up to 10 feet. We asked the centre for the scanners but since they are not coming from there, we have placed an order," he said.

In addition to the one standing scanner, the airport currently has three hand held thermal scanners. There are teams of eight persons each at the seven aerobridges at the airport in Shamsabad. Everyone getting of flights is being checked, he said.

TTD tells virus-hit to avoid Tirumala

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, MARCH 10

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams on Tuesday urged anyone who returns to India from another country or travels to India, to avoid visiting Tirumala for 28 days after the date of their arrival in India.

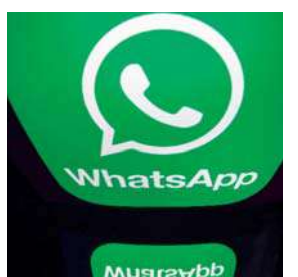
The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams on Tuesday urged anyone who returns to India from another country or travels to India, to avoid visiting Tirumala for 28 days after the date of their arrival in India.

This disease can easily spread in such large crowds in the temple town, the TTD said in its advisory asking people to stay away from any planned pilgrimage to visit the Sri Venkateswara temple at Tirumala for 28 days after their arrival in India. Tirumala Tirupati Dev-

● **THE TTD** urged devotees who return to India from another country or are travelling to India, to avoid visiting Tirumala for 28 days after the date of their arrival in India

asthanams (TTD) Additional Endowments Officer A.V. Dharmar Reddy has advised devotees to bring masks and sanitizers with them in view of the coronavirus threat, as it could spread easily in a much-congregated place like Tirumala.

Addressing media persons at Tirumala on Tuesday evening, Dharmar Reddy said a special task force with thermal screening equipment and medical equipment has been set up at Alipiri and Srivari Mettu footpath routes to detect pilgrims who may show symptoms of fever, cough and cold.



SOCIAL MEDIA GETS ABUZZ TO AVOID VIRUS PHONE TUNE

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Call someone and you will get a public service announcement giving various bits of information about the latest health scare, the novel Coronavirus, before the connection goes through.

The new caller 'tune' forced upon people has replaced the anti-tobacco ads played in cinema halls as the latest butt of jokes and angry raves on social media.

Though the message gives information, it is an irksome intrusion. Cellphone operators say it is a central government mandate and they can do nothing about it.

"I have senior citizens at home, one of whom is recovering from surgery. The first time I heard the message, I thought one of them had fallen ill!" said Beyniaz Edulji, a resident of Sainikpuri.

The message has triggered a number of responses on social media, some of which claim to show how to remove the caller tune or message.

One said 'Press one when the tune is playing you will not receive the message any further.' Another said you need to dial a particular number to disable the caller tune.

"Even if you try pressing some key, and successfully manage to get rid of the caller tune, it will play again as the telecom service provider will refresh his servers at midnight. This is something that people will have to listen to for the next four days at least," said Vik K Kallianpur, another irked resident of the city.

Rajan S. Matthews, DG, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) told *Deccan Chronicle*: "This is not something that will go away very soon since it is a public health issue. We will have to wait for the government to ask the service providers to stop playing the announcement."

● **THE NEW CALLER 'tune'** forced upon people has replaced the anti-tobacco ads played in cinema halls as the latest butt of jokes and angry raves on social media.

● **IT IS** an irksome intrusion even though it gives information

SHORT TAKES

10 EMPLOYEES OF SCR GET SAFETY AWARDS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

South Central Railway (SCR) has presented "Man of the Month" safety awards to 10 of its employees for showing "alertness in duty and taking timely action to prevent unsafe conditions".

SCR general manager Gajanan Mallya presented the awards at a review meeting held at the Rail Nilayam on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Mallya reviewed punctuality and loading performance of the zone. He asked officials to conduct a technical study and improve the performance of SCR even further. He instructed them to draw up action plans for the approaching financial year towards enhancing loading of cement, food grains and fertilisers. The SCR GM also instructed divisional railway managers to counsel loco-pilots and shunters in maintaining safety.

MASKS HOARDED AT HOMES OF POLITICIANS

From Page 1

Sources said that on the outskirts of Hyderabad, masks are stockpiled at safe houses of TRS leaders.

"Some are guarded by policemen round-the-clock," sources said.

"In the absence of regulations on the manufacturing and hoarding of masks, those connected to the ruling party have a free run," sources said, adding that this made business difficult for other exporters and middlemen who are in turn looking at manufacturing units in states other than Telangana. There are at least half a dozen manufacturing units in the state.

While several exporters have struck lucrative deals for exporting masks, they are now frantically visiting other states to meet the demand after local manufacturers are denying stock to them.

Before the Coronavirus outbreak, surgical masks were manufactured at ₹2 per piece. But due to higher price of raw material, the price of each has gone up to ₹6-7. Exporters are willing to pay is around ₹25-28 while the international price has touched over USD 3.5 per piece.

The export of masks has triggered fear about a potential shortage of masks in the state if the virus was to spread. "In this scenario, the retailers stand no chance. If all the stock is diverted in favour of a few who front for TRS leaders, then how can other exporters do business?" rued an exporter.

While most exporters kept their foreign clients a secret to ensure no one poached them, the TRS politicians' fronts have established extensive contact with overseas dealers and are supplying to them in the millions.

On an average, overseas companies are selling one to two million masks per day after purchasing it from India. There are less than 100 manufacturing units nationwide.

● **BEFORE THE coronavirus outbreak, surgical masks were manufactured at ₹2 per piece. But due to higher price of raw material, the price of each has gone up to ₹6-7. Exporters are willing to pay is around ₹25-28 while the international price has touched over USD 3.5 per piece.**

● **SEVERAL EXPORTERS are now visiting other states to meet the demand.**

Colours of joy



Youngsters play Holi at a venue in Shamshabad Airport on Tuesday.

— R. PAVAN

Swagruha Corp. assets sale soon

Panel to work out process for auction

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

The state government on Tuesday constituted a three-member high-powered committee to work out the modalities for the disposal of all assets of the Telangana Rajiv Swagruha Corporation.

The committee comprised of Chitra Ramchandran, special chief secretary of the housing department, K. Ramakrishna Rao, principal secretary of finance and Aravind Kumar, principal secretary of municipal administration and urban development.

In fact, in 2016, the state government had issued an order on December 21, giving priority to state government employees in selling semi-finished and finished flats of Rajiv Swagruha housing projects in Bandlaguda and Pocharam townships of the city.

The state government on

● **THE GOVERNMENT said that a bailout package was recommended by a group of ministers and a high-powered committee, headed by the chief secretary.**

Tuesday issued an order superseding the earlier order and stating that the government has decided to dispose all the assets of Telangana Rajiv Swagruha Corporation, including the properties at Bandlaguda and Pocharam by conducting an open auction in a fair and transparent manner.

In the latest order, the state government pointed out that 20 housing projects with a project cost of ₹6301.01 crore were grounded between 2008 to 2011 by mobilising bank loans by the corporation and, in 2011, Rajiv Swagruha Corporation

faced a severe financial crisis and all operations came to a standstill.

The government said that a bailout package was recommended by a group of ministers and a high-powered committee, headed by the chief secretary.

Accordingly, the decision was taken to stop the work in "as is where is condition" and agreements with the contractors were foreclosed. By that time, an amount of ₹1621.26 crore had been spent on the projects, which were all shut down, the order explained.

The project is therefore incomplete and the houses unfit for occupation in their current condition. After the formation of the Telangana state, the Rajiv Swagruha Corporation cleared bank loans along with interest by paying ₹1071.39 crore with the support of the state government and released all projects from their mortgages.

Departments cry for fund release

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Though ₹10,000 crore has been allocated by the state government for the Hyderabad urban agglomeration area within the outer ring road (ORR) limits, none of the civic departments such as the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB), Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) and other city departments is aware of the departmentwise allocation.

The budget allocation should not only meet the requirements of newly formed corporations such as Nizampet, Badangpet, Meerpet, Bandlaguda-Jagir, Boduppal, Peerzadiguda and Jawaharnagar, but also fund key infrastructure projects such as the sewerage master plan, Musi Riverfront Development and Beautification Project, widening of

nalas, completion of skyways and under-passes under the Strategic Road Development Plan (SRDP), Comprehensive Road Maintenance Project (CRMP), Lake Development Programme, enhancement of urban lung spaces, Hyderabad Metro Phase II and several other projects, which requires over ₹60,000 crore. Officials from all the nodal agencies have also expressed doubts about the release of funds from the government to their respective organisations going by their bitter experiences in the past.

They claim that though the money has been allocated, the government has not released even 20 per cent of the allocated money to their kitties in the past. On the flipside, the departments are being blamed for not utilising the allocated funds. It is claimed that the city departments don't have the mechanism to spend ₹10,000 crore in a financial year even if work is carried out 24/7 for 365 days.

Inter exam: Plea to drop late entry rule

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

A PIL was filed before a division bench comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy asking the court to hear a plea which charged the board of intermediate education officials with not permitting students to enter the examination hall even if they are late by a minute.

This action of the officials, it argued, was forcing students to go into depression and, moreover, the students were losing one precious year.

The petitioner in his affidavit argued that there are several reasons which force a student to reach late at the examination centres viz., traffic congestion, family issues, students sometimes fail to identify the correct exam centre, the distance between the exam centre and the house is considerable, health issues, etc.

Out of the five lakh students who appear for the intermediate examinations every year, 100 to 200 students reach exam centres late and such students are denied entry into the exam halls.

The petitioner asks the court to cancel the circular 'One Minute Late Rule', and allow students to enter the exam hall and attend the exam even though they are late, conduct special examinations for students who are late, conduct a detailed enquiry into the instances where students are denied entry into exam halls when they are late and ask the colleges to spread awareness among the students on this issue. The principal secretary, education department, board of intermediate education (BIE), secretary, BIE, controller of examinations, BIE, and public relations officer, BIE are respondents in the PIL. The bench agreed to hear the plea on Wednesday.

All candidates will get SSC hall tickets

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Authorities have clarified that students need not to worry about issuance of hall tickets for Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations as there is fear that students appearing from institutions which failed to submit an extension of temporary recognition (ETR) or recognition for the year March 2019-20 will not get hall tickets for the ensuing SSC Public Examination in March.

The Director of Government Examinations Mr A. Satyanarayana Reddy said though action will be taken against the managements of private unaided schools, which submitted MNR (Manual Nominal Rules) and Challan with affidavit and uploaded them online without an ETR, but students will get their hall tickets on time. The District Education Officer, Hyderabad, Ms B. Venkata Narasamma also assured that the students will get their hall tickets without fail and asked them not to worry.

It is pertinent to mention that there are more than 200 schools which could not get an ETR due to various reasons. However, the managements of these schools

have submitted MNRs and uploaded the candidates' data online without copies of ETR/Recognised Orders of their institutions. The Additional Joint Secretary, Mr G. Gangi Reddy, in a communication dated February 27, addressed to the Head Masters of such schools, instructed the schools to submit School Recognition orders copy within 3 days.

He warned that the hall tickets of such schools will not be issued and failing to submit the School Recognition, the Headmasters of such institutions will be personally held responsible in the matter.

This letter created panic among the institutions which could not get an ETR. All India Muslim Educational Society addressed a letter on Tuesday to the Principal Secretary School Education requesting to issue instructions to the concerned to release hall tickets at the earliest.

The general secretary of the Society, Mr M.S. Farooq, said that the files are under process for issuance of ETR because of the slow movement of files at various stages, though the managements have submitted the proposal for temporary recognition on time.

'Munnabhai' engineer caught

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Suspense is looming large over the wrongful appointment of an official to the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB). The official allegedly produced fake documents and got promoted to this unlawful appointment.

Vinod Bhargava joined the water board in 1989 as a lower rung official. However, hand in glove with state government officials, he managed to produce fake B.Tech certificates in the name of Vinod Kumar, who passed civil engineering in 1996 with hall ticket

number 2921118. Interestingly, the hall ticket number produced by the official did not match with records maintained by the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad (JNTU-H). Mr Bhargava, who joined as a lower-rung official, has been now been promoted to the post of general manager of operation and maintenance of Asifnagar division. This came to light when Shahbaz Khan Ameer, an RTI activist, filed a complaint with the department.

Mr Ameer said that the RTI query revealed that neither the service book nor the director of evaluation JNTU-H has mark

● **RTI ACTIVIST said that Mr Bhargava, after producing the documents, was first elevated as manager, then DGM and is now a general manager.**

memos bearing the hall ticket number. The RTI activist told Deccan Chronicle that Mr Bhargava, after producing the documents, was first elevated as manager, then deputy general manager and is now a general manager.

"It is ridiculous on the part of HMWS&SB to state in its reply that it is informed that copies of educational qualifications of V Vinod

Bhargava, general manager (engineering) of O&M, division III, are not available to avoid its responsibility. However, as per his service records, Mr Bhargava has passed B.Tech (civil engineering) from JNTU Hyderabad in 1996, with HT number 2921118," said Mr Ameer.

He said that when an RTI was filed with JNTU, he was shocked to learn that certificates are with a different name, V Vinod Kumar, with same hall ticket number, where JNTU also did not have marks memos.

When reached out for a comment, HMWS&SB MD M. Dana Kishore was unavailable for comment.

JOBLESS YOUTH ENDS LIFE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

A 25-year-old from Vishakhapatnam reportedly committed suicide by jumping from the third floor of an apartment at Miyapur on Tuesday. The police suspect unemployment as a reason for the extreme step.

According to the

Miyapur police, Sriki Sai Venkata Balaram Mohan, 25, an M.Tech graduate, worked in a software company for some time and was unemployed for the last five months. He was staying along with his friends at a hostel in Kondapur and was searching for a job. On Tuesday, he came to a relative's house in Miyapur.

Aarogyasri dues make doctors desperate

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Small and medium hospitals are staring at a major financial crisis as overhead costs increase and they are not being reimbursed in time under the government's Aarogyasri scheme. The suicide of Dr Ravindra Kumar of Aditya Hospital is an example of financial and personal stress causing the doctor to take the grave step.

In fact, Aditya Hospital in Medchal had asked to be de-pannelled from Aarogyasri in 2019 as it was not possible for the hospital

to continue with the scheme which did not pay on time.

A senior doctor said that even small hospitals have arrears of ₹5 crore to ₹20 crore pending with the department. "These are huge amounts as the vendors for medicines, medical equipment, implants and others have to be paid. It is a cycle which the hospital operates on and if there are pending amounts it becomes very stressful," he said.

There are about 220 small hospitals in Telangana and they have an approximate ₹800 crore pending with the

● **THERE ARE about 220 small hospitals in Telangana and they have an approximate ₹800 crore pending with the Aarogyasri scheme. There were two major shut-downs in 2019, which forced the government to release some of the money.**

Aarogyasri scheme. There were two major shut-downs in 2019, which forced the government to release some of the money to

ensure that hospitals continue with the scheme.

But the same problem has resurfaced as the reimbursement is again in arrears. Bills have been scrutinised in the Aarogyasri department but there is no money with the state government to pay out.

These problems have had serious consequences. More than 50 small hospitals and nursing homes have closed down in the last two years. Many doctors have taken up consultancy work in bigger hospitals while some have moved to states where there is a

shortage of doctors. "The condition is so bad that many of them are on the verge of complete loss and collapse. Financial constraint is at an all-time high and family support is very important to wade through this crisis," said a senior doctor.

The Aarogyasri scheme provides coverage for medical services to below poverty line beneficiaries of up to ₹2.50 lakh per family per annum.

The hospitals are reimbursed by the state government, but the state government does not pay the hospitals in time.

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IN BRIEF

Drunkard held for abusing traffic cop

Hyderabad: A drunk man, 42, who caused an accident and later misbehaved with a traffic police constable who was enquiring about the incident, was arrested by the Balanagar police on Tuesday. According to Balanagar police, at around 5 pm on March 8, G. Kumar Singh, 42, a resident of Sanathnagar and supervisor at a private company, rammed his bike into another bike belong to Hema Shankar at Narsapur X roads in Balanagar. When Kumar and Shankar were arguing over the issue on the road, police constable Chandra Shekar (PC 4249) working at Balanagar traffic police station along with Home Guard Sharma went to enquire about the issue. A drunk Kumar abused the policeman and also held the collar of constable. Further, he snatched the Manpack (wireless communication device) from the constable and beat him. Following a complaint from constable Chandra Shekar, a case was registered against Kumar, and he was arrested on Tuesday, said the police.

20 home guards feted for good work

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad City Traffic police on Tuesday felicitated 20 home guard officers from various police stations for their exemplary work during 2019. The Addl. Commissioner of Police, Anil Kumar IPS, along with his officers was presented at the occasion. The Traffic Addl. Commissioner, reviewed the weekly parade in which 670 home guard officers of all police stations participated. While addressing the gathering, the Addl. Commissioner said, "Because of the hard work done during the last four years, road accident deaths have reduced in Hyderabad city. A total of 405 people died in 2016. In 2019, the deaths reduced to 271. This credit goes to all the Home Guard Officers, who work hard from the morning till mid night. This has brought a good name to the Hyderabad Traffic Police not only in Telangana State but in our country." The Addl. Commissioner also said "Due to the timely action in clearing water logging or handing over abandoned bags, money, documents, cell phones to its owners, and apprehending theft vehicles involved in crime, the home guard officers have played an appreciable role."

