

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 19 MARCH 2020

## WEATHER

Max: 36.2°C  
Min: 22.7°C  
RH: 29%  
Rainfall: Nil  
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Max/Min temp. 36/23°C

## WORLD | 12

Biden sweeps three US states

## SPORTS | 16

IOC hints Olympics may be postponed

## TABLOID

Dhoni takes to badminton



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## AN APPEAL

We are in a critical stage of our fight against the Coronavirus (Covid-19), and the coming 7-10 days will determine how we weather the disease. Please take it seriously and follow these precautions:

- Avoid all travel unless absolutely critical.
- Avoid all gatherings, congregations and meetings.
- Maintain social distance.
- Maintain personal hygiene; wash your hands frequently.
- In case of any symptoms, self-report to (Gandhi/the nearest) Hospital.
- Follow doctors' advice.
- Heed government advisories.
- Don't believe or spread rumours.

— Editor-in-Chief

## IN BRIEF CBSE exams postponed

**New Delhi:** The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Wednesday postponed ongoing class 10, 12 examinations till March 31. "All ongoing CBSE examinations in India and abroad postponed till March 31 and will be rescheduled thereafter... after an assessment of the situation," CBSE secretary Anurag Tripathi said. "All ongoing evaluation work will be suspended during the period," he added.

## Sensex crashes below 29,000

**Mumbai:** Global recession fears, rising coronavirus cases and the Supreme Court's stand on self assessment of dues by telecom companies led to panic selling in the equity market on Wednesday. The Sensex crashed 1,709.58 to end below 29,000 point — 28,869.51 — for the first time in three years. The Nifty-50 sank 498.25 points to end at 8,468.80.

Full report on Page 14

# 8 new Covid cases in one day

Seven cases relate to Indonesians, one from Medchal; total reaches 13

BALU PULIPAKA and KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

Wednesday witnessed the most serious surge in coronavirus (Covid-19) cases in Telangana, with the state health department announcing a total of eight new positive cases of the disease late at night. Of these eight cases, seven are from among the 10 Indonesian preachers who were brought to the Gandhi Hospital here from Karimnagar on Tuesday.

This takes the total number of Covid-19 cases in Telangana to 13, including one patient, the first, a youth from Mahendra Hills area of the city, a techie, who was cured and discharge from the hospital a few days ago.

The first of the eight new cases announced on Wednesday was declared in the evening at around 5 pm by health minister Etala Rajendar, who said that one of the 10 Indonesian preachers had tested positive for the disease.

The 58-year-old Covid-19 Indonesian patient, the first in the group of preachers to be found positive, is in a critical condition

However, late at night, after 11 pm, Telangana health department released a special bulletin announcing that seven more Indonesians had tested positive for the disease. Worried over the fallout, the government is planning a widespread testing

for the disease in a 3-kms radius of the district collectorate, close to the mosque in Karimnagar, where the Indonesians had stayed for three days, before being sent to the Gandhi Hospital in the city on Tuesday.

Earlier, the 58-year-old Covid-19 positive Indonesian patient, the first in the group of preachers to be found positive, was reported to be in a critical condition at the Gandhi Hospital, with breathlessness, severe persistent

cough and other acute symptoms. Doctors were monitoring diagnostic tests for the viral load in the patient's body, its affect on the lung system, and possible pneumonia. The response of the immune system to the viral load is being checked to adjust medication accordingly. "He is not on ventilator support, but his condition is being monitored," the minister said.

Page 4: Scotland returnee from Medchal tests positive

# Ban all foreign flights: Etala

Health minister tells Centre to abandon Indians stuck abroad

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

The Telangana government has urged the Centre to ban all incoming international flights into the country to prevent the further 'import' of Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) cases.

Speaking to Union health minister Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday, state health minister Etala Rajendar urged him to impress upon the Central government to ban all international air travel into India.

The state government has steadfastly held that every one of the six Covid-19 positive cases recorded in Telangana was that of an individual who got infected



in a different country and carried it back. The first positive case of Covid-19 in Telangana was confirmed on March 2 and the sixth on March 18.

He said that while the Telangana government "was concerned about well-being of Indians stuck abroad, it is not advisable to get people who are stuck in other countries into India at this stage".

"The Central govern-

ment should work through local embassies in such countries and ensure all Indians stuck there are looked after and provided the healthcare needed. It is not a good idea to get someone with an infection into the country, given the population density and the threat of mass spread of the disease," he said.