184 DRUNKEN DRIVING CASES REGISTERED

GEETA VALABOJU | DC HYDERABAD MARCH 10

As many as 184 drunken driving cases were registered in Rachakonda Commissionerate on Tuesday. The police reiterated the need for self-discipline among the public. 184 drunken driving cases were produced before courts and fines amounting ₹3,83,000 were imposed. 54 respondents were given imprisonment, five were given traffic duty over a period of five days, and the rest had their driving licenses suspended.

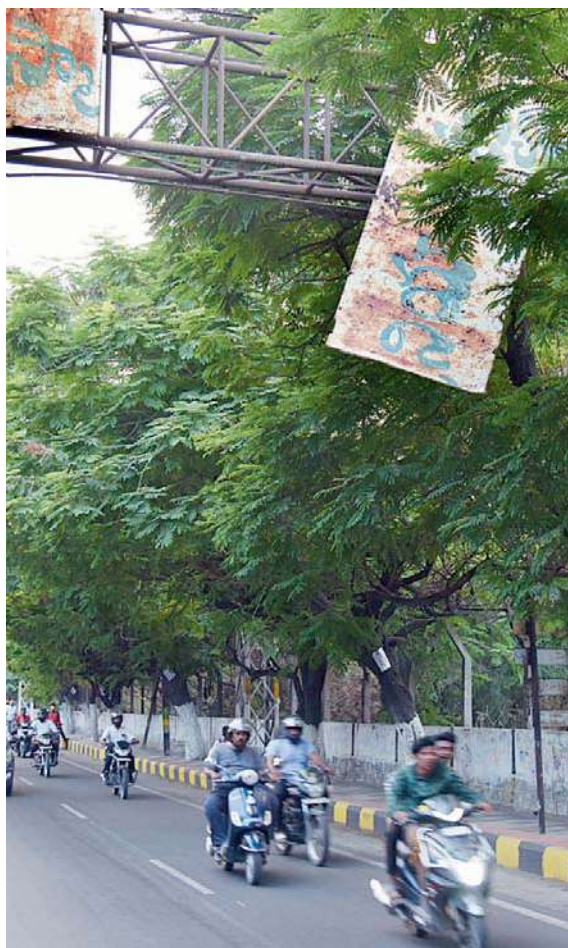
The Rachakonda traffic police said despite issuing advisories, educated youngsters were driving vehicles in an inebriated condition. Many youngsters were losing control while driving when drunk and without helmets.

They are the main reason for accidents on the roads yet continue to break rules, even triple riding on highways and flyovers at great speed. Despite the widespread campaigns on traffic education and awareness programmes conducted, the lack of discipline that has been noticed among highly educated employees of reputed corporations was shocking.

The police also requested parents not to encourage their children to drive vehicles if they do not carry valid driving licenses or in an inebriated condition or without helmets.

There are an increasing number of accidents caused by drunken driving. The drivers appear to have learnt nothing despite awareness of the rules. The police said that stringent action would be taken against violators who don't follow rules.

DC impact



A day after the photograph of a precariously hanging signboard in front of RTC Hospital near Tarnaka was published (left), officials removed it as it was posing danger to vehicles and people walking on the road, on Tuesday.



— GANDHI

Youth delivering food run over by RTC bus

He loses life though he was wearing helmet

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

A 22-year-old youth working as a food delivery boy was run over by a speeding RTC bus at Miyapur on Tuesday. The biker was wearing a helmet, but the bus climbed on his head and he died on the spot, said the police. A case was booked against the driver of the RTC bus and the police are trying to find the speed of the bus during the mishap.

- A CASE was booked against the driver of the RTC bus and the police are trying to find the speed of the bus during the mishap.
- THE DECEASED was identified as L. Suman, 22, a resident of Reddy Enclave at Miyapur was working as a delivery boy with Swiggy.

At around 6.30 am, Suman left the flat as part of the duty. At around 8.45 am, when he was on the way to collect breakfast

ordered from Mr Idly Dosa hotel located at Miyapur, the mishap took place. Miyapur inspector S. Venkatesh said that a speeding RTC bus (TS 15 UD 6609), which was moving on the main road near Udbhava Hospital rammed into Suman's

bike (TS 8 G 1185) from the rear. When the biker fell on the road, the bus ran over his head.

"Suman was wearing a helmet when he fell down. But, the bus climbed on it and got crushed leaving him dead on the spot," said the inspector, responding to a query.

He also further said that they are verifying the footage of the CCTV cameras installed in the vicinity, to identify at what speed the bus was moving when the mishap took place.

Eggs-tra care



Municipal authorities sprinkle saw dust on the Dilukhnagar-Malakpet Road on Tuesday after several trays of eggs slipped and fell on Monday resulting in slowing down of vehicles.

— P. SURENDRA

ORDER | ORDER Convict told to respond to issues

HC issues notices to killer on death row

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday issued notices to the Hajipur serial murders case convict, Marri Srinivas Reddy, who has been awarded the death sentence by the trial court of Nalgonda, in two different cases, on the charges of rape and murder of

three girls. The bench, comprising chief justice Raghuvendra Singh Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy, was dealing with the proceedings for confirmation of the death sentence against Reddy. A special court in Nalgonda had awarded capital punishment to the accused after finding him guilty. According to the Crim-

inal Procedure Code, any sentence of death passed by the trial court is subject to confirmation by the High Court. Meanwhile, Reddy had also approached the High court challenging the trial court verdict, which sentenced him to capital punishment. When the matter came up for hearing, the bench issued notices to Reddy to respond on the issues.

3-YEAR-OLD GIRL DROWNS NEAR KOMPALLY HOME

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

A three-year-old girl, who was playing in front of her house at Kompally, slipped into a water drum and died on Tuesday.

According to Miyapur sub-inspector D. Mahesh, the deceased Dali Bhagyavathi was the daughter of Venkat Rao, a labourer, who was living with his family at Malakuntabavi Colony in Kompally. At around 2.30 pm, she accidentally fell into a water drum nearby and tried to pull her out.

ACB ARRESTS AUDITOR IN CORRUPTION CASE

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

An auditor at Pay and Accounts Office involved in a graft case was arrested and remanded to judicial custody by Anti-Corruption Bureau on Tuesday.

According to ACB, P. Gopinath, the auditor had assisted Thota Rama Rao, superintendent of Pay and Accounts office, Hyderabad, in collecting a bribe of ₹5,00,000 from K. Krishna, Deputy Inspector of Survey and Land Records, for processing the latter's pending salary bills.

Rama Rao was arrested on March 7 while Gopinath was taken into custody and remanded on Tuesday.



We deeply mourn the death of Mr. Bheemgalkar Subhash on Thursday, March 5th 2020, at about 2 pm after noon at Residence, Hyderabad.

The following ceremonies are being performed at Soan Village, Tq. & Mandal Nirmal, Dt. Adilabad (TS).
9th day, Friday 13th March, 2020.
10th day, Dharmodakam, Saturday 14th March 2020
11th day, Sunday, 15th March 2020
12th day Monday, 16th March 2020.
Ms. B. Sharvani Deshpande
Contact No: 8790288627

(S/1920/D01982)

OBITUARY

I will dwell in the house of the lord foreverPsalm 23:6

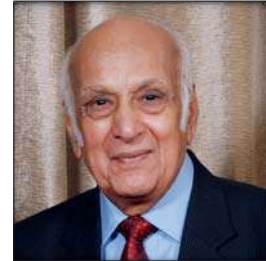


Dr. G. S. PREM RAJ

S/o Late GA Samuel
DOB: 05-04-1955 DOD: 09-03-2020
Slept in the Lord on 09-03-2020, the body will be kept at his Residence at Chaitanyapuri from 10am on 11-03-2020, Funeral at Narayanaguda Cemetery at 4pm

Inserted by: FAMILY MEMBERS

HOMAGE

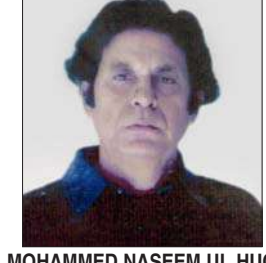


PDG-Ln. A. Ranga Rao, pmjif
D.O.B: 24-09-1931 D.O.D: 08-03-2020
Chairman & Board of Governors & Staff of Lions Club of Hyderabad Sadhuram Eye Hospital, Domalguda, Hyderabad.

Pay their Obeisance to Our Founder Chairman
May His Soul Rest In Peace

(B/1920/D00214)

OBITUARY



MOHAMMED NASEEM UL HUQ
(Ex Scientist IICIT CSIR)

S/o Late Mohammed Naim Ul-Hug
Have left us for Heavenly abode on 6th March 2020 Tadeen was done at Pension Pura Eidgah, Langarhoushe.

Inserted By: FAMILY MEMBERS
Ph: 9395152455 / 23221615.

UTHAVANA



KUSUM SONI
W/o Late Kantilal Soni
Expired on: 10-03-2020
Uthavana on 12-03-2020 between 4.30 to 5 pm
Place: Sindhu Bhavan, P.G. Road, Secunderabad.

In Grief: Umesh Soni, Pankaj Soni & Family

(S/1920/D01993)

OBITUARY



Mrs. RUPA KUNDE
W/o late Dr. Arun Kundu

The Lord who promised her "... I will never leave you nor forsake you," welcomed her into His presence on March 8th, 2020.

The viewing is at Christ Church Ramkot, HYD, Between 2-4 P.M. March 12th 2020
Funeral Service on same day at 4 P.M., followed by burial at Naryanaguda Cemetery.

Memorial Service on Friday March 13th 7:00P.M. at Christ Church, Ramkot, HYD.

INSERTED BY: Ajay Kundu & Family
Ruth Aparna Nelson & Family

IN LOVING MEMORY



LYNETTE COLLINS
DOB: 08.06.1972 DOD: 11.03.2019
Today has been a year, and not a day has passed without your memories. You are eternally present amongst us.

Inserted by: Phyllo Collins (Mum), Samara Collins (Daughter) & Family Members.
Ph: 9866338182, 9963610696

(S/1920/D01986)

4th ANNIVERSARY

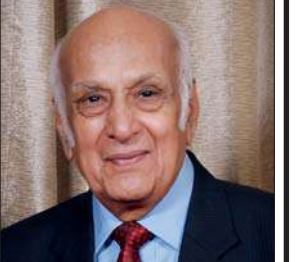


Mrs. RUGMANI KRISHNAN
DOB: 15.08.1940 DOD: 11.03.2009

Though you are not with us, you are always in our hearts
Fondly Remembered by:
Children: Mallika, Nandan, Nalini Gopa Kumar, Venu Gopal, Reghu, Sindu, Vijaya, Nidhi, Rahul and Rohit

(S/1920/D01970)

SHRADHANJALI



PDG-Ln. A. Ranga Rao, pmjif
D.O.B: 24-09-1931 D.O.D: 08-03-2020
Kalavati Sadhuram Alimchand Trust

Pay their homage to the Founder Chairman of Lions Club of Hyderabad Sadhuram Eye Hospital, Domalguda, Hyderabad.

(B/1920/D00213)

5th Death Anniversary

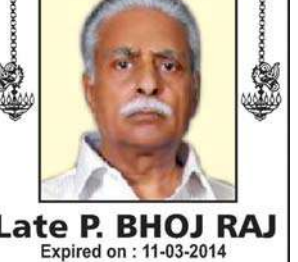
"The memory of the righteous is blessed. Prov.10:7"



K. SERENA LAKSHMI KUMARI
W/o. Dr. Karre Dayanand Karunakar
DOB: 16-2-1957 DOD: 11-3-2015

Your Memories will always remain in our hearts forever.
Inserted by - Husband, Sons, Daughter in Laws, Grand Daughters Brothers & Sister Family.

6th Anniversary



Late P. BHOJ RAJ
Expired on: 11-03-2014

Your memories are always remembered
(Inserted by) Family Members

10th ANNIVERSARY



RAJNIKANT V. VORA
DOB: 29.03.1951 DOD: 11.03.2010

Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us every day, unseen, unheard, but always near we all miss you.

Inserted by: Jayashree R. Vora (Wife), Sons & Daughters-in-law & Grand Children.

11th ANNIVERSARY



Mrs. ARAVINDAKSHAN NAIR
DOB: 20.09.1942 DOD: 11.03.2016

Wife: Mrs. P.K. Rukmini Aravind
Daughter & son-in-law: Shalini & Damodaran
Son & Daughter-in-law: Krishna & Sri Vidya & Grand Children's, Cell: 967644473, 9346925214

INSERTED BY: T. ARAVINDAKSHAN NAIR

OBITUARY



Mrs. Udinty Premila Sarojini
W/o. Late Mr. A.V. Benjamin
RTD-Teacher St Georges Grammar School (Girls)
Called to glory on 6-03-2020 at New York, USA.

For Further Details Please Contact Ph: 9959974886, 8977161488, 9885340402, 9550383840

IN BRIEF

Remove YSRC hue on govt buildings

Vijayawada: The AP High Court (HC) ordered the removal of the YSRC colours painted on panchayat buildings within 10 days or prior to the gram panchayat elections and directed the state government to issue necessary orders to that effect. It asked the chief secretary to submit a compliance report on the issue within two weeks. The HC ordered the removal of the paint on gram panchayat buildings akin to political parties and the re-painting of them with colour schemes decided by the chief secretary.

Jagan schemes lapped up by other CMs

YSRC supremo introduced English in govt schools besides a Disha app for safety of women

S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Forty-seven-year-old Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, who became Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh without having any experience as a minister in the past, has become a role model for several chief ministers in the country.

At least six Chief Ministers are following schemes and decisions initiated by Chief Minister Reddy. Two days ago, Telangana's Chief

Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao praised Mr Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's decision to introduce English as the medium of instruction in all government schools and said Telangana would do the same.

After the rape and murder of a young woman, referred to as Disha by the media, in Telangana last year, Mr Reddy responded quickly and brought in the Disha Act to punish the accused without any delay. The Andhra Pradesh gov-



• **SIX CMs** are following schemes and decisions initiated by Jagan. Telangana's CM K. Chandrasekhar Rao praised Mr Jagan's decision to introduce English as the medium of instruction in all government schools.

• **INNOVATIVE** idea of Mr Reddy was to decentralise the state administration and set up three capitals, which is to be adopted by three other states.

about this Act. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also appreciated the Disha Act and said that the central government has to bring in this Act to be implemented by all state governments and he is also planning to introduce it in Delhi. Another innovative idea of Mr Reddy was to decentralise the state administration and set up three capitals, which is to be adopted by three other states, two of them BJP-ruled states though the BJP in AP is

opposing the tri-capital move. Karnataka Chief Minister Yeddyurappa and Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat have decided to have three capitals. Jharkhand, where Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader Hemant Soren has become Chief Minister after the recent Assembly elections, will emulate Jagan and set up three sub capitals at Medininagar, Chaibasa and Giridih in addition to the capital city of Ranchi.

ernment also devised a Disha app for the safety of women. The Maharashtra government has sent a delegation to Andhra Pradesh to find out more

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• BANJARA HILLS	• LAKDI-KA-POOL	• RTC 'X' ROAD	• NELLORE
• BN REDDY NAGAR	• M. G. ROAD	• SHAH ALI BANDA	• RAJAHMUNDRY
• BODUPPAL	• MADINAGUDA	• SHAMSHABAD	• TIRUPATI
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• DILSUKHNAGAR	• MIYAPUR	• TOLICHOWKI	• VIJAYAWADA-2
• ECIL	• NACHARAM	• VANASTHALIPURAM	ELURU ROAD
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• GACHIBOWLI	• NALLAKUNTA	• KARIMNAGAR	DIAMOND PARK
• HABSIGUDA	• NIZAMPET	• KHAMMAM	• VIZAG-2
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SHORT TAKES

One accused is still absconding

From Page 1

While Pradeep Reddy was absconding, two other persons suspected to be involved in the murder, including Ramesh, a driver, and Vamshidhar Reddy, another friend, were taken into police custody on Tuesday. Based on the information given by the arrested duo, a team of Hanamkonda police including ACP Jitender Reddy, CI Dayakar and two constables searched for the body in the forest area, where the murder is said to have taken place. The police found the body late on Tuesday evening, deep inside the forest area, between Rampur and Kamalapur villages.

The police would shift the body for post-mortem after the clues team brushes up the crime scene tomorrow.

The main accused Pradeep Reddy is the brother of a police inspector working in the Hyderabad intelligence wing. He hails from Shanigaram of Kamalapur in Warangal urban district. A case has been registered, based on a complaint filed by Anand's brother in law Indrasena Reddy. Probe is on.

Jain child monks walk from Gujarat to city

10-yr-old siblings can recite 5K shlokas from scriptures

GEETA VALABOJU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Twin Jain child monks Namichandrasagar Maharaj Saheb and Nemichandrasagar Maharaj Saheb arrived in the city walking all the way from Surat in Gujarat. The 10-year-old siblings are known as the youngest Jain monks. It is said they have memorised 5,000 shlokas and quotes from Jain scriptures, Bhagwat Gita, Bible and Quran and would be giving discourses in the city.

Dhruv and Dhairya, sons of Piyush Mehta, a diamond merchant from Gujarat, took renunciation from the world in May 2017.

They have mastered unique memory skills, which they will be exhibiting at a *Shataavadhan*, which



The duo will deliver sermons in 10 languages. — DC

means paying attention to 100 things at the same time.

Their guru, Mahashatavani Abhinandansarji Maharaj Saheb, says, "Give them any hundred phrases, things, names and numbers. They will memorise and repeat them even in the reverse order. The *bala munis* will be delivering ser-

mons in 10 languages. They shun mobile phones and artificial light and do not consume any food post sunset. As Jain seers, they voluntarily follow stringent rules. They got in touch with us as six-year-olds before becoming *bala munis*," says their guru.

The young monks say, "Today, youngsters spend

lot of time on their phones and other technological implements that they carry. One can't imagine what could happen if they always remain hooked to their phones." It is stated both the monks are very fast learners and keep themselves updated. It took them just a month to complete the entire portion of what other students take a year to complete during their normal schooling.

The *bala munis* are super cheerful with a bright smile adorning their faces all the time. Their guru says they have reached the pinnacle of *Shataavadhan* with their indomitable will-power, meditation, yoga, passion, hard work, concentration and focus. The child monks will be presenting a *Balashataavadhan* on March 22.

Forests make way for roads in Adilabad, Nirmal districts

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC ADILABAD, MARCH 10

The state government has been destroying the forests to develop roads to religious and Naxal-affected places, though it has been talking about protecting the forests.

Forest minister Allola Indrakran Reddy had laid the foundation stone for the BT road (4.01 km) at an estimated cost of ₹4.65 crore sanctioned by Nabard on March 1.

Surprisingly, the state government will pay ₹2.36 crore as compensation for the forest loss for laying the road from Raghunathpur in Boath mandal of Adilabad district to Adelli in Sarangapur mandal in Nirmal district. Suresh Rathod, Deputy Executive Engineer of R&B, said the road will reduce nearly 35-km distance.

But the road, including bridges and culverts, will affect the flora and fauna in the area. Even the police had laid roads to interior Naxal-affected villages like Gundala in Tiryani mandal and Loha in Dahegam through dense forests cut-



ting large number of trees in Kumarambheem Asifabad district in the past.

Even forest officials have allowed other departments to lay a road to Loha through reserve forest which falls in the tiger corridor between the Thadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve and Kawal Tiger Reserve and also the buffer area of Sarangapur mandal in Nirmal district.

The Dahegam police had cleared reserve forest of 10-feet width for 6-km stretch without taking permission from any departments, including forest, to make a road to Loha village, once the Maoists' stronghold, in Dahegam mandal in Sirpur (T) Assembly constituency in Kumrambheem-Asifabad district in January 2017.

The police laid a gravel road covering 6-km to Loha

village via Karji from Girivelli. The migrant tigers were found frequently moving in the same area where the forest was cleared by the police.

Surprisingly, the forest department remained a mute spectator exposing the double-standard of forests officials on adivasi rights. The Adelli Pochamma temple is located in Nirmal district bordering Maharashtra. The reserve forest was destroyed by wood smugglers, popularly known as Multhanis, with the support of political leaders and officials of the departments concerned.

The wood smugglers may now cut the trees using the advantage of roads. The forest department found that some families who had migrated from the bordering Maharashtra destroyed the forest in the Sarangapur area. They even managed to get patta for the lands they cultivated clearing the forest.

Forest and Endowment Minister Allola Indrakran Reddy said the road between Raghunathpur to Adelli will connect the people with the Nirmal area and help its development.

Practising yoga helps in improving sperm motility

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Yoga-based lifestyle interventions (YBLI) are increasingly being offered as an adjunct to modern medicine.

In a pilot study, published in the journal *Andrologia*, in the form of a collaborative effort between the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB),

Hyderabad and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, a first of its kind analysis of the effect of YBLI in infertile men demonstrating reduction in seminal oxidative stress and improvement in sperm motility, and therefore fertilising potential, after the practice of yoga, is offered.

YBLI in this study included physical movements and

postures (asanas), breathing techniques (pranayama) and meditation (dhyana), practiced for one hour each day for 21 days. This led to improved sperm quality in patients enrolled in the study.

Using state-of-the-art DNA sequencing analysis, the study demonstrates a re-setting of the sperm methylome (pattern of chemical changes called

DNA methylation) in yoga practitioners.

Methylome, known to directly control the expression of genes, in this case is found to be associated with changes in nearly 400 genes, including several genes that are known play a role in male fertility, spermatogenesis and embryo implantation.

"The genes identified using the epigenomic

approach in this study will be useful candidates for further focused investigations.

As this pilot study was carried out on a small number of individuals, a larger scale investigation and further research on the effects of Yoga-based lifestyle interventions on male infertility will be necessary," says Dr Rakesh Mishra, Director, CSIR-CCMB.

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SHORT TAKES

PETROL BOMB HURLED AT HINDU MUNNANI OFFICE

Coimbatore, March 10: A petrol bomb was hurled at the Hindu Munnani office here by some unidentified people on Tuesday, sparking tension in the city.

The incident comes days after two mosques in the city were targeted in a suspected retaliation for the attack on a Hindu Munnani functionary here.

The matter came to light after the staff, who opened the office at 10 AM noticed broken pieces of a bottle which contained molotov cocktail, police said.

On information, senior police officials, including DCP (Law and Order), Balaji Saravanan rushed to the spot and held inquiry.

Police are also verifying the surveillance cameras in the vicinity to get clue about the miscreants, while fingerprint experts have been pressed into service, they said.

Adding to the tension, SDPI secretary Iqbal was attacked by unidentified miscreants while he was in his shop, the police said. Iqbal with head injuries was admitted to the government hospital, they said. Security has been beefed up following the incidents and police are keeping strict vigil to prevent any eventuality.

CRACKDOWN ON FAKE NEWS, 8 CASES BOOKED

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 10

The Kerala police has registered eight cases so far in connection with fake news being spread through social media in the state in connection with Covid-19.

Two cases have been registered with Ernakulam central police station and a case each in Thrissur Kunnankulam, Kannur Pariyaram, Alappuzha Haripad, Idukki Kaliyari, Kozhikode rural Kakkoor and Wayanad's Vellamunda police stations respectively.

Four persons have been arrested in connection with the fake messages. Praveesh Lal, Mohammad Anas have been arrested by Kunnamkulam police, Sukumar by Haripad police and Haris Emanuel by Vellamunda police.

Meanwhile, the district health authorities have launched an exercise to identify the people with whom the man who jumped from isolation ward of a hospital in Pathanamthitta, came into contact while being outside.

The man had fled from the isolation ward of district hospital in Pathanamthitta on Monday. He was tracked and brought back by the authorities within hours.

DIDI WANTS TO DEFER LOCAL POLLS: GHOSH

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 10

West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh on Tuesday accused the Trinamul Congress government of trying to defer the ensuing municipal elections in the state due to chief minister Mamata Banerjee's fear of the saffron party and electronic voting machines (EVMs).

"We know Banerjee is scared of fighting the BJP. So she is trying to postpone all the elections," he alleged.

The Midnapore BJP MP claimed, "She is trying to enjoy power by not allowing the polls. Fate of 17 municipalities is hanging in balance. People's rights are snatched through the appointment of the administrators. So they (Trinamul Congress) are trying to win it by hook or crook. But it will not happen so easily. Till date she won all the elections through polling in the EVM. The 22 MPs of her party won in the last Lok Sabha polls same way."

"She herself came to power in 2011 and 2016 the same way. Why is there a fear about the EVMs now? She is talking absurd as she is scared of the votes and public," he said.

Targeting political strategist Prashant Kishor for his *Banglar Gorbo Mamata* (Bengal's Pride is Mamata) campaign, Ghosh argued, "People of Bengal will decide what is Bengal's pride."

"The situation is not so bad that someone would come here from outside to decide who Bengal's pride is. We have many legends here. We take pride in them. Circulation of own photos does not make one Bengal's pride," he said.

Letting your hair down



A reveller smeared in coloured powder celebrates Holi in Mumbai on Tuesday. Holi was celebrated in several states across the country amid the coronavirus scare as people exercised caution and avoided mass gatherings. However, the celebrations turned tragic as at least 27 people, including 13 in Odisha, were killed in Holi-related incidents. — Debasish Dey

Scindia's move is straight out of grandma's playbook

Rajmata too was instrumental in the collapse of Mishra government of undivided MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 10

Gwalior royal palace which has held centre stage of Madhya Pradesh politics for the last five decades is most likely to present its third generation leader to the BJP very soon.

Rajmata's grandson Jyotiraditya Scindia is most likely to join BJP on March 12. His grandmother, late Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia, was one of the founders of Jan Sangh and his father late Madhavraj Scindia had begun his political career in Jan Sangh in 1971.

"Jyotiraditya Scindia has taken the decision in the interest of the country. We will walk hand in hand to build a new nation. All differences (among us) have now sunk", former Madhya Pradesh minister Yasodhararaje Scindia, who is daughter of Rajmata, tweeted.

Gwalior palace's tryst with saffron legacy began in late 1960s when the Rajmata who had begun her political career in Congress had played key role in the growth of Jan Sangh as a formidable political force after quitting Congress in 1967.

Rajmata debuted in electoral politics by winning Guna Lok Sabha seat in 1957 as a Congress candidate. She had masterminded the collapse of D.P. Mishra government when she was ignored by the then chief minister of undivided MP.

Her situation in Congress and her subsequent coup against the D.P. Mishra government has uncanny similarity with that of Jyotiraditya now.

Jan Sangh had defied Indira Gandhi-wave and won three Lok Sabha seats, Vijayaraje from Bhand, former prime minister late Atal Behari Vajpayee from Gwalior and her son Madhavraj Scindia from Guna in 1971.

Late Madhavraj Scindia, however, broke away from Jan Sangh as well as his mother in 1977 and joined Congress. He won Guna LS seat as Congress candidate in 1980.

Jyotiraditya stepped into his father's shoes after the latter's demise in an air crash in 2001 and contested a by-election to Guna.

Jyotiraditya, however, suffered a shock defeat in 2019 at the hands of his long time aide and BJP candidate K.P. Singh.

He was the face of Congress in the 2018 Assembly polls which returned the party to power in the state.

Scindia, however, was upset when Kamal Nath was chosen over him for the top post. His claim for the post of state party chief was also ignored leaving him sulking.

Rebel Cong MLAs to stay in K'taka for 2 weeks

Bengaluru, March 10: The move by rebel ruling Congress MLAs in Madhya Pradesh to trigger the crisis for the party government appears to have been in the making at least close to a month as Karnataka BJP leaders were sounded about hosting them here in advance, according to sources.

They also indicated the rebel MLAs would stay here for at least two weeks till an alternative government took charge in Madhya Pradesh.

A senior Karnataka BJP leader taking care of the Madhya Pradesh legislators stay here had got a communication from the party central leaders about the move nearly 15-20 days ago, the sources involved in the development said on condition of anonymity on Tuesday.

The leader had even gone to New Delhi in the third week of February to meet party central leaders in this regard, they said.

In a massive setback for the Congress, its prominent youth leader Jyotiraditya Scindia quit the party and in a coordinated rebellion on Tuesday 22 MLAs loyal to him resigned in Madhya Pradesh, pushing the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government to the brink of collapse. As many as 19 Madhya Pradesh MLAs, including six Ministers, said to be loyalists of



MLAs of the ruling Congress in Madhya Pradesh show their resignation letter in Bengaluru on Tuesday. — PTI

Scindia who appeared set to join BJP, are camping at a resort here. Two of them were women, the sources said. The MLAs on Tuesday sent their resignation letters via e-mail to Raj Bhavan in Bhopal from Bengaluru.

According to the sources, eight legislators including, an independent, have been staying in the city for about a week now. Of them

two — one Congress and the independent — had gone back. The six were joined by 13 legislators, who landed in the city by a chartered flight on Monday and all of them are put up in a villa accommodation.

The senior Karnataka BJP leader, also an MLA, is looking after their stay and related arrangements here on the directions of

the party high command, the sources said.

Their stay here may be long, say couple of weeks. There will be no-confidence motion, and then there will be trust vote of the new alternative government that will be formed. So they may have to stay here for some time. They may be moved out of their current location," they said. The Madhya

Pradesh legislature session is expected to begin on March 16. The sources also said the six legislators staying here since last week were shifted a couple of times within the city.

Congress in Madhya Pradesh, under the leadership of Kamal Nath, had come to power in December 2018 by ousting the BJP by a narrow margin. — PTI

Did 'royal' link connect Scindia to BJP leaders?

Bhopal, March 10: It was Shubhangini Raj Gaekwad, member of the former royal family of Baroda, who apparently became the bridge between the top BJP leadership and Jyotiraditya Scindia in the run-up to his exit from the Congress, sources said on Tuesday.

Scindia's wife Priyadarshni comes from the Gaekwad family.

On Tuesday, Scindia announced that he had resigned from the Congress amid a flurry of resignations by party MLAs and ministers belonging to his camp in Madhya Pradesh, bringing the Kamal Nath government to the brink of collapse.

Sources close to Scindia family, former royals of Gwalior, said after he was 'cold shouldered' by Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul, Jyotiraditya began



Congress worker removes name plate of Jyotiraditya Scindia from PCC office, in Bhopal, on Tuesday. — PTI

to explore his options beyond the party. "Jyotiraditya's wife Priyadarshni belongs to

Keeping tabs on events: Governor

Lucknow, March 10: On a day when Jyotiraditya Scindia quit the Congress and 22 MLAs close to him resigned from the Madhya Pradesh assembly, Governor Lalji Tandon said he is keeping tabs on political developments and will take a decision only after reaching the Raj Bhavan in Bhopal.

Tandon is currently in Lucknow to celebrate Holi with his family and made the remarks in a conversation with an English news channel over the phone.

When asked whether the Governor House (Raj Bhavan) is keeping tabs on the prevailing situation in Madhya Pradesh, he said, "Yes, yes definitely. Whatever decision I have to take, I will do so once I reach the Raj Bhavan."

When asked as to when will he return Bhopal, Tandon said he was on leave till March 12 to celebrate Holi with his family.

I AM PROUD of my father for taking a stand for himself. It takes courage to resign from a legacy. History can speak for itself when I say my family has never been power hungry. As promised we will make an impactful change in India and MP

MAHANARYAMAN SCINDIA, Jyotiraditya's son

"At present, I am a spectator. Once I return there, only then can I make any comment after seeing all things, letters in which people have made some complaints," Tandon said responding to when will he call any party to prove majority in the House.

"As of now, I am at my home meeting everyone on the occasion of Holi," he said. —PTI

Doc sacked for raising alarm

GILVESTER ASSARY DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 10

A lady doctor who alerted health department officials about suspected Covid-19 symptoms showed by person who came to her clinic was allegedly sacked by the hospital management.

Dr Shinu Syamalan employed with Rosh Clinic in Thalikulam of Thrissur district was dismissed from the service on the ground that her action could prevent people from coming to the clinic.

Dr Syamalan said the patient came to the clinic on Sunday and informed that he had returned from Qatar on January 30-31.

"I thought since it was already more than 35 days there may be no risk involved. But to my shock he revealed that during last two weeks he had traveled to Delhi and Agra by air. I told him to inform the health authorities," she said.

The patient told her that

he had already visited a general hospital.

"He came to the clinic without any precaution like mask. Despite making request, he was not ready to inform the health authorities. He wanted to leave for Qatar on Monday and sought in injection for bringing down the fever. Since he refused to cooperate, I took his address but he didn't share the mobile phone number. I told the reception to take down his bike registration number with the help of which I tracked him down," Syamalan said.

Later, I came to know that he had reached Qatar and was quarantined in a local hospital.

The doctor said she was not sad about losing the job but the total negligence on the part of authorities to act in time.

"They treated me as if I had done something wrong. I request health minister K.K. Shailaja to look into the matter and fix responsibility," she said.

STRUGGLE BETWEEN OLD AND NEW IN CONG CONTINUES

New Delhi, March 10: The exit of Jyotiraditya Scindia signals the deepening leadership crisis in the Congress which continues to grapple with factionalism and growing power struggles between old and young leaders.

The fact that Scindia failing to get an audience with Congress President Sonia Gandhi, as pointed out by sources, reinforces the grudge many hold in the party about the high command becoming progressively distant.