The minister said that while it was finally a call for the Centre to make, if it wants to bring Indians back home, it can do so in special flights and keep all such returnees in special camps, under its control, in Delhi.

Chairing a review meeting on secondary transmission of disease from infected individuals arriv-

ing in the state, Mr Rajendar urged Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar to take every possible step to ensure quarantine facilities for all international passengers arriving into Telangana.

"Arrangements must be made for all such passengers to be placed under quarantine. We should be prepared to house an increasing number of people in such facilities," he said, adding, "we have planned for keeping 5,000 persons with symptoms in isolation and more than 20,000 asymptomatic persons under quarantine at different locations in the state."

Page 2: TS can isolate at least 1,000, says minister



V-P Venkaiah Naidu

## VENKAIH SAYS MPs CAN'T WEAR MASKS IN RS

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, in his role as the chairman of the Rajya Sabha, objected when members entered the Upper House on Wednesday wearing face masks as protection against the Coronavirus (Covid-19).

Opposition members demanded that the ongoing budget session of parliament be curtailed in view of the Coronavirus scare, but the government was unwilling to accede.

Four Trinamool Congress (TMC) MPs came to the House wearing masks: Derek O'Brien wore a black mask while his deputy, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray wore white.

# WB top official's son skips screening

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 18

The coronavirus scare has hit the heart of the Mamata Banerjee government — the state secretary — as West Bengal home secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay went under "home isolation" along with his

wife Sonali Chakrabarti Bandopadhyay, who is also vice-chancellor of Calcutta University, from Wednesday within two days of his meeting with the bureaucrat mother of the state's first Covid-19 patient who had taken her son to the secretary instead of admitting him

to a hospital. At least 10 more government employees, who were around them, are also in isolation at home.

The development came a day after the Covid-19 virus was confirmed in the teenager boy after his return from the United Kingdom. He came into contact

with three Covid-19 patients at a birthday party in London. The Oxford University student was found to be deliberately ignoring advisories to get quarantined at a hospital by using his mother's influence.

Full report on Page 9

# MLAs can't be held captive, says top court

Asks Speaker when will he decide on MLAs' resignations

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 18

The Supreme Court is set to decide the fate of 16 rebel Congress MLAs of Madhya Pradesh, who hold the key to the survival of the Kamal Nath government as the week-long political crisis in the state took an ugly turn on Wednesday.

The Supreme Court, which began hearing petitions on the ongoing political turmoil in the state filed by various parties and individuals, observed that as of now the constitutional court (the bench hearing the case) knew that 16 MLAs of MP, lodged in a resort in Bengaluru, tilted the balance one way or the other.

A division bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Hemant Gupta also made a significant observation that the 16 MLAs may or may not take part in the business of the House, but they cannot be held captive since they need to be ensured free exercise of their choice in this regard.

The bench also declined an offer for the production of the MLAs in judges' chambers and rejected a proposal to send its registrar-general to meet them. The court then adjourned the hearing in the matter till Thursday.

In another development, the Karnataka High Court on Wednesday dealt a blow to the Congress as it rejected a writ petition filed by Congress' Rajya



The resignation of an MLA has to be accepted by the Speaker and it cannot be said to be accepted because the Governor saw something on TV, this is a new jurisprudence

MP SPEAKER N.P. PRAJAPATI TO SUPREME COURT

Sabha nominee and former chief minister Digvijay Singh who had sought access to the 16 rebel party MLAs.

Earlier, high drama was seen in Bengaluru as several senior MP Congress leaders, including Mr Singh, held a staged sit-in before the resort where the 16 MLAs were staying, demanding access to them.

The police deployed at the resort stopped them from storming the resort and later detained them. The Congress leaders, who included six ministers of the Kamal Nath government, were later released.

Page 8: Kamal Nath firm on no floor test

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**TATA MOTORS ASSURED**



IN BRIEF

**THUNDERSTORM EXPECTED OVER TELANGANA**

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

The pre-monsoon season has begun well in advance for the state, say officials of the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD). In this regard, the local weather office has issued a thunderstorm warning for the state for the next 48 hours.

In its warning it said: "Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning very likely to occur at isolated places over Telangana." According to officials of the department, there would be chances of light rainfall over the state; however, the thundering activity would be higher than the amount of rainfall.

"We had issued a thunderstorm warning, and we predict that there would be light rainfall, coupled with thunder activity over the state," K. Naga Ratna, director, IMD told *Deccan Chronicle*. The rainfall was caused by a trough travelling over the state spanning northern Tamil Nadu to Vidarbha, she said.