Scindia's departure is seen as a big blow to the Congress, which lost a prominent young face, but it is also feared that his revolt may trigger a wave of dissensions in the party where youngsters have long felt sidelined by veterans.

The first Congress leader to publicly lament Scindia's departure on Tuesday was former MP and sitting Haryana MLA Kuldeep Bishnoi who said it was a big blow and the party needed to empower youngsters who resonate with the masses.

"Jyotiraditya Scindia's departure is a big blow to the Congress. He was a central pillar in the party and the leadership should've done more to convince him to stay. Like him, there are many other devoted INC leaders across the country who feel alienated, wasted & disoriented.

India's oldest party needs to empower young leaders who have the capacity to work hard and resonate with the masses," said Bishnoi, whose turf war with former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda is well known.

Several young leaders in the Congress have been voicing their anxieties in public of late.

In Rajasthan, Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot is engaged in a continuous power tussle with Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

In Punjab, former minister Navjot Singh Sidhu has been at loggerheads with Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

Ahead of Maharashtra elections, former Mumbai Congress chief Sanjay Nirupam had threatened to quit the party accusing Sonia Gandhi's "coterie of sidelining Rahul Gandhi's team members".

Another young Maharashtra Congress leader Milind Deora has been striking a note of dissent of late. —PTI

Multiple issues like party is adrift, weak-decision making processes and uncertain future leadership are causing anxieties among leaders who have long political careers ahead of them, insiders say

IN BRIEF

\$15m stolen in Chilean airport

Santiago: Heavily armed thieves stole around \$15 million from an armored security truck at Chile's Santiago airport Monday, one of the biggest heists in the country's history. The gang arrived in the airport's cargo area aboard two vehicles, police colonel Oscar Figueroa told reporters. "Once inside, they threatened the guards before making off with the money," he said. In 2017, a gang stole a cash shipment worth \$19 million from the same airport.

SA court clean chit to President

Johannesburg: A South African court has cleared President Cyril Ramaphosa of allegations that he misled parliament about the funding of his campaign to become leader of the ruling African National Congress party. Ramaphosa had been accused by the country's public watchdog of misleading lawmakers about a \$34,000 contribution from the CEO of a local company, Africa Global Operations, formerly known as Bosasa. The company has been implicated in a state probe into allegations of corruption in government and state-owned enterprises during former president Jacob Zuma's tenure from 2009 to 2018. The Pretoria High Court Tuesday dismissed the watchdog's report which is a boost for Ramaphosa, who became president on promises to rid South Africa of corruption.

Burkina Faso attacks kill 43

Ouagadougou: At least 43 people have been killed in attacks in northern Burkina Faso, the government said on Monday, in what local sources described as apparent vigilante reprisals for jihadist violence that has claimed hundreds of lives. Burkina Faso, one of the world's poorest countries, has battled a jihadist insurgency since 2015, but the conflict has also provoked attacks on Fulani herders whom other communities accuse of supporting militants. "On Sunday, attacks were carried out on the villages of Dingulla and Barga... in Yatenga province. The provisional toll is 43 victims," the government said in a statement. It said six people were hospitalized with injuries. The statement did not blame any group for the attack or mention the Fulani community, but a local source reached by telephone blamed "self-defence groups who are acting in reprisal against jihadist attacks".

INDONESIA RIGOUR: DUTCH KING SORRY

Jakarta, March 10: Dutch King Willem-Alexander apologised to Indonesia on Tuesday for "excessive violence" during the former colony's independence struggle in the 1940s. The king made the remarks during a state visit to the country with Queen Maxima after a ceremony with Indonesian President Joko Widodo in the capital Jakarta. Indonesia declared its independence on August 17, 1945 following a brief wartime occupation by the Japanese and several hundred years as a Dutch colony. "The past cannot be erased, and will have to be acknowledged by each generation in turn," the king said in a joint statement. In the years after the independence proclamation "a painful separation followed that cost many lives... I would like to express my regret and apologise for excessive violence on the part of the Dutch in those years," he added. "I do so in the full realisation that the pain and sorrow of the families affected continue to be felt today." In 2013, the Dutch government publicly apologised to Indonesia for mass killings by its army in the 1940s war of independence, in the first general apology for all executions. But the apology Tuesday was a first by a Dutch monarch, according to two sources, including a senior Indonesian government official. The Dutch embassy in Jakarta declined to comment. Previously, the Dutch government announced compensation to the widows of those who died in mass killings. But not all have received funds, according to the Committee for Dutch Honour Debts.

Royal gesture



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II meets High Commissioner of Sri Lanka Saroja Sirisena (c) and her husband Sudath Talpahewa (R) during an audience at Buckingham Palace in London on Tuesday. —AFP

US begins military pullout from 2 Afghanistan bases

US is keen to end its longest ever conflict and quit country in 14 months

Kabul, March 10: American forces have started pulling out of two bases in Afghanistan, a US official said Tuesday, the day peace talks between Kabul and the Taliban were due to start despite widespread violence and a political crisis. The United States is keen to end its longest-ever conflict, and under the terms of a deal signed in Doha last month has said all foreign forces will quit Afghanistan within 14 months — provided the Taliban stick to their security commitments. Under the accord, the US is initially supposed to cut its troop presence from about 12,000 currently to 8,600 by mid-July, and close five of its roughly 20 bases across the country. Troops have started leaving one base in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province in the

south, and another base in Herat in the west, a US official told on the condition of anonymity. Even with the drawdown, US forces retain "all the military means and authorities to accomplish our objectives", Colonel Sonny Leggett, spokesman for US Forces-Afghanistan, said Monday, referring to American counterterrorism operations and support for Afghan forces. Helmand, which along with neighbouring Kandahar province is considered a Taliban stronghold, is where US and British forces fought some of the bloodiest campaigns of the 18-year war. Omar Zwak, spokesman for Helmand's governor, said that "20 to 30" foreigners had left Lashkar Gah since the weekend. The initial drawdown comes as the Taliban, which see

PRIORITISING AN inclusive government and unified Afghanistan is paramount for the future of the country and particularly for the cause of peace

MIKE POMPEO, Secretary of State

themselves as having achieved "victory" over America, test the Pentagon's resolve to protect local partners by conducting dozens of low-level attacks against Afghan forces. The US has only responded to a few of these attacks. Under the terms of the withdrawal deal, the Taliban are supposed to tackle jihadists such as the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda, as well as hold talks with the Afghan

government that were due to start Tuesday. But Kabul is in disarray and appears unable to present a unified front to negotiate with the Taliban. On Monday, President Ashraf Ghani was inaugurated for a second term following an election that was marred by fraud allegations while his rival, former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah, also declared himself winner and swore himself in as premier in a parallel ceremony. Washington has denounced Abdullah's self-inauguration, urging unity in Kabul ahead of negotiations with the Taliban. "Prioritising an inclusive government and unified Afghanistan is paramount for the future of the country and particularly for the cause of peace," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Monday.

Peace talks were supposed to start Tuesday but have been thrown into limbo by a dispute over the release of Taliban prisoners — something the insurgents have demanded as a prerequisite ahead of negotiations, but which Ghani has so far refused to do. Ghani was expected later Tuesday to announce a decree on the issue and reveal details of the negotiating team. A member of the Taliban's leadership council — the Quetta Shura — told that the insurgents had delivered a list of the 5,000 captives they wanted freed to the Afghan government. But he accused Kabul of acting in bad faith, alleging that "the government (planned) to release only those prisoners who are elderly, very ill, or those whose sentences have expired". —AFP

Turkey FM: EU deal this month

Ankara, March 10: Turkey hopes to reach a new agreement with Europe to deal with refugees in time for the next EU leaders' summit, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Tuesday. "If we reach an agreement by March 26 when there will be an EU leaders' summit, this issue will come on to the agenda of this meeting," Cavusoglu said. "We are ready for constructive work." — MEVLUT CAVUSOGLU, Foreign Minister

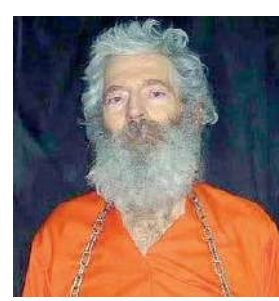
have not been met. Erdogan skipped the post-talks press conference in Brussels on Monday. "Clearly we do have our disagreements, but we have spoken plainly and we have spoken openly to each other," Von der Leyen, the head of the European Commission, said. Turkey hosts some four million refugees — most of them from Syria — and faces a fresh influx as the Syrian regime, backed by Russia and Iran, seeks to retake the last rebel stronghold of Idlib on the Turkish border. Europe has said it will consider taking 1,500 child refugees, but has focused on reinforcing Greece's borders. Although Turkey and Russia agreed a ceasefire for Idlib last week, previous peace deals have proved temporary and Ankara has called for greater assistance from its NATO allies. —AFP

Court rejects Bibi's plea to delay trial

Jerusalem, March 10: A Jerusalem district court on Tuesday rejected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's request to delay the start of his corruption trial, ruling it would begin as planned next week. Netanyahu's lawyers had appealed for a delay, saying they needed more time to review evidence. State prosecutors responded that they oppose any delays and the court accepted their position. In overruling the request the presiding judge wrote that the first session on March 17 was a reading only and the defendant's response was not needed, therefore there was no justification for a delay. Netanyahu has been charged with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in connection to a series of scandals that include accepting expensive gifts from wealthy friends and offering to exchange favors with powerful media moguls. The long-ruling Israeli leader denies any wrongdoing and says he is the victim of a media-orchestrated witchhunt. His legal troubles stood at the center of last week's third inconclusive Israeli election in less than a year.

Missing ex-FBI agent: Blame Iran

Washington, March 10: A federal judge has held Iran responsible for the kidnapping of former FBI agent Robert Levinson, entering a default judgement against the regime on the 13th anniversary of his disappearance. The decision from US District Judge Timothy Kelly on Monday was a milestone moment in the family's lawsuit against Tehran, which featured wrenching testimony in Washington's federal court from each of Levinson's seven children. "It is really important to the family that people realize what their father, their husband, has been through and what they've been through," said David McGee, a lawyer for the family. "It is a terrible ordeal." In his 25-page ruling, Kelly found that Iran "in no uncertain terms" was responsible for Levinson's "hostage taking and torture" and entered a default judgement after the country declined to respond to the lawsuit. The family sought more than \$1.5 billion in damages. Most of that amount was in punitive damages. "He has been unable to see his children grow up, enjoy professional success, marry, and become parents themselves — as they have many times over," Kelly wrote in his judgment. "But they have not forgotten him, not by a long shot."



Robert Levinson

● **HIS DAUGHTERS** tied photographs of him to their bouquets on their wedding day, the judge said, and one named a son after him. Levinson disappeared on March 9, 2007, when he was scheduled to meet a source on the Iranian island of Kish.

Levinson was working independently on a private investigation. But a 2013 Associated Press investigation revealed that Levinson had in fact been sent on a mission by CIA analysts who had no authority to run such an operation. The family received proof-of-life photos and a video in late 2010 and early 2011, but his whereabouts and fate are not known. In November, the Iranian government unexpectedly responded to a United Nations query by saying that Levinson was the subject of an "open case" in Iranian Revolutionary Court. Though the development gave the family a burst of hope, Iran clarified that the "open case" was an investigation into his disappearance. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement on Monday that the US would continue working to free Levinson and other hostages held by Iran. —AP

Biden hopes on continuing impetus in Michigan primary

Detroit, March 10: Surging US presidential candidate Joe Biden has urged Michigan voters to help him bolster his lead over Bernie Sanders as the rivals made their final pitches hours before the battleground state holds its Democratic primary. The veteran politicians — Biden a moderate former vice president and Sanders a leftist senator calling for nothing less than a political revolution — are locked in a political duel to decide who faces President Donald Trump in the November election. Michigan is the top prize with the largest number of

● **MICHIGAN IS** the top prize with the largest number of delegates at stake among six states, and the candidates campaigned heavily here. ● **BOTH LAWMAKERS** are touted as possible vice presidential picks for Biden. Michigan "could be the turning point" of the campaign, said Booker. delegates at stake among six states, and the candidates campaigned heavily here. While Sanders is desperate to right his listing ship with a strong showing,

Biden is riding high, having won 10 of 14 states that voted last Tuesday, and was hoping to continue the momentum. "Michigan, I'm counting on you in a big way!" Biden told a cheering crowd at a majority black high school in Detroit. Biden, 77, is flush with the endorsements of several high-profile former rivals in the Democratic race, including two prominent African-American senators: New Jersey's Cory Booker, who threw his support behind Biden early Monday, and Kamala Harris of California. Both lawmakers are touted

as possible vice presidential picks for Biden. Michigan "could be the turning point" of the campaign, Booker said at a Biden rally in Flint. Later in Detroit, he implored Michiganders to get out the vote on Tuesday to help secure a Biden victory. "We can't pray he wins, we can't hope he wins, we can't wish that he wins," Booker said. "We've got to vote him in." Biden took the stage with Booker, Harris and Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, hugging each of them before the quartet held hands and raised them triumphantly aloft. —AFP

MELANIA TRUMP CANCELS FUNDRAISER

Washington, March 10: Melania Trump has cancelled a California fundraiser set for later this month. Stephanie Grisham, the first lady's spokeswoman, cited an unspecified "scheduling conflict" as the reason on Monday. The cancellation comes as organizations and groups around the country are scrapping large gatherings amid an outbreak of the new coronavirus. President Donald Trump's reelection campaign had been asking supporters to make a donation for a chance to meet the first lady in California. —AP

COMPASSION | PLEA He's already had a 'historic' fall and has serious health issues

Weinstein lawyers seek mercy

New York, March 10: With Harvey Weinstein facing sentencing this week, his lawyers have argued that the disgraced movie mogul deserves mercy in his New York City rape case because he's already suffered a "historic" fall from grace and is dealing with serious health issues. Weinstein's defense team on Monday asked a judge in court papers to consider a sentence of only five years, far short of the potential 29-year maximum term allowed by law. The papers argue Weinstein should get credit for supporting various charitable causes during his rise to one of Hollywood's most powerful producers. On the health front, the 67-year-old Weinstein is dealing with heart problems, ramifications of unsuccessful back surgery



A file photo of Harvey Weinstein leaving the courthouse during jury deliberations in his rape trial. — AP

stemming from a car crash last summer and a condition that requires shots in his eyes so he does not go blind, his lawyers have said. The filing came in

advance of Weinstein's sentencing on Wednesday for his conviction last month on one count of criminal sex act for forcibly performing oral

sex on a woman in 2006 and one count of third-degree rape for a 2013 attack on another woman. His lawyers had contended at trial that any sexual

● **WEINSTEIN'S DEFENSE** team on Monday asked a judge in court papers to consider a sentence of only five years, far short of the potential 29-year maximum term allowed by law. ● **THE PAPERS** argue Weinstein should get credit for supporting various charitable causes during his rise to one of Hollywood's most powerful producers. contact was consensual. On the criminal sex act count, Weinstein faces a minimum of five years in prison and a maximum of 25 years in prison, while the third-degree rape count carries a maximum penalty of four years in prison. The judge could have the sentences run concurrently. —AP

IN BRIEF

Iran virus death toll climbs to 291

Tehran: Iran said Tuesday that the new Covid-19 killed 54 more people, raising the death toll to 291 amid 8,042 cases in the Islamic Republic. Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahangour made the announcement in a televised news conference. It represented an 18 per cent increase in deaths from the day before and 12 per cent more confirmed cases. Iran is the hardest-hit country in the Mideast by the new Covid-19, which sickens but largely doesn't kill those afflicted. Across the region, there are over 8,600 confirmed cases of the virus.

Israel opts for quarantine

Jerusalem: Israel will impose a two-week quarantine on all travellers entering the country, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday, toughening already significant travel restrictions. "After a day of difficult discussions, we have taken a decision: All those coming to Israel from abroad will be placed in isolation for 14 days," Netanyahu said in a video broadcast on his Twitter account. "This is a difficult decision but it is essential to maintaining public health, which takes precedence over everything," he added, according to a statement. He noted that the measure would be implemented for two weeks and promised steps to support the Israeli economy. Israel had already imposed major restrictions on travellers arriving from several countries.

Bangla PM Japan visit postponed

Dhaka: Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has postponed her two-day official visit to Japan over the global outbreak of the deadly novel Covid-19, Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen said on Tuesday. "The prime minister was scheduled to travel to Japan on March 30. But the visit has been postponed as the novel Covid-19 cases have spread there too," he was quoted as saying by Bdnews24.com. "We will visit Japan later and they (Japan) have agreed to the deferred plan," he added. Earlier this week, Bangladesh postponed the March 17 inauguration ceremony of the birth centenary celebrations of its founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after three Covid-19 cases were detected in the country.

CHINA FOOD PRICES SPIKE AS SUPPLY HIT

Beijing, March 10: China's food prices jumped 21.4 per cent over a year earlier in February as anti-virus efforts disrupted supplies, adding to pressure on Communist leaders who are trying to revive economic activity. Overall consumer prices rose 5.2 per cent over a year ago, down from January's eight-year high of 5.4 per cent but well above the ruling Communist Party's traditional annual target, government data showed Tuesday.

Pork prices, which have more than doubled over the past year due to an outbreak of African swine fever that disrupted supplies, rose by 9.3 per cent compared with January. The government reported no year-on-year price increase. The price of fresh vegetables rose 9.5 per cent over a year ago. The government has yet to announce this year's inflation target.

Trump not tested for Covid: White House

This despite being in contact with lawmakers who self-quarantined over proximity with virus-hit

Washington, March 10: President Donald Trump remains in excellent health and has not been tested for Covid-19, the White House said, even though he was in contact with multiple lawmakers who have since gone into self-imposed quarantine due to their proximity to someone with the virus. White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham said on Monday that testing was not necessary because President Trump is not showing symptoms and the lawmakers aren't confirmed to be infected.

"The President has not received Covid-19 testing because he has neither had prolonged close contact with any known confirmed Covid-19 patients, nor does he have any symptoms," Grisham said. "President Trump remains in excellent health, and his physician will continue to closely monitor him," she said. The White House statement came as Trump was in contact with multiple lawmakers who have since gone into self-imposed quarantine. These lawmakers had come into contact with someone at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) who tested positive for the deadly Covid-19. The virus is believed to have an incubation period of about 14 days.

Earlier during a news conference, Trump assured the country that his administration is taking all necessary steps to bring it under control. "We are going to take care of, and have been taking care of, the American public and the American economy," he said. Vice President Mike Pence, who is leading the efforts on Covid-19, said the risk of contracting the virus to the American public remains low, and the risk of serious disease among the American public also remains low. "The President did deploy not just a whole-of-government approach, but also a whole-of-America approach. And last week, at the President's direction, we met with leaders in industries, from nursing homes to airlines, pharmaceutical companies, commercial labs, and it's had great, great impact," he said. "Pharmaceutical companies are already working, literally around the clock, on the development of therapeutics; that will be medicines that can bring relief to people that contract the Covid-19. I know how pleased the President was to learn that the commercial labs in this country, led by companies like LabCorp and Quest, have already brought a test forward and are taking that to market effective today," he said.



This photo released by China's Xinhua News Agency shows Chinese President Xi Jinping wearing a mask as he waves to a Covid-19 patient and medical staff via a video link at the Huoshenshan hospital in Wuhan, in China's central Hubei province on Tuesday. — AFP

XI MAKES FIRST VISIT TO WUHAN SINCE OUTBREAK

Beijing/Wuhan, March 10: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday said Wuhan city had turned the tide against the deadly Covid-19, as he made his first visit to the virus' epicentre in a message that Beijing has the situation under control and vowed to resolutely fight for a victory against the novel Covid-19 outbreak.

Wearing a protective mask and accompanied by a retinue of military and health officials, Xi — who initially came under criticism for not acting in time to stem the virus when it first showed up in December last year, but later won praise for a decisive follow-up action — visited a makeshift hospital and community residents and frontline workers in Wuhan. Xi, 66, vowed to resolutely fight for a victory in the war against the Covid-19 during his inspection tour of Wuhan, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. During his visit, Xi said the spread of Covid-19 had been basically curbed in Hubei Province and its capital Wuhan where over 50 million people lived in total isolation since January 23 following a complete lockdown.

The initial success has been made in stabilising the situation and turning the tide in Hubei and Wuhan, Xi said. Ahead of the President's visit on Tuesday, China's National Health Commission (NHC) announced a dramatic drop in number of Covid-19 cases both of which fell below 20 mark for the first time since the NHC began daily reporting of cases in later part of January. — PTI

4,000 The global death toll from the new Covid-19 passed 4,000 on Tuesday.

- The death toll from the collapse of a hotel used as a quarantine facility in China's Fujian province has risen to 20.
- Bootleg alcohol death toll rises to 44 in virus-affected Iran
- Canada and Lebanon recorded their first deaths from Covid-19

IMPACT OF EPIDEMIC ACROSS WORLD

- A 65-year-old German tourist has tested positive for Covid-19
- Pakistan witnessed a sudden increase in Covid-19 infections as the number of patients rose to 16
- Mongolia on Tuesday barred anyone from entering or leaving its cities for six days after the country reported its first Covid-19 case

7,513 The total rise in infections in South Korea as the country reported a total of 131 new cases for the first time in two weeks. Three more people have died, taking the death toll to 54.

- Romania and Slovenia on Monday banned big public gatherings, while Bulgaria ordered theatre and cinema shows cancelled in increasingly stringent measures to fight the spread of the novel Covid-19.
- Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has cancelled an annual speech marking the start of the Persian new year

It was announced today to all staff that it is recommended that UN personnel who have recently returned to the US from countries with widespread transmission of Covid-19 should remain home and self-monitor for 14 days

— STÉPHANE DUJARRIC, spokesperson for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres

1st passengers leave cruise ship Two Indian-origin S Africans in soup

Oakland (US), March 10: The first passengers were taken ashore from a Covid-19-hit cruise ship after it docked Monday at California's port of Oakland, in what officials called an "unprecedented and difficult" operation involving thousands on board. The Grand Princess arrived shortly after noon (1900 GMT) in the San Francisco Bay after days stranded at sea with more than 3,500 passengers and crew. Emergency workers equipped with gowns, gloves, respirators and face shields loaded those requiring immediate treatment into ambulances, while all port employees and residents

were cleared from the fenced-off landing site. More than 900 Californian residents will disembark next from the ship, in a stage of the operation expected to take most of the day. "Individuals will be led off the ship in smaller groups," and "anyone who is symptomatic... will be fitted with a surgical mask and disembarked via a separate gangway" to avoid disease spread, said a statement from Governor Gavin Newsom's office. The ship, which has 21 confirmed novel Covid-19 infections, had been idling off the San Francisco coast since Wednesday. Passengers gathered on balconi-

es were "whooping and waving at dock workers onshore" as the ship drew into port, said Carolyn Wright, 63, of New Mexico, from on board the vessel. Tents were set up on the Oakland quayside, with the surrounding floor doused in what appeared to be disinfectant, she added. Buses and flights were lined up to transport passengers. After initial screening, those who don't require acute care will be quarantined for 14 days at US military bases in California, Texas and Georgia — or flown to their home countries, in the case of foreign residents. Those at US bases will be given private si-

ngle rooms with access to private bathrooms, said Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman. Passengers will be fully tested at their onward destination to avoid delays. Crew will remain onboard and the ship will leave San Francisco Bay, the company said. The entire site will be decontaminated by pressure-washing with a bleach solution once the operation is complete. Wright earlier Monday said the mood had been lifted on board by the prospect of finally reaching land, and guests were briefly allowed to leave their cabins. — AFP

Johannesburg, March 10: Two Indian-origin South Africans are in hot water over making light of the Covid-19 that is causing global concern. In the first case, an unnamed 55-year-old woman returning to Durban from India was rushed to hospital after she claimed to be carrying the virus. While authorities scrambled to find those whom she had been in contact with, the woman confessed that she had been joking after it was found that she had no symptoms associated with Covid-19. Later, police investigations found that the woman had been trying to evade arrest on an unrelated charge of fraud and she was immediately arrested.

In the second case, authorities have launched a search for the owner of a high-end sports vehicle, who is believed to be of Indian-origin, after he was spotted by four independent people driving a vehicle with Covid-19-ZN registration plate that is not legally registered, with penalties that include the vehicle being impounded and heavy fines for the owner and the driver. Officials from the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) appealed to the public to assist in tracking down the vehicle and its driver or owner. They said even if an application was made to register Covid-19 as the number plate for a vehicle, they were unlikely to approve it, given the insensitivity it would show towards those affected by the deadly virus. On social media, comments ranged from frivolous ones about the vehicle being safe from hijackers or others wanting to steal it; to admonishing the vehicle user for making light of a serious issue. The incidents occurred as South Africa confirmed seven cases of Covid-19 on Monday. All are members of a group returning from Italy. — PTI

Patient out of ICU as Italy on the brink

Rome, March 10: Italian doctors celebrated one small victory in their battle against the Covid-19 after a 38-year-old man was moved out of intensive care for the first time since he tested positive February 21 and opened Italy's health care crisis as Patient No. 1. But in the rest of northern Italy, the virus spread was growing so exponentially that doctors were making comparisons to war-time triage medics deciding who lives, who dies and who gets access to the limited ICU beds. "It's a

reasoning that our colleagues make," Dr Guido Giustetto, head of the association of doctors in northern Piedmont, said Monday. "It becomes dramatic if, rather than doing it under normal situations, they do it because the beds are so scarce that someone might not have access to medical care." The Italian society of anesthesiology and intensive care published 15 ethical recommendations to consider when deciding on ICU admissions during the virus crisis and the ICU shortage. The criteria include the age of the pa-

tient and the probability of survival, and not just "first come first served." The Lombardy government has been scrambling to increase its ICU capacity, converting operating and recovery rooms into isolated wards to treat the 440 critical virus patients currently in need. It has cobbled together 150 more beds in the last two weeks and expects another 150 in the coming week. But it may not be enough. "Unfortunately we're only at the beginning," said Dr Massimo Galli, head of infectious disease at Milan's Sacco

hospital. Speaking to Sky-Tg24, Galli noted that the numbers of infections registered in Lombardy last week were similar to those in Wuhan, China in late January. — AP

AUSTRIA BANS PEOPLE'S ENTRY FROM ITALY

Vienna, March 10: Chancellor Sebastian Kurz on Tuesday said Austria was restricting travel from Italy, which has been hard hit by the Covid-19. He told reporters Vienna was putting in place "an entry ban for people from Italy to Austria, unless they have a doctor's certificate". — AFP

3 quakes jolt Tibetan county, but no deaths

Beijing, March 10: Three moderate earthquakes jolted a county in Tibet on Tuesday, though no casualties were reported, official media reported. There have been no casualties reported following three earthquakes including a 5.0-magnitude earthquake in a county in southwest Tibet Autonomous Region on Tuesday, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The 5.0-magnitude earthquake jolted Gerze County in Ali Prefecture at 2:12 a.m. Tuesday, according to the China Earthquake Networks Centre. Later on, the county was struck again by a 3.7-magnitude quake and a 3.4-magnitude one.

Sonam Daje, deputy head of the county's civil affairs bureau, said a preliminary investigation found no casualties, and no houses collapsed so far. The epicentre was monitored at 32.84 degrees north latitude and 85.52 degrees east longitude. "The epicentre is around a village in Gerze. Most people were asleep when the earthquakes occurred, and tremors were not strongly felt by the residents in the county seat," said Hu Haibo, director of the county's poverty relief office. Gerze is the largest county featuring animal husbandry industry in Ali, with an average altitude of over 4,500 metres. — PTI

CRITICAL PHASE Eyes on 1.2M tonnes of still-radioactive water prior to this year's Tokyo Olympics Fukushima water safety focus of sea release

Okuma (Japan), March 10: Inside a giant decontamination facility at the destroyed Fukushima nuclear power plant, workers in hazmat suits monitor radioactive water pumped from three damaged reactors, making sure it's adequately — though not completely — treated. Three lines of equipment connected to pipes snaking around in this dimly lit, sprawling facility can process up to 750 tonnes of contaminated water a day. Four other lines elsewhere in the plant can process more. From there, the water is pumped to a complex of about 1,000

temporary storage tanks that crowd the plant's grounds, where additional tanks are still being built. Officials say the huge tanks will be completely full by the summer of 2022. The decontamination process, which The Associated Press viewed on a recent tour, is a key element of a contentious debate over what should be done with the nearly 1.2 million tons of still-radioactive water being closely watched by governments and organisations around the world ahead of this summer's Tokyo Olympics. The plant's operator, To-

kyo Electric Power Co., or TEPCO, says it needs to free up space as work to decommission the damaged reactors approaches a critical phase. It's widely expected that TEPCO will gradually release the water into the ocean following a government decision allowing it to do so. The company is still vague on the timing. But locals, especially fishermen, are opposed because they think the water release would hurt the reputation of already battered fisheries, where annual sales remain about half of the level before the nuclear accident. — AP



An employee walks past storage tanks for contaminated water at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, Japan. — AP

quick
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	35,634.95	-5.17
Nifty 50	10,451.50	-4.90
S&P 500*	2,806.59	-5.58
Dollar (₹)	74.17	-0.42
Pound Sterling (₹)	96.83	0.79
Euro (₹)	84.59	1.26
Gold (10gm) (₹)	45,063.22	0.004
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	36.67	-8.60
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.066	-0.118
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.430	-0.277

* As of 9:30 pm on March 9

Cairn expects
arbitration award
in retro tax case

British oil explorer Cairn Energy Plc expects an international arbitral tribunal to give a decree by the summer of 2020 on its challenge to the Indian government seeking ₹10,247 crore in retrospective taxes. The tribunal, which had in December 2018 completed hearings in Cairn's challenge to India's retrospective tax demand of ₹10,247 crore in taxes, was supposed to give an award by February 2019.

Nirmala to meet
heads of merging
banks tomorrow

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will hold meeting with chief executives of amalgamating banks on Thursday to review preparedness for the merger beginning April 1. Earlier this month, the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved consolidation of 10 state-owned banks into four. Sources said the minister will review planning and preparedness of merging banks.

ED slaps ₹5 crore
fine on Shriram
Transport Finance

Shriram Transport Finance Company on Tuesday said a penalty of ₹5 crore has been imposed on the company through an Enforcement Directorate order in relation to an old case of issuing warrants. The company said it had received a show cause notice from the ED in relation to issue of warrants by erstwhile Shriram Holdings (Madras), which was amalgamated with STFC in April 2012, to an NRI.

TCS declares
₹12 a share
interim dividend

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Tuesday said its board has approved payment of an interim dividend of ₹12 per share for the financial year 2019-20. The company in a regulatory filing said that "the interim dividend shall be paid on Tuesday, March 24, 2020, to the equity shareholders of the company" existing as on March 20, which is the record date fixed for the purpose.

Saudi escalates oil price war

Riyadh vows to increase oil output further; rejects Russia's offer for talks

Dubai/Moscow, March 10: Saudi Arabia said on Tuesday it would increase its crude oil supply to a record high, raising the stakes in its price war with Russia and effectively rejecting Moscow's overtures for new talks.

The clash of the two oil titans sparked a 25 per cent slump in oil prices on Monday, triggering panic selling and heavy losses on Wall Street's main stock indexes, already hit badly by the coronavirus outbreak.

On Tuesday, Amin Nasser, chief executive of Saudi Aramco said the oil giant would increase supply to 12.3 million barrels per day (bpd) in April for customers inside the kingdom and abroad.

That's 300,000 bpd above its maximum production capacity, indicating Aramco may also free up crude from storage.

Saudi Arabia has also agreed with Kuwait to resume output from jointly operated oilfields in the so-called Neutral Zone, production which is not accounted for under Aramco's output capacity of 12 million bpd.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told Russia's ambassador to



Russia president Vladimir Putin



Saudi Arabia's crown prince Mohammed bin Salman

the United States on Monday that energy markets needed to stay "orderly" amid rising concerns that extra supply from Saudi Arabia and Russia could trigger bankruptcies among higher-cost US shale oil producers.

Saudi Arabia has been pumping around 9.7 million bpd in the past few months. The kingdom holds hundreds of mil-

lions of barrels of oil in storage so its supply oil above its production capacity.

Brent oil prices jumped 10 per cent on Tuesday above \$37 per barrel after Russian energy minister Alexander Novak said Moscow was ready to discuss new measures with OPEC, effectively offering an olive branch to Riyadh.

But Saudi Arabia's energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman appeared to rebuffed the idea.

"I fail to see the wisdom for holding meetings in May-June that would only demonstrate our failure in attending to what we should have done in a crisis like this and taking the necessary measures," Prince Abdulaziz told Reuters.

CLASH OF EGOS

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But Saudi Arabia's energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman appeared to rebuffed the idea saying there is no point in holding meetings in May-June.

The United States tried to calm the tempers by telling Russian envoy to the US that energy markets needed to stay orderly.

There are concerns that extra supply from Saudi Arabia and Russia could trigger bankruptcies among higher-cost US shale oil producers.

Riyadh's unprecedented hike in crude supply follows the collapse of talks between Opec and other producers led by Russia — a grouping known as Opec+ — which had sought to extend their joint efforts to curb supply beyond the end of March.

Three years of cooperation among OPEC+ producers ended in acrimony on Friday after Moscow refused to support deeper production cuts to support prices hit by the coronavirus outbreak.

Opec responded by removing all limits on its own output. Oil prices plunged as the development revived fears of a repeat of the 2014 price crash, when Saudi Arabia and Russia fought for market share with U.S. shale oil producers, which have never participated in agreed output curbs.

Russia's energy ministry has called a meeting with oil companies on Wednesday to discuss future cooperation with OPEC, two sources said.