Unusually, this year, these rains — pre-monsoon showers — had arrived on time. "This year, the showers began on the dot on March 1—these showers were aiding in keeping the maximums in control, to an extent," she said.

Speaking about the summer forecast, she said that the day time temperatures in the state, were on the rise. "Compared to the last 24 hours, the temperatures were on the rise. Every day we are witnessing a rise of one degree," she said.

● **THERE ARE** chances of light rainfall over the state; however, the thundering activity would be higher than the amount of rainfall.

● **THE RAINFALL** was caused by a trough travelling over the state spanning northern Tamil Nadu to Vidarbha, said K. Naga Ratna, director, Indian Meteorological Department

**ICMR to test 150 random samples**

Results to ascertain if there is local transmission which is an indication of spread

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

Around 150 samples of severe acute respiratory infections have been collected by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) from northern and western states to ascertain whether there is any local transmission of Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) disease in the country. Samples from southern states are yet to be collected.

The samples are from those patients who have been hospitalised in

both private and government sector but have no history of travel or contact with those who have travelled to any of the Covid-19 affected countries.

These results will ascertain whether any local transmission has taken place.

Medical experts, following the transmission wave from contacts, have found that the first peak wave was noted on March 4, with 22 cases and another on March 17 with 23 cases. In between these dates, there have been 15 positive cases

● **THE SAMPLES** are from those patients who have been hospitalised in both private and government sector but have no history of travel or contact with those who have travelled to any of the Covid-19 affected countries.

which have been reported.

The patterns show that cases are on the rise and there would be another peak either on March 24 or March 27. Whether these are contact or local

transmissions would be an indication of the spread.

A senior infection specialist explained, "our definition for testing right now is only contact transmission. We are not going beyond. ICMR is now opting for testing SARI, as that is the next step of verification. These samples would also have to be tested twice. If the first test is positive and they are to re-confirm it — it still means there is community transmission. Even if one test in 150 samples is positive, it means

there is local spread."

Epidemiologists on field suspect possibility of local transmission but say that it will be "mild". Will the government admit or give data? No, say medical experts. The data coming out from day one has led to doubts of actual numbers.

A senior pulmonologist explained, "Actual numbers are not being released on the day of confirmation. The data is being released slowly and gradually, which is a clear indication that it is being managed. Hence,

there could be a difference in what is being shown and the actual picture."

"High level of secrecy is being maintained and no one is allowed to talk or give out any kind of information exchange. The buzz is that there is already a lot of panic and the government does not want to create more. Let everyone practice social distancing, isolation in case of cold and cough, and allow the virus to eliminate itself. Tests are only necessary in case of fever," the doctor added.

**KARIMNAGAR ON HIGH ALERT FOR OUTBREAK**

PULI SHARAT KUMAR | DC KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 18

A high alert has been declared over possibility of outbreak of coronavirus infections here in Karimnagar with BC welfare minister Gangula Kamalakar announcing on Wednesday night that everyone who lives in a three-kilometer radius of the mosque in which a team of 10 Indonesian preachers stayed for a couple days, will be tested for the virus.

Mr Kamalakar was asked by the state government to lead the efforts to contain the disease spread here in the city and district following confirmation that eight of the 10 Indonesians, tested positive for Covid-19.

On Wednesday, the district administration shifted 13 more people — in two batches — to Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad for testing for the disease.

**SSC exams start today amid tight health vigil**

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

The Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exams for the academic year 2020 are starting from March 19. Keeping in mind the novel Coronavirus, which is at the threshold of wide-spread, the SSC has come up with new precautions and instructions.

The minister for education, Sabitha Indra Reddy in a press release, said that there are around 5,34,903 students appearing for the examinations in 2,530 centres across the state. All the required precautions have been taken to ensure the smooth conduct of the examinations, which will end on April 6. The minister also added that students will be allowed inside the centres from 8.30 am onwards, an hour before the examination starts and also five minutes'

● **IF SOMEONE** is suffering from fever, cough or cold, they will be provided with a separate room.

● **STANDBY** invigilators will take over if assigned invigilators fall sick

● **ALL CENTRES** have been strictly instructed to provide sanitizers and liquid soap, fresh and clean drinking water at the centres for the students.