Novak said Russian oil companies may boost output by up to 300,000 bpd, and that the country's producers have the potential to increase output by 500,000 bpd. — Reuters

Covid-19 may
affect hiring
plans in IndiaSANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MARCH 10

While India Inc is expecting that the hiring sentiments will improve by next quarter, it is sitting fingers crossed to see what could be the possible impact of coronavirus on the economy and hiring.

"Corporate India is all up with its expectations and hopes for 2020. Progress of technology along with more macro-economic stability and entrepreneur friendly schemes is certainly going to pamper the hiring sentiments," said Sandeep Gulati, Group Managing Director of Manpower Group India.

Manpower Group Employment Outlook Survey indicates steady hiring plans for the upcoming three months. Sectors like mining and construction, wholesale and retail trade and services sectors are likely to lead the job market.

However, the industry is cautious about the COVID impact while making projections on hiring.

"The survey states that the hiring condition will certainly improve however the condition may fluctuate due to the recent virus scare. It completely depends on whether the right precautionary measures are taken to prevent further spread of virus," said Cynthia Gokhale, associate director, marketing, ManpowerGroup India.

According to Rituparna Chakraborty, co-founder and executive vice president, TeamLease Services, the virus impact has not affected the hiring sentiments yet as the last quarter of the financial year is generally subdued in terms of recruitment. "The momentum picks up by April. Those companies which are dependent

THE SURVEY states that the hiring condition will certainly improve however the condition may fluctuate due to the recent virus scare.

— CYNTHIA GOKHALE
Associate director,
Manpower Group India

THE MOMENTUM picks up by April. Those companies which are dependent on China, would probably be lot more cautious when it comes to hiring.

— RITUPARNA
CHAKRABORTY
Co-founder,
TeamLease Services

on China, would probably be lot more cautious when it comes to hiring," she said.

With more than 60 countries getting affected and the markets and currencies getting battered by the infection, the impact on the global economy and recovery is still not clear.

"While it is too early to predict the potential impact of Covid-19 on global hiring, the reality today is that unemployment remains low in many markets and organizations globally are still struggling to find people with the right skills" said Gulati.

According to Manpower survey, India's job market overall looks steady when compared to the last quarter. A growing demand for super specialised skills will rule the job market across industries. Hiring parameters are, therefore, changing, with increasing demand for higher calibre candidates in the lower age group.

Asian markets see relief rally,
US market ends up in see-saw

Hong Kong, March 10: A bounce in the price of oil helped fuel a rally in equities in Asia on Tuesday, a day after global markets suffered their biggest losses in more than a decade, though observers remain on edge over the coronavirus outbreak.

Global stock markets capitulated on what has become known as "Black Monday", with the Dow on Wall Street plunging more than 2,000 points, triggering an emergency break in early trade.

Asia had suffered a meltdown as the deadly disease continues to infect thousands and shows no sign of abating.

But there was relief on Tuesday as oil prices jumped up to eight per cent after plunging by a third the previous day, in their worst session since the 1991 Gulf War.

The rush for safe investments also sent yields on US Treasuries to record lows, while the VIX "fear" index is within touching distance of its record high seen during the global financial crisis.

After a shaky start that had sparked fears of another rout, regional markets pushed into positive territory, with energy firms clawing back some of their massive losses.

Tokyo ended up 0.9 per cent and Shanghai finished 1.8 per cent higher with Hong Kong adding two per cent in the afternoon. Indian stock markets were closed on the account of Holi festival.

Sentiment was boosted by news that Chinese President Xi Jinping had visited Wuhan, the centre of the virus outbreak, lifting hopes that the country is well on track to recovery as new infections fall. The news comes after weeks of quarantines that have rocked the global and local economy.

HOW CIRCUIT BREAKERS WORK

A plunge in US markets on Monday triggered a 15-minute trading halt in stocks after the S&P 500 fell seven per cent shortly after the market opened. Let's find out how the markets work during disruptions or panic selling of stocks in India.

The index-based market-wide circuit breaker system applies at three stages of the index movement, either way — at 10 per cent, 15 per cent and 20 per cent.

The market-wide circuit breakers are triggered by movement of either the BSE Sensex or the Nifty 50, whichever is breached earlier.

The trading would halt for 45 minutes if the index declines by 10 per cent before 1 pm. It would halt for 15 minutes, the index falls by 10 per cent between 1 pm and 2.30 pm.

The market would shut for 1 hour 45 minutes if the index declines by 15 per cent before 1 pm. It would halt for 45 minutes, the index falls by 15 per cent between 1 pm and 2.30 pm.

There would be halt in trading if the index falls by 10 per cent at any time during the market hours, the trading would halted for the entire day.

If the index falls by 20 per cent at any time during the market hours, the trading would halted for the entire day.



US stocks, however, wiped out a gain that reached 3.5 per cent in another wild session on Wall Street on Tuesday as signs mounted that stimulus promised by President Donald Trump is not imminent even as the coronavirus threatens to upend the economy.

The S&P 500's gain slumped to virtually nothing with investors pining for signs that the administration can deliver what Mr Trump said would be "major" moves to combat the fallout from the spreading virus.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average erased a gain of four per cent, or 900 points, and a four per cent rally in European stocks got zapped.

Some investors, meanwhile, are betting that markets will stay turbu-

lent in the coming weeks. The Choe Volatility Index, known as "Wall Street's fear gauge," climbed by more than 20 points above its Friday closing level to peak at 62.12, its highest level since December 2008.

Speculation is also mounting that the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates again, having slashed them last week, while the European Central Bank is due to meet this week to discuss monetary policy.

Still, while governments and central banks have unleashed, or are preparing to unleash, stimulus, the spread of Covid-19 is putting a huge strain on economies and stoking concerns of a worldwide recession.

That has now been compounded by an oil price

war between Saudi Arabia and Russia that sparked Monday's crude price plunge.

"Given market moves and other developments, we expect to see further stimulus announcements, both monetary and fiscal. As these come, they should help to stabilise sentiment, though we believe fear and volatility will remain high for some time," said Esty Dwek, at Natixis Investment Managers.

AxiCorp's Stephen Innes warned the panic on markets had not yet stopped, with "growing evidence that an oil shock of historic proportions is now underway."

And Toshiyuki Horiuchi, a broker at IwaiCosmo Securities, added: "Nervous trading is likely to continue for now." — Agencies

Nissan may exit Renault's jointly run VC fund

Tokyo, March 10: Nissan Motor Co is likely to pull out from a venture capital fund it runs with alliance partners Renault SA and Mitsubishi Motors, as part of the Japanese automaker's drive to cut costs and conserve cash, two sources said.

Nissan will formally take a decision on whether to leave the fund, Alliance Ventures, by the end of this month, the two Nissan insiders told Reuters, declining to be identified because the information has not been made public. The likely move comes

after Nissan's junior partner, Mitsubishi Motors Corp, told an alliance meeting last week that it would no longer continue to inject money into the fund, one of the sources said.

The decision to leave the Amsterdams-based fund was all but a done deal, the other source said, adding: "Of course we're out. The house is on fire."

A Nissan spokeswoman said it was speculation and declined to comment. A Mitsubishi spokesman said no decision had been made.



The move comes as Nissan — which has seen its earnings slump — is now facing a downturn in China, its biggest market, due to the impact of the coronavirus outbreak. China sales plunged 80 per cent last month. It also highlights the

extent of the automaker's cost-cutting under new CEO Makoto Uchida, who is under pressure for a quick turnaround.

Alliance Ventures is aimed at finding "learning opportunities" for the alliance through investing in startups, and is sup-

posed get up to \$200 million a year from the three alliance partners, although it never achieves that full amount, the first source said.

It was set up under former alliance head Carlos Ghosn, whose dramatic arrest in Japan culminated in an escape to his childhood home of Lebanon in December. Ghosn faces multiple charges in Japan, including of under-reporting earnings and misappropriation of company funds, all of which he denies.

According to its website, the fund was set up with a \$200 million initial investment and aims for up to \$1 billion by 2023. Portfolio companies include WeRide, a Chinese robo-taxi startup and Tekion Corp, a cloud-based retail platform for cars. "It wasn't established by Ghosn as a way to make money. It was for those learning opportunities we get from investing in smart startups," the first source said. "But given the tough financial situation we are facing, we are looking at investment return," the source said. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



FIGHT AGAINST VIRUS BACKED BY EU LAWS

Berlin, March 10: Europe's privacy rulebook does not create obstacles to taking action to curb the coronavirus epidemic but mass tracking of people's movements and contacts using smartphone location data would represent a clear violation.

Technophiles support the use of such data to reconstruct the movements of people exposed to the flu-like virus and identify others at risk of infection. Privacy advocates counter that this approach, used in China, subjects people to the kind of digital surveillance that has no place in a Western democracy.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) states that people's data is their own and requires anyone seeking to process it to obtain their consent.

Companies should take action to minimise both the risk of infection and violations of privacy. They can obtain information on whether an employee has travelled to a region with confirmed coronavirus cases, according to law firm CMS here.

Some systemic data collection may also be required, such as through workplace questionnaires or requiring staff to report their travel plans.

This is covered under Articles 6 and 9, which cover workplace health and safety, and using preventive or occupational medicine to address serious cross-border health threats. Employers are not allowed to take readings of the temperature of employees or visitors, nor can they require them to fill out medical questionnaires. — Reuters



Elon Musk

ELON DISMISSES CONCERNS OVER STARLINK

Washington, March 10: SpaceX founder Elon Musk on Monday dismissed scientists' concerns that his company's Starlink constellation of internet satellites would obscure the view of the night sky, predicting the network "will not cause any impact whatsoever in astronomical discoveries."

Musk is trying to seize control of the future internet space market and has already sent about 300 Starlink satellites into orbit — with plans to grow that number, potentially up to 42,000.

Scientists raised objections after the initial batch appeared as a train of bright lights shortly after they launched last year, arguing they were a death knell for both optical and radio astronomy.

Speaking at a satellite internet conference in the capital Washington, Musk said his company had already taken measures to reduce their reflectivity.

"I am confident that we will not cause any impact whatsoever in astronomical discoveries, zero," he said. "That's my prediction, we will take corrective action if it's above zero." He said the issue only occurred as the satellites were "tumbling" as they raised their orbit, and that once they achieved their final flight path, the issue went away.

"I've not met someone who can tell me where all of them are," said Musk. "So it can't be that big of a deal." But he added SpaceX was working with the science community to reduce the potential for reflection, including painting the antennas black instead of white, and placing a sunshade on the satellites.

The system is due to go live in the northern United States and Canada later this year and expand to global coverage by 2021. Musk wouldn't be drawn on the cost to users, nor on precise speed, but said it would be enough to stream high definition movies and to play high-end video games without noticeable lag time. — AFP

INDONESIA ARRESTS 6 FOR HOAXES

Jakarta, March 10: Six Indonesians have been arrested for allegedly spreading misinformation online about the deadly Covid-19, police said Tuesday, as the Southeast Asian nation's confirmed infection cases jumped.

A woman in Indonesia's second-biggest city Surabaya was arrested Monday for spreading inaccurate claims on Facebook a patient was being treated for the virus in the city, police said.

Five others were also detained for spreading false information on social media, including claims a Muslim woman flying to Saudi Arabia for a religious pilgrimage had died suddenly from the virus at Jakarta's international airport.

All six suspects are accused of violating laws banning the spread of misinformation, which carries as much as six years in prison.

"It should serve as a lesson for other people not to spread hoaxes about Covid-19 in Indonesia," senior communications ministry official Semuel Abrijani Pangerapan said.

Last month, two Indonesian women were arrested for allegedly posting virus-linked misinformation in a country with some 130 million people online — among the globe's biggest internet audiences. On Monday, the country reported its confirmed cases had jumped to 19 from six.

Scientists have questioned the relatively low number of cases in the world's fourth most populous country, and suggested there could be many more people with the illness.

Covid-19 has killed more than 4,000 people and infected over 110,000 globally since it emerged last year.

Police seized some 1.9 million facemasks from a warehouse outside Surabaya on Monday, after Covid-19 sparked panic buying and sent prices for prevention products skyrocketing. — AFP

Dorsey to stay on as CEO after agreement is reached

Silver Lake will invest \$1 billion in Twitter; 3 more directors to be added

Washington, March 10: Twitter on Monday reached an agreement with Elliott Management that lets Jack Dorsey stay as chief executive and adds three new directors a few days after Elliott's plan to push out the social media company's chief became public.

Elliott's head of US activism, Jesse Cohn, and private equity firm Silver Lake's co-chief executive officer Egon Durban, will join the social media site's board immediately and the company plans to appoint a third new director soon. Silver Lake also will invest \$1 billion in Twitter.

The agreement brings together hedge fund Elliott, which owns a \$1 billion stake in Twitter, and Silver Lake in an unusual arrangement that lets Dorsey continue to lead the company, for now, and sidestep a potentially nasty proxy contest.

"While our CEO structure is unique, so is Jack and so is this company," Twitter's lead independent director Patrick Pichette said. Twitter shares were up about 0.4 per cent on a day of heavy selling on Wall Street.

In reaching the agreement with Twitter, Elliott



Jack Dorsey

keeps a close eye on Dorsey while also giving the company more time to formulate long-term plans and repair missteps, people familiar with Elliott's thinking said. They added that the deal avoids a mad scramble to find an immediate replacement for Dorsey.

Twitter's Chief Financial Officer Ned Segal, who was privy to the discussions, said he believed the arrangement reflected more than short-term support for Dorsey. "This is by no means thought about as temporary. This is just getting back to work with the team and the strategy, ambitions and timeframe that we were working against before," he told Reuters.

"Egon joining should be a big indication of Silver Lake's support for the founder, the team and our strategy and ambitions," he said. Twitter said in its statement that it would use the Silver Lake investment to help fund a \$2 billion share repurchase program.

Twitter also pledged to grow daily users by 20 per cent or more in 2020 and beyond, roughly in line with user growth in its most recent quarter and its projections that costs and expenses would increase 20 per cent this year.

The board will also create a temporary committee to evaluate Twitter's leadership structure and CEO succession plan that will share the results publicly before the end of the year.

● **ELLIOTT'S HEAD** of US activism, Jesse Cohn, and private equity firm Silver Lake's co-chief executive officer Egon Durban, will join the social media site's board immediately.

● **TWITTER ALSO** pledged to grow daily users by 20 per cent or more in 2020

nominated four directors to Twitter's board and was pushing to remove Dorsey, one of Silicon Valley's most prominent entrepreneurs, criticising him for being the CEO of two publicly traded companies: Twitter and Square, a mobile payments company he co-founded.

Investors had also expressed concern about Dorsey's plan to spend three to six months living in Africa this year, something he walked back last week citing "everything happening in the world, particularly with Covid-19."

"We invested in Twitter because we see a significant opportunity for value creation at the company," Elliott's Cohn said. "I am looking forward to working with Jack and the board to help contribute to realizing Twitter's full potential."

Cohn will now sit on three boards including online shopping company eBay, which reached an agreement with Elliott in early 2019. Devin Wenig, eBay's CEO at the time, left nine months after Elliott got a seat, citing differences with the board.

2020 promises to be a big year for Twitter with people looking to the compa-

ny for news about the Covid-19, the U.S. election and the planned Olympics in Tokyo.

The company has taken more aggressive steps in recent months to curtail abusive behavior and give people control over the content they see on the platform. It is also rebuilding its ads system following technical issues that hurt profits last year.

Dorsey told analysts in January that rolling out features at a faster pace was one of Twitter's top priorities this year, acknowledging that the company had been slow in turning ideas into products.

Silver Lake sent its first tweet ever to announce the news, saying: "Silver Lake is excited to partner with @Twitter by investing and joining the board and we look forward to working alongside @Jack and the whole team."

Twitter is one of the few U.S. technology companies headed, but not controlled, by one of its founders. It has given shareholders equal voting rights, making Dorsey, who owns only about two per cent of the company, vulnerable to a challenge from an activist investor such as Elliott. — Reuters

AI AND COVID-19 OUTBREAK

As Covid-19 spreads across the world, several companies are coming out with Artificial Intelligence-enabled solutions

● UK-based Deepmind has said it has released structure predictions of several proteins to promote Covid-19 research



● Alibaba has said that its Artificial Intelligence system can detect Covid-19 in CT scans of patients with 96 per cent accuracy



● Baidu has come out with a tool — LinearFold — to reduce prediction time to just 27 seconds



● Chinese doctors have been using an AI-based software inferVISION, which can quickly highlight problem cases in record time

● China-based SenseTime AI has developed a face recognition system to scan faces of people with masks

● John Brownstein of Harvard Medical School is part of a team that is using Machine Learning to prepare real-time health updates



● MicroMulti-Copter, a Shenzhen-based company, is deploying drones to transport medical samples and conduct thermal imaging



US envoy presses Canada on Huawei's 5G network

Washington, March 10: A senior United States envoy has pressed Canada about its forthcoming decision on whether to allow China-based Huawei Technologies to take part in its 5G network, a move Washington opposes, officials said.

The administration of United States President Donald Trump last year warned Canada it could lose access to top secret intelligence unless it blocked Huawei 5G technology.

Robert Blair, Trump's special representative for international telecoms policy, discussed the "importance of a secure and reliable next-generation telecommunications infrastructure" and the defense partnership between the United States and Canada, the US embassy said.

Speaking ahead of the meeting, two US sources said Blair planned to underscore that a decision by Canada to include Huawei could jeopardise its access to United States intelligence.

The White House has accused Huawei of being able to spy on customers and maintaining close ties to the Chinese government, allegations Huawei denies.

Washington's campaign to thwart the company was hit by Britain's plans to give Huawei a limited role in its next generation wireless network.

One of the Cabinet members who will decide the fate of Huawei 5G equipment in Canada, Public Safety Minister Bill Blair, on Monday told legislators that "there is a very robust and important discussion going on between

ourselves and our allies" about Huawei.

A spokesman for Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said Monday's meeting was "a part of regular and ongoing conversations with the United States regarding national security and continental telecommunications".

Innovation Minister Navdeep Bains, who will also have a say in Ottawa's decision, told the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation last Friday that Canada "won't get bullied by any other jurisdiction" over the decision.

Asked whether he was referring to the Trump administration, he said "maybe that was the wrong choice of words ... we won't be influenced by other jurisdictions". — Reuters

INTEL SAYS EU GOT ITS 2009 VERDICT WRONG

Luxembourg, March 10: Intel on Tuesday said EU antitrust regulators got it wrong when they fined the chipmaker 1.06 billion euros more than a decade ago for thwarting a British rival in a case that could affect Google and Qualcomm.

The US company set out its arguments at the General Court in a rehearing of a case seen as testing the European Commission's power to go after US tech giants which offer incentives to lure customers from competitors.

EU antitrust enforcers in 2009 said Intel tried to block Advanced Micro Devices by giving rebates to computer makers Dell, Hewlett-Packard Co, NEC and Lenovo for buying most of their chips from Intel. — Reuters

HUAWEI SAGA

● **WHAT IS THE ISSUE?**

US President Donald Trump and his administration is concerned that Beijing could use the tech giant for cyber espionage.



● **HOW DOES IT IMPACT TECH WORLD?**

Huawei is a major player in building the 5G (fifth generation) technology infrastructure in the world. The tussle with the US government could impact the way 5G technology spreads across the world.

● **WHAT HAS US DONE SO FAR?**

Washington has led a crackdown by enforcing nationwide bans on the company's equipment and encouraging its allies to do the same.

● **DOES US' STANCE AGAINST HUAWEI THREATEN WORLD ECONOMY?**

As per experts, the US stance against the company could lead to a "digital iron curtain", where-by countries may have choose between working with the US or China.

Malay Silicon Valley hit by Covid-19 fears

Penang, March 10: Tech firms at Malaysia's one-time Silicon Valley of the East, swimming in orders from customers fleeing trade war-hit China, have seen fortunes turn again in the space of just a year as the Covid-19 outbreak cuts them off from Chinese suppliers.

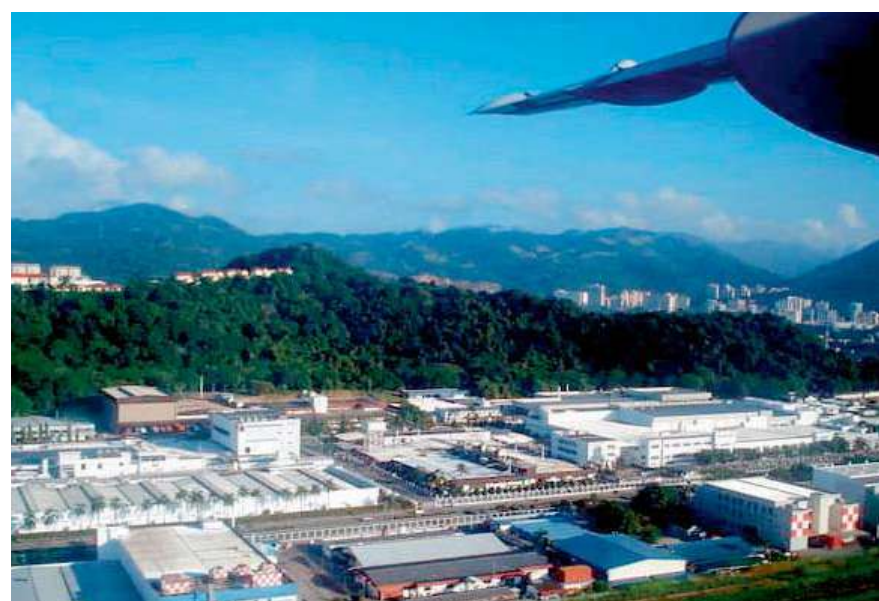
Semiconductor test equipment manufacturer Pentamaster Corp saw its shares more than double last year as sales surged by about a fifth — the steepest in its 29-year existence — as the firm became a refuge from Sino-US import tariffs.

But then China sent workers home to slow the virus, stifling supplies of parts and material further upstream. Pentamaster called alternative sources in Japan, South Korea, Germany and Italy, only to find the action had left them in the lurch too.

The firm has since lowered its 2020 revenue growth outlook to flat from double digits, while its stock has fallen more than 10 per cent since China in late January locked down the virus epicenter, Wuhan.

"Even if you source from another country, the other country also depends on China," said Pentamaster Executive Chairman Chuah Choon Bin.

Pentamaster's predicament is echoed across Malaysia's coastal state of Penang, one of the world's biggest electronics and electrical hubs, which had been losing business to China for the past decade until the trade war



Bayan Lepas Free Industrial Zone is a high-tech manufacturing area in Bayan Lepas, near the southeastern tip of Penang Island. — Wikimedia

sparked a revival.

Home to factories owned by Intel Corp and Broadcom Inc alongside numerous other firms that supply tech majors including Apple Inc, the state accounts for about 8 per cent of global back-end semiconductor output.

Inbound investment reached a historic high last year. This year, however, the goal is just a third of that, at about \$1.2 billion — though that is due to the life cycles of investments rather than the virus, the state government said.

The roller-coaster ride illustrates how quickly and broadly the virus is changing fortunes around the world. While Penang firms saw

record sales last year from customers seeking to curb reliance on China and escape US tariffs, they themselves relied on China for as much as 60 per cent of components and materials with the rest coming from Europe or elsewhere in Asia.

Analysts and local firms said the virus' sales impact would be acute in the April-June period when stockpiles run out. While many firms have warned of delays, some have seen orders surge as customers continue to seek suppliers outside of China.

"Good news: Product transfers from China are leading to more quotation requests and order over-

flow," said Goh Guek Eng, managing director at semiconductor products assembler Hotayi Electronic. "Bad news: Materials are not coming in from China."

Hotayi sources 60 per cent of components such as printed circuit boards and multi-layer ceramic capacitors from China, for customers including Samsung Electronics Co Ltd, LG Electronics Inc and Sharp Corp.

Its sales soared 40 per cent last year. Goh said its 20 per cent target this year could be at risk due to the supply issues, which could turn critical in one to two months' time and badly hit production. Pentamaster buys most

of its components such as motors and sensors from Japan, Europe and China — the latter making up 20 per cent to 30 per cent. In the past few weeks, it has changed the design of some equipment to accommodate parts from outside China, Chuah said.

"We're able to get supplies but the lead time is long — two to three months from Europe," he said, compared with two to three weeks from anywhere under normal circumstances.

Analysts said other firms likely affected by the supply disruption include electronics manufacturing services companies VS Industry Bhd and ATA IMS Bhd as they rely on China for up to 30 per cent of components and material.

Semiconductor company Inari Amertron Bhd, whose radio frequency components are used in smartphones including Apple's iPhones, might have a weak second half after the U.S. firm flagged slowing production and demand in China, Malaysia's AmInvestment Bank said.

Inari told Reuters the virus had indeed had an impact on its supply chain but "probably less than the market feared" as the situation in China was improving.

"We expect our performance to be in line with the overall growth, resilience or lack thereof, in the global semiconductor market," said Vice Chairman Tan Seng Chuan. Globetronics Technology

Bhd, a contract manufacturer of semiconductor-based products, told Reuters it did not directly source from China but that there was a small risk to its indirect supply chain.

"We had previously forecast the year over year growth for all semiconductors to be 5.5 per cent in 2020," said Kevin Anderson, senior analyst for power semiconductors at consultancy Omdia. With the virus, "now we think the range could be from 20 per cent (worst case) up to 2.5 per cent (best case), with a most likely of 3 per cent."

"All this depends very much on impact on the demand side as the virus spreads around the world and how quickly the electronics supply and logistics chains recover."

Qdos, which makes flexible printed circuit boards and caters to five of the world's 10 biggest smartphone makers, cut its sales growth outlook to "the low tens" from 20 per cent forecast last year, said Group Chief Executive Jeffrey Hwang.

"The supply chain in electronics and semiconductors is really long, so one way or another you touch China," said Hwang, whose company also has a factory in the Chinese city of Xiamen. "China is a big supply chain that has served the world really well, so companies will not stop going to China entirely but probably they will cut down on dependence on China alone." — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



Jonty wants ABD back in SA squad

New Delhi: South Africa must do anything to win the T20 World Cup, including exploring the option of bringing back the great AB de Villiers from retirement, former player Jonty Rhodes has suggested. The 36-year-old de Villiers hasn't played international cricket for nearly two years, having announced his retirement in May 2018. It was later revealed that he made an offer to play the 50-over World Cup last year, but was turned down by the national selectors. "I'm a big fan of AB de Villiers. I'm just not sure of the precedent. If you want to win a T20 World Cup, you should do anything to win it," Rhodes was quoted as saying by *ESPNcricinfo*. The ICC T20 World Cup 2020 will commence from October 18 and conclude on November 15 in Australia. "I think it's interesting because it's a tough call. You want your best team to play, it's also tough on the guys who then miss out. You know AB is a very special player so then do you set a precedent for a guy like AB de Villiers if he is not playing for South Africa, I mean why are you selecting him." — PTI



Chahal's mask photo goes viral

New Delhi: It's not only the South African players but also their Indian counterparts who are taking precautionary measures in the wake of coronavirus outbreak as leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal wore a mask at the Delhi airport on way to Dharamshala for the first ODI there. Chahal posted a picture of him wearing a mask at the airport here on his Twitter handle. As the number of positive coronavirus cases rises in India, South Africa head coach Mark Boucher has said that his players could avoid the customary handshakes during their stay in the country. South Africa have also come with a medical team to advise the players about the dos and don'ts. — PTI



Ireland's Kevin O'Brien (left) celebrates with Harry Tector. — AFP

Saurashtra grind it out

Rajkot, March 10: Cheteshwar Pujara and Arpit Vasavada gave a masterclass in defensive batting with a five-hour partnership on day two, taking Saurashtra to a strong position in their Ranji Trophy final against Bengal here on Tuesday. Their 142-run stand off 380 balls wore down the opposition who had a slight edge after reducing Saurashtra to 206 for five on the opening day. Pujara (66 off 237), who was on five when he retired hurt on day one due to fever, and Vasavada (106 off 287) batted for two sessions and five overs as the hosts reached 384 for eight at the close of play. On day two, the hosts managed 178 runs in 79.1 overs for the loss of three wickets. Speedster Mukesh Kumar removed Pujara and Prerak Mankad (0) in the final session but by then the damage had already been done. Bengal took their first wicket of the day in the fifth over after tea with Wriddhiman Saha effecting a sharp stumping off Shahbaz Ahmed to send back Vasavada.

Bengal coach Arun Lal had rated the pitch as "very poor" on Monday with the odd ball keeping low but their pace attack could not make much use of the conditions after Akash Deep struck thrice on day one. Run scoring indeed was difficult but Pujara and Vasavada's plans were crystal clear: tire the bowlers out and pounce on the loose balls.

Their stay in the middle may not have been pleasing to the eye but proved to be very effective. While it was a typical Pujara knock, full of patience, Vasavada, who is coached by the India batsman's father Arvind Pujara, made a bigger contribution to the team's cause with a back-to-back hundred and fourth of the season. Vasavada, who had made a match-winning knock against Gujarat in the semi-final, played with remarkable patience and composure.

His innings comprised 11 fours. This was Vasavada's eighth first-class hundred. It was a commendable effort from Pujara too, considering that he had not been keeping well ever since his return from New Zealand last week. Such was the slow pace of the Pujara-Vasavada stand that the first boundary of the bat came in the 15th over of the day when Vasavada pulled Akash Deep.

Bengal, who had bowled 80.5 overs on day one, took the new ball after the 85th over but it did not lead to a breakthrough. Vasavada brought his fifty with a four off off-spinner Arnab Nandi, driving him past mid-on. Pujara broke the shackles in the following over by stepping out to cover-drive left-arm spinner Ahmed. Soon after, the Test specialist survived an lbw appeal after Bengal went for the limited DRS.

The closest Bengal came to getting a wicket



Saurashtra's Arpit Vasavada raises his bat to celebrate his century as Pujara applauds the effort. — PTI

et in the afternoon session was when Vasavada straight-drove Mukesh, who claimed the ball kissed his hand before hitting the stumps with Pujara at the non-striker's end.

However, the appeal was turned down as there was no conclusive evidence. The left-handed Vasavada reached three figures 20 minutes before the tea break as he cut one off Nandi

through cover, leading to an intense celebration. The entire dressing room applauded his valuable effort for which he also got a hug from Pujara. In the morning and afternoon session combined, Saurashtra scored 133 runs in 58.1 overs. Pujara's best shot of the day came when he caressed one off Akash Deep between cover and point.

— PTI

RANJI TROPHY FINAL

Ton-up Vasavada puts on marathon stand with Pujara to wear Bengal down



A screengrab shows umpire C. Shamshuddin getting hit on the lower abdomen. — TWITTER

City umpire hurt, ruled out of game

Rajkot, March 10: Hyderabad's C. Shamshuddin was on Tuesday ruled out as the on-field umpire for the remainder of the Ranji Trophy final after getting hit around the lower abdomen area on the opening day of the title clash between Bengal and Saurashtra. Shamshuddin did not take the field on Day Two after the pain aggravated overnight and he went for a check-up in a local hospital on Tuesday.



C. Shamshuddin

With S. Ravi as the designated umpire, Shamshuddin's on-field partner Anantha Padmanabhan was the only one officiating in the middle in the first session on Day Two as local umpire Piyush Khakar stood at square leg. Post lunch, Ravi joined Padmanabhan in the middle while Shamshuddin took the role of the TV umpire. Shamshuddin's replacement, Yashwant Barde, will join Padmanabhan on Day Three. "Shamshuddin felt more pain at night and went to the hospital in the morning for a check-up. He has been advised a week's rest," a Saurashtra Cricket Association spokesperson said. — PTI

Hyderabad's C. Shamshuddin was on Tuesday ruled out as the on-field umpire for the remainder of the Ranji Trophy final after getting hit around the lower abdomen area on the opening day. Shams did not take the field on Day Two after the pain aggravated overnight and he went for a check-up in a local hospital on Tuesday.

Arpit wanted to bat like Pujara

Rajkot, March 10: Arpit Vasavada, who struck a crucial hundred in the Ranji Trophy final in company of childhood friend Cheteshwar Pujara on Tuesday, says he was determined to bat time with the Indian batting mainstay, a plan that worked out very well for Saurashtra.

Both Vasavada (106 off 287) and Pujara (66 off 237) batted for five hours on Day Two for their 142-run stand off 380 balls, succeeding in their plan to wear down the Bengal attack.

Pujara overcame illness to make a valuable contribution while Vasavada, who is coached by the former's father Arvind, could not have asked for a

bigger stage to score a back-to-back hundred. "We have been playing together for long. It was in my mind that because of Pujara's health, he will bat after me and I knew he would be there. So, for me it was about not getting tired and keep playing with him," said Vasavada.

Asked if there was a specific plan to tire out Bengal's pace attack, the left-handed Vasavada said: "We just wanted to bat as long as possible to tire them out."

The 31-year-old is having his best first-class season with four hundreds. "It was about staying on the wicket. I have learnt from Pujara's father." — PTI

SCORECARD

Saurashtra (1st innings): Harvik Desai c Abhishek Raman b Shahbaz Ahmed 38, Avi Barot c Saha b Akash Deep 54, Vishvaraj Jadeja b Akash Deep 54, Arpit Vasavada st Saha b Shahbaz Ahmed 106, Sheldon Jackson lbw b Ishan Porel 14, Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Mukesh Kumar 66, Chetan Sakariya c Saha b Akash Deep 4, Chirag Jani (batting) 13, D Jadeja (batting) 13. **Total (for eight wickets in 160 overs) 384. Extras (b3, lb10, w7, nb2) 22.** **FoW:** 1-82, 2-113, 3-163, 4-182, 5-206, 6-348, 7-358, 8-364. **Bowling:** Ishan Porel 26-10-51-1, Mukesh Kumar 38-8-83-2, Shahbaz Ahmed 46-14-103-2, Akash Deep 30-8-77-3, Arnab Nandi 17-3-45-0 Anustup Majumdar 3-0-12-0.