● **THEY ALSO** asked to request students not to congregate after exams

grace period for the late-comers will be allowed to avoid crowding at the entrance. If someone is suffering from fever, cough or cold, they will be provided with a separate room. There are some standby invigilators, who will replace if any assigned invigilator

falls sick. Talking to *Deccan Chronicle*, B. Venkata Narasamma, the District Education Officer of Hyderabad, said that there are 362 centres from Hyderabad. All the centres have been strictly instructed to provide sanitizers and liquid soap, fresh and clean drinking water at the centres for the students. They have also requested the students not to congregate after writing the exam. Md Ishaq, who is appearing for the exams, said that keeping the epidemic of COVID-19 in mind, the school management prescribed a list of precautions which include carrying your own water bottle and a sanitizer.

The principal of St Theresa's High School said that schools and classrooms have been sanitized properly and all the invigilating staff have been given all the instructions by the government.

**C-V suspect case shifted to Gandhi**

DC CORRESPONDENT ADILABAD, MARCH 18

A person from Indravelli mandal headquarters was shifted to Gandhi hospital, Hyderabad on suspicion of suffering from the coronavirus, given his symptoms. He was shifted to Gandhi hospital on the advice of

doctors of RIMS, Adilabad. The man had gone to Pune, Maharashtra and returned to Indravelli two days ago and complained of cough, cold and fever.

However, it would be confirmed whether or not he really is infected with the coronavirus only after seeing his medical reports.

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- Maintain at least 1 metre distance in hospitals, malls, market places, restaurants, public transport, etc.
- Work from home and avoid meetings, classes, tutorials, workshops, etc., as far as possible
- Keep number of guests minimal if social events cannot be postponed

**Don'ts**

- Visiting crowded or public places
- Non-essential social, commercial, religious, cultural, sporting events, etc.
- Shaking hands and hugging as a matter of greeting
- Non-essential travel
- Tourist trips

**Together we can fight COVID-19!**

If you feel unwell (Cough, fever or difficulty in breathing), avoid exposure to others and immediately call the helpline numbers

For further information call Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India's 24x7 Control Room Number **1075 (Toll Free) | +91-11-2397 8046**  
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**IN BRIEF**

**₹5.2L property recovered, 1 held**

Hyderabad: Sleuths of the LB Nagar police station have arrested a burglar and recovered property worth ₹5.2 lakh from him. He has been identified as Sriramadasu Jagan, a resident of Masjid Galli and native of Neredcharla in Suryapet district. He was an auto rickshaw driver who turned into a habitual offender owing to bad habits. Police recovered from him 12 tolas of gold, 11 tolas of silver and a CBZ bike, all worth ₹5.2 lakh. He was produced before a court and remanded to judicial custody on Wednesday.

## Fake sanitiser makers held

GEETA VALABOJU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

A duplicate hand sanitiser manufacturing unit was busted at Cherlapally under Kusaiguda police station limits on Wednesday. The products were sold as 'Semuns Cleanse' hand sanitiser and 'Kausthuba Coclean 19' hand sanitiser. Sleuths of the Special Operations Team (SOT) of Rachakonda, along with police officers of Hyderabad and Ayush Drug Inspectors from Telangana, raided the duplicate manufacturing unit and seized huge

Semuns Cleanse and Kausthuba Coclean 19 stocks at Kusaiguda and Abdullapurmet and raw material worth ₹60 lakh. They arrested Managing Director of Seven Hills Softgel Company Krishna Kiran, General Manager Vemuri Venkata Subramanyam and Marketing Manager Vemuri Vishwanath. Police recovered 180 cartons containing 25,000 100ml bottles, eleven drums of Iso-propyl alcohol weighing 162 kgs and other material worth ₹40 lakh. Investigations revealed that Kakarlupudi Krishna



Police seizing products at a duplicate hand sanitiser manufacturing unit in Cherlapally on Wednesday.

Kiran obtained a licence for Ayush Softgel capsules and Syrups in 2018 and started operations at IDA Cherlapally.

Since the demand for hand sanitisers has increased multifold after the outbreak of Covid-19, demand for the products has skyrocketed while retailers sold them at exorbitant rates. Commissioner of Police Mahesh Bhagwat said, "Normally, hand sanitisers turn dry as soon as they are applied on hands. But this particular company's sanitiser does not." The accused distributed their products, Medipro, in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. While the approximate cost for manufacturing is ₹46 per bottle including

GST, the accused priced them at ₹144. "We have seized 50 lakhs bottles of fake sanitisers from the manufacturing unit and its sub-unit. The groups appointed distributors in both States and supplied them to leading medical shops," police said. Meanwhile, in another similar operation, police raided a manufacturing unit at Abdullapurmet and arrested Chandan Panjwani, Anil Kumar and Bommu Shanker. Around 2,500 fake sanitiser bottles and other raw material worth ₹10 lakh were seized from the spot.

## Sex worker business busted, one arrested

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU | DC HYDERABAD MARCH 18

Panjagutta police apprehended a man running a sex worker business and rescued one sex worker on Wednesday. Identifying the accused as Inti Pavan, police said that he along with another accused, Kiran, who was absconding, were running a brothel. According to the police, the accused are working as junior artists in the film industry, wanted to earn easy money and

hatched a plan to run a brothel. M. Niranjan Reddy, inspector of police, Panjagutta, said, "The accused procured the sex workers and others from different parts of India offering them ₹1,000 per session per person and have been running a brothel in the premises, charging customers anything between ₹2000 to ₹5000 for 30 minutes to an hour." The accused person was sent to judicial custody and efforts are made to nab his accomplice.

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| • HABSGUDA        | • NIZAMPET        | • KHAMMAM         | • VIZAG-2        |
| • HAYATHNAGAR     | • PATANCHERU      | • MAHABUB NAGAR   | DONDAPARTHY      |
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IN BRIEF

**SERB EXCELLENCE AWARD FOR SWATI GHOSH**



Dr Swati Ghosh Acharyya

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

Dr Swati Ghosh Acharyya, a professor from the University of Hyderabad is selected for the prestigious SERB Women Excellence Award, 2020.

Her research encompasses the development of novel corrosion-resistant materials and surfaces. Her team has recently developed an eco-friendly route for bulk synthesis of graphene under ambient conditions. Graphene-based nanocomposites have been fabricated by her team to synthesise corrosion resistant, abrasion resistant, hydrophobic, high temperature resistant and high strength coatings. These would be used for fabrication of water purification membranes and self-powered corrosion resistant sensors for heavy metal ion detection in water.

Her project 'Real-time detection of heavy metal ions in groundwater by stripping voltammetry using indigenously fabricated self-powered, corrosion-resistant, pH insensitive, flexible nano-composite based electrochemical sensors: concept to product (RISE)' has been recommended under the Women Excellence Award of Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) of the Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India, with a ₹5 lakh annual grant for 3 years.

# Chevella murder: Cops fail to make headway

Police: Jewellery links woman to Guj. or Maha

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

The mystery over the identification of the woman, who was found murdered at Chevella continues, as the police could only correlate that the woman could be a native of Maharashtra or Gujarat, based on the type of gold ornaments recovered, which they anticipate belonged to her.

On Tuesday morning, the body of an unidentified woman was found under a bridge located on the outskirts of Thangadpally village in Chevella mandal of Rangareddy district in Cyberabad police commissionerate limits.

The woman was killed and was disrobed before her body was dumped in an isolated area. Her face was smashed with a boulder and her hands were tied. The Chevella police, who registered a case, sent the body to the Chevella government hospital for a post-mortem.

The special teams of Cyberabad police, who verified the ornaments

with the jewellery stores to learn which part of the country made such designs, found that the woman, aged between 25 and 30 could be hailing from Maharashtra or Gujarat. Meanwhile, forensic doctors have already made it clear that there was no sexual assault. In addition, leaving behind the gold ornaments cleared that it was not murder for gain.

The doctors informed the investigators that the woman had a habit of using tobacco products after checking her mouth. "The death possibly took place between 2 to 3 am on Tuesday. She was strangled before her face was smashed

with a boulder. She is a married woman," said sources close to the Cyberabad police.

The police have also identified that the ring recovered from the spot was of a new model and also detected a hallmark on it, but has become so difficult to find the ring manufacturer.

The footage of the CCTV cameras installed in nearby places were of no help so far. The viscera and blood samples have been collected and stored and the body is preserved at the Chevella government hospital.

An official from Cyberabad, who is part of the probe said, "She had also undergone a tubectomy procedure. No one has contacted the police so far about a missing woman or close to the descriptions of the woman killed."

# 6 Inter copycats, 2 staff arrested

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD MARCH 18

Six Intermediate students, who were caught mass-copying during the Chemistry and Commerce supplementary exams on Wednesday, were arrested by Golconda police. Reportedly, taking ₹8,000 per paper, a few of the college staff were helping the students, who are believed to have resorted to this since the Mathematics examination.

Identifying the 29-year-old correspondent of New Madina Junior College at Tolichowki, Shoib Tanveer, and faculty members Shabha, Shahida Shareen and Syed Kaleemuddin have been caught by the police who said they helped the eight students in mass-copying.