O'Brien's last-ball six guides Ireland to win

Greater Noida, March 10: Kevin O'Brien hit a last-ball six as Ireland clinched a consolation super-over win against Afghanistan in the third Twenty20 international in India on Tuesday. With three runs needed for victory off the final ball of the super-over, O'Brien cleared the long-off fence to end his team's 12-match losing streak in T20s against the Afghans. O'Brien made 26 off 21 balls in Ireland's 142 for eight after electing to bat first. Afghanistan, who won the series 2-1, replied with 142 for seven. "Luckily that last hit came off," a relieved O'Brien said

BRIEF SCORES

Ireland 142 for 8 (Delany 37, Naveen 3-21, Ahmad 3-25) tied with Afghanistan 142 for 7 (Gurbaz 42, Delany 2-21). Ireland won the Super Over.

after receiving the man of the match award. "We have learnt from game one to game three, about specific plans for each player. You have to adjust quickly and I think we did."

Afghanistan needed 16 to win off the final six deliveries of normal play, and paceman Craig Young claimed Asghar Afghan for 32 before Rashid hit a boundary off the last ball, taking the game into a deciding over. Gareth Delany also played a key part in Ireland's win after top-scoring with 37 and

then taking two wickets with his leg-spin. Off-spinner Simi Singh hurt Afghanistan's middle-order with two wickets off successive balls to send back Mohammad Nabi, for four, and Najibullah Zadran, for nought. Wicketkeeper-batsman Rahmanullah Gurbaz top-scored with 42 and was named player of the series for amassing 105 runs in the three matches. Bowlers Naveen-ul-Haq and Qais Ahmad took three wickets each in the Ireland innings. — AFP

Masters Games in City

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Hyderabad will host the 4th National Masters Games in February next year. They will be organised by the Telangana Masters Games Association (TMGA) under the auspices of Masters Games Federation (MGF). Addressing the media on Tuesday, MGF secretary Vinod Kumar said the Indian team for the World Masters Games to be held in May 2021 in Kansai, Japan, will be selected from the Hyderabad event as well as the third edition of the National Masters Games that were held at Vadodara (Gujarat) in February this year. Speaking about the activities of MGF, Vinod said the first National Masters Games were held at Chandigarh in 2018, the second at Dehradun in 2019, followed by the one at Vadodara last month. More than 7,000 athletes



Sports Authority of Telangana State chairman Allipuram Venkateshwar Reddy (centre) unveils the brochure for the 2021 National Masters Games in Hyderabad.

— both men and women — from 28 States are expected to participate in the Hyderabad Masters Games. Competitions will be held in 15 disciplines like athletics, hockey, football, handball, basketball, volleyball, kabaddi, archery, shooting, weightlifting, wrestling, badminton, tennis, table tennis, swimming, canoeing and rowing at the Gachibowli

Sports Stadium, Lal Bahadur Stadium and Kotla Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy Indoor Stadium. Speaking on the occasion, Sports Authority of Telangana State chairman Allipuram Venkateshwar Reddy pointed out that since the formation of Telangana, no sports event of this magnitude has ever been held in Hyderabad.

AUSSIES SEARCH FOR DHONI-LIKE FINISHER IN ODIS

Melbourne, March 10: Australia head coach Justin Langer says his team is desperately looking for a finisher in the mould of Mahendra Singh Dhoni or Michael Bevan in limited overs cricket. Their three-match ODI series against New Zealand, beginning on March 13, provides Australia an opportunity to test the depth in their middle order, and potentially hone in on batsmen who could fill the "finisher" role. "We've been fortunate in the past with a Mike Hussey or a Michael Bevan who are masters at it. M.S. Dhoni is a master of it, Jos Buttler has been brilliant at it for England. What I've learned is everyone in the world is looking for it," Langer was quoted as saying by ICC. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Harika draws in Switzerland chess

Lausanne: Indian Grandmaster Dronavalli Harika was held to a draw by Zhansaya Abdumalik of Kazakhstan in the seventh round of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix chess tournament here. She remained on four points, half a point behind two Russians.

The India No.2 (Elo rating 2518) could not overcome the challenge posed by her lower rated opponent Abdumalik (Elo 2471) in 30 moves in a game late on Monday. She was in fourth place.

Russia's Alexandra Gorya-chkina and her compatriot Alena Kashlinskaya remained in joint lead after seven rounds, following draws against former world champion Mariya Muzychuk of Ukraine and Stefanova respectively.

World champion Ju Wenjun's search for her first win in the tournament continued as she settled for her sixth draw against Frenchwoman Marie Sebag, at 2443, the lowest rated player in the field.

— PTI

Lewis drops by bushfire hit area

Melbourne: Lewis Hamilton described a visit Tuesday to parts of Australia ravaged by months-long bushfires as heart-breaking, saying it was "one of those days that really put things into perspective".

The six-time Formula One world champion, who starts his title defence at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne this weekend, is a passionate supporter of environmental and animal welfare issues. At the height of the bushfires, which have now been extinguished, he donated \$500,000 to "support the animals, wildlife volunteers and rural fire services" affected by the crisis.

"Knowing over, I think, 1.5 billion animals perished during that time as well, it was really important for me to try and support some of the people out there who are trying to look after them and rescue the animals. I wanted to come out here and see it. It's been a really amazing experience," the Brit said after visiting a bushfire aid centre. — AFP

RONALDINHO TO REMAIN IN PRISON

Asuncion: Brazilian football great Ronaldinho will remain in pre-trial detention in Paraguay after a judge on Tuesday rejected his lawyer's request that he be released on bail or to house arrest.

The 39-year-old World Cup winner and his brother Roberto were arrested on Friday, accused of being in possession of fake Paraguayan passports. "The judge rejected the defense's request for conditional release or house arrest," said prosecutor Osmar Legal.

Judge Gustavo Amarilla cited the seriousness of the case and the discovery of new evidence, as well as the involvement of public officials and business people who facilitated Ronaldinho's arrival in Paraguay.

Those factors meant the former footballer needed to be kept in Asuncion "so that there is no obstruction to the investigation," he said. Amarilla acknowledged the measures taken against the brothers were harsh but said it was his "responsibility not to hinder an investigation," which could be the case if the suspects "were to flee" the country.

Legal said he opposed house arrest because the property offered as a guarantee was only valued at \$750,000 to \$800,000.

"It's a tiny amount given the economic solvency of one of the accused," he said. Ronaldinho and his brother are spending a fifth day in a police cell in Asuncion.

They arrived in Asuncion from Brazil on Wednesday and showed their passports to immigration police, who did not immediately notice any problem with the documents. Hours later, when the passports were determined to be fake, investigators raided the footballer's hotel room. — AFP

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Foxes come to four

Vardy, Barnes net braces as Leicester win

Leicester, March 10: Brendan Rodgers hopes Leicester can kick on from a confidence-boosting 4-0 thrashing of Aston Villa, thanks to doubles from Harvey Barnes and Jamie Vardy, and secure a place in next season's Champions League.

The Foxes had won just one of their previous seven Premier League games, but remain in third and restored an eight-point advantage over fifth-placed Manchester United in the battle for a top-four finish.

Defeat leaves Villa rooted in the relegation zone and there was little from the visitors to suggest they can save themselves in the final 10 games of the season.

No side has conceded more goals in the Premier League this season than Villa and it was easy to see why as Leicester passed up a host of simple chances from poorly defended set-pieces early on.

Pepe Reina was a spectator when Villa stunned Leicester to reach the League Cup final in January and Dean Smith's decision to recall the Spaniard in place of Orjan Nyland backfired for the opening goal five minutes before half-time.

The former Liverpool goalkeeper raced well outside his box, but was beaten to the ball by the pace of Barnes, who kept his cool to fire into an unguarded net.

Iheanacho then missed a great chance to double Leicester's lead early in the second half and the Nigerian may find himself back on the sidelines in the weeks to come as Vardy refound his scoring touch.

The former England striker started on the bench as he returned from injury and had only been on the field four minutes when he grabbed his first goal in 10 games from the penalty spot after Tyrone Mings was adjudged to have handled Barnes's cross.

Vardy was back in the groove and doubled his tally 11 minutes from time when he found space at Reina's near post to move two goals clear in the race for the Premier League golden boot. "The injury over seven or eight weeks had curtailed him but his running and movement were back to what we are used to from him," Rodgers said on his top scorer.

— AFP



Leicester City's Jamie Vardy celebrates after scoring his side's third goal during their English Premier League match against Aston Villa at King Power Stadium in Leicester on Monday. Leicester won 4-0. — AFP

Atletico brace for Anfield

Madrid, March 10: Atletico Madrid may have to fight to the end to finish in Spanish League's top four but the success of their season will depend on holding on against Liverpool in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Few gave Atletico even an outside chance ahead of their throwback display at the Wanda Metropolitano last month, when guts, determination and diligence gave them a shock 1-0 lead to preserve in the second leg.

Asked to describe his team's performance, Simeone said: "The word that comes to mind is calm, that tranquility that

Live on TV
CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Liverpool vs Atletico Madrid from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony TEN 2, HD

PSG vs Dortmund from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony TEN 1, HD

you feel when you work as a team and know you can do anything."

And while after the match Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp bristled over Atletico's approach and Andy Robertson complained about the extent of their celebrations, the

sense was still of an aberration, a momentary error that Liverpool would soon correct on their own patch.

"We don't think it will be easy but as long as we can get 11 players in Liverpool shirts we will try everything we have," said Klopp.

"And for all the Liverpool fans that can get a ticket for the game, welcome to Anfield," he added.

"They've celebrated as if they've won the tie after the game, so let's see," said Robertson.

For Atletico, the challenge is to prove the doubters wrong again, not least because that is the

scenario they and Simeone revel in most.

Liverpool might be encouraged by their opponents' continuing problems since, with a win and two draws — one of them against Spanish League's bottom club Espanyol 1 hardly pointing to a team inspired to leave mediocrity behind.

Yet Liverpool have been suddenly wobbling too.

On the other hand, while their demolition of the Premier League makes the Champions League something of a bonus, Atletico's failure in Spanish league means progress in Europe is their remaining hope.

— AFP



Mohun Bagan players celebrate after winning the I-League — with four matches to spare — in Kalyani, West Bengal, on Tuesday. This is Bagan's second title from five seasons.

Bagan win second I-League

Kalyani (West Bengal), March 10: Indian football heavyweights Mohun Bagan clinched their second I-League title with a 1-0 win over Aizawl FC with four rounds to go in the season here on Tuesday.

Prolific Senegalese striker Baba Diawara scored the all-important goal for Mohun Bagan in the 80th minute to beat former champions Aizawl in their 16th round match and give their supporters a memorable Holi gift. It was former Sevilla

striker's 10th goal from nine consecutive games. With Tuesday's win at the Kalyani Municipality Stadium, Mohun Bagan have 39 points from 16 matches. They are 16 points ahead of second-placed East Bengal (23 points from 16 matches) who cannot catch up their

arch city rivals even if they win all their four remaining matches.

Mohun Bagan, who won their first I-League title in 2014-15 season, also matched Dempo's record of wrapping up I-League title with maximum matches left to play. Dempo SC of Goa had also sealed the I-League

title in 2009-10 season with four matches left to play. The title in their pocket, Mohun Bagan will also enter their second leg Kolkata Derby match against arch rivals East Bengal on Sunday with a psychological advantage. They had beaten East Bengal 2-1 in the first leg on January 19.

Aizawl were not, however, intimidated either by the occasion or the 17,000 partisan home crowd which had packed the stands. — PTI

Sindhu, Saina up for All-England

Birmingham, March 10: Undeterred by the coronavirus outbreak, Indian shuttlers will continue to chase glory at the All England Championships beginning here on Wednesday, with reigning world champion P. V. Sindhu spearheading the campaign.

The season's first Super 1000 event witnessed a dramatic build-up in the wake of the COVID19 outbreak.

Concerned about their health, seven Indian shuttlers, including H. S. Prannoy and Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy had withdrawn from the All England.

The \$1,100,000 BWF world tour event offers 12,000 ranking points to the winner and with the Olympic qualification on the line, most of the top players will be seen in action at the Arena Birmingham.

While Sindhu, who is almost assured of an Olympic berth, will look to end a nearly two-decade-old title jinx at the All England Championship by adding the coveted title to her 2019 world championships gold, former silver medalist Saina Nehwal and men's former World No.1 Kidambi Srikanth will eye valuable points to squeeze inside the top 16 before the deadline for

Olympic qualification ends on April 28.

World No.6 Sindhu will need to cut down on unforced errors and strengthen her defence as she opens against USA's Beibwen Zhang. The 24-year-old is expected to take on Sung Ji Hyun if she crosses the opening hurdle.

Saina is in dire need of some ranking points to qualify for the Olympics and she will face a stern test against Akane Yamaguchi.

Srikanth will have to get across Olympic champion Chen Long to have any chance of going deep in the draw and retain his ranking points.

World championships bronze medalist B. Sai Praneeth, who is also almost assured of a berth at Tokyo, will open against Zhao Jun Peng.

Parupalli Kashyap will be up against Indonesia's Shesar Hiren Rhustavito in the opener.

Debutant Lakshya Sen will face Lee Cheuk Yiu. Among other Indians, Ashwini Ponnappa and N. Siki Reddy will face Setyana Mapasa and Gronya Somerville in women's doubles, while Sikki will pair up with Pranaav Jerry Chopra to play Zheng Si Wei and Huang Ya Qiong.

— PTI

FOOTBALL TEAM OWNER CATCHES CORONAVIRUS

Athens, March 10: The owner of Greek league leaders Olympiakos on Tuesday said he had coronavirus, two days before a Europa League clash with Wolves that is to be held behind closed doors.

Vangelis Marinakis, who is also the owner of English second-tier club Nottingham Forest, said he was taking "all necessary measures" and "feeling well".

"I am following the instructions of doctors. I strongly (advise) all my fellow citizens to do the same," Marinakis, 52, said on his Facebook page.

Greece has announced 89 cases of the virus, including a 66-year-old man with acute pneumonia whose condition is critical.

Most of the cases come from a single group of Holy Land pilgrims that travelled to Israel and Egypt last month.

Authorities have shut schools and cancelled public events in three areas in western Greece where the group had come from. Dozens of schools in Athens and Thessaloniki have also been shut for two weeks.

The outbreak will also affect the Olympic Flame lighting ceremony for this summer's Tokyo Games, which will be held without spectators in ancient Olympia.

A dress rehearsal scheduled for Wednesday will also be closed to the public. — AFP

Football games in empty stadia

Madrid, March 10: Barcelona's Champions League round of 16 return match against Napoli on March 18 has been ordered to be played behind closed doors because of the coronavirus outbreak, both clubs announced Tuesday.

"The Champions League match scheduled for Wednesday, March 18, between FC Barcelona and Napoli, will be played at Camp Nou behind closed doors," the Spanish giants said on Twitter.

The other Champions League match on Wednesday — Paris Saint-Germain vs Borussia Dortmund match — is scheduled to be played in empty stadiums.

PSG's match at the Parc des Princes was forced behind closed doors after the French government announced a ban on all gatherings of more than 1,000 people.

The announcement was closely followed by the postponement of the Six Nations rugby match between France and Ireland scheduled for Saturday in Paris.

Barcelona said the match would be played without spectators in line with recommendations from the regional Catalan government.

Napoli, meanwhile, were forced to deny press reports that they had asked for the match to be postponed. "Napoli abides by decisions taken by the Italian government and UEFA," the club tweeted, describing the reports as fake news.

NO FANS IN MAJOR EUROPEAN LEAGUES

All upcoming professional football games in Spain, France and Portugal, as

well as some in Germany and a European Championship qualifying match in Slovakia, will be played in empty stadiums because of the coronavirus outbreak.

The Spanish league said Tuesday that matches in the first and second divisions will be played without fans for at least two weeks. The announcement came after the government outlined a series of preventative measures being implemented to help contain the spread of the virus, including ordering all sporting events with a significant number of fans professional and non-professional to be played in empty venues.

MATCHES BEHIND CLOSED DOORS IN GERMANY

The Euro2020 warm-up match between Germany and Italy in Nuremberg on March 31 will be played behind closed doors, the German Football Association (DFB) announced on Tuesday.

The game is one of several high-profile fixtures in Germany to be played without fans in the coming weeks, including Saturday's Ruhr derby between Borussia Dortmund and Schalke, and Bayern Munich's Champions League clash with Chelsea next week.

Wednesday's Rhine derby between Borussia Moenchengladbach and Cologne will be the first game in Bundesliga history to be played without fans. Bundesliga fixtures had been going ahead as usual, even as the number of people testing positive for the coronavirus continued to rise in Germany, passing 1,000 on Monday.

— Agencies