The arrested students have been identified as Mohd Iqbal Abbas, Ahamad Nazeer, Mohd Riyan Nazeer, Nisar Ahmed appearing for the second year Chemistry supplementary exam while Firaz Mirza, Mohd Ahmed Hussain were writing the Commerce-II exam.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, K Chandra

**● SPEAKING TO Deccan Chronicle, K Chandra Shekar Reddy, Inspector of Golconda police station said, "The students from different private colleges were writing their papers in the New Madina Junior College centre. On being tipped about mass-copying, our task force team raided the premises Wednesday morning and caught four college staff and six students red-handed. Two escaped from the spot."**

Shekar Reddy, Inspector of Golconda police station said, "The students from different private colleges were writing their papers in the New Madina Junior College centre. On being tipped about the mass-copying, our task force team raided the premises Wednesday morning during the examination and caught four college staff, including the correspondent, and six students red-handed. Two escaped from the spot."

A case was booked against all of them and all arrested have been sent to judicial custody.

# FIVE NABBED FOR RAPING TWO MINORS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

Kamatipura police arrested two persons and three juveniles in connection with the rape of minor girls, who are sisters. Identifying the accused as Mohd Shafeeq and Mohammed Saif Ali, police said the two, along with three juveniles, exploited the innocence of the two minor girls.

According to the police, one of the juveniles befriended a sister, aged 17 years, about a year back and proposed to her. They girls are school and tuition mates.

According to G. Rambabu, Inspector at Kamatipura PS, "One day while the girl was returning home from tuition, the boy took her to a graveyard in front of Vazir Ali Mosque and assaulted her sexually." Later he shared his experience with the other four, who also raped her at different locations.

Later Saif Ali, also sexually exploited the victim's 14-year-old sister. All the accused were arrested and sent to judicial custody.

# AK-47 theft: 5 cops suspended

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

The Telangana police department has suspended five of its personnel for negligence in safeguarding weapons stored at the Bell of Arms in Husnabad police station.

An AK-47 and a 9-mm carbine, along with 30 live rounds, were stolen from Husnabad police

station in early 2017. Strangely, no investigation was taken up and no efforts were made to trace and recover the stolen weapons.

In February this year, police found the weapons to be in possession of a shepherd D. Sadanandam, a resident of Akkanapet village in Siddipet district. He even used the AK-47 rifle to fire at his

neighbour G. Gangaraju because of rivalry.

Subsequently, Sadanandam was arrested and his questioning revealed that it was he who entered the Bell of Arms and stole the AK-47, 9-mm carbine and 30 live rounds of AK rifle. An inquiry was conducted to identify person- nnel whose negligence had led to the theft.

Following the inquiry,

sub-inspector Sanjay, assistant sub-inspector Manemma, head constable Sampath, and constables Ashok and Manoj were placed under suspension.

When contacted, Siddipet commissioner Joel Davis said, "Five personnel, who were found to be responsible for the missing weapons, have been suspended after an inquiry."

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## IN BRIEF

### 4 Pak army men, 7 ultras killed

**Peshawar:** Four Pakistan Army personnel, including an officer, and seven terrorists were killed in an exchange of fire on Wednesday after security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in northwest Pakistan, the army said. Acting on a tip-off, security forces launched the operation in Datta Khel area of North Waziristan district bordering Afghanistan. In the intense exchange of fire, seven terrorists and four army personnel soldiers, including an officer of Lieutenant rank, were killed, the army said in a press statement. The officer was identified as Agha Muqaddas Ali Khan.

### St. Patrick's Day: 1 dead in shooting

**Corpus Christi (US):** One woman was killed and another injured in a shooting on St. Patrick's Day at an Irish pub in southeast Texas, authorities said. The shooting happened Tuesday night at Molly's Irish Sports Pub in Corpus Christi and a suspect is in custody, police spokesman Travis Pace said. When officers arrived, they found one woman dead and another who had been shot in the torso, the Corpus Christi Caller Times reported. Police interviewed witnesses and identified a suspect, who was later arrested after a brief foot chase, Pace said. The suspect's name was not immediately released but Pace said that person will likely face charges of murder and aggravated assault. Pace said the investigation was ongoing but "it's not a random act of violence."

### US court stays Texas execution

**Washington:** A US court has ordered a 60-day stay of an execution scheduled for Wednesday in Texas because of the novel coronavirus. A Texas court rejected John Hummel's appeals arguments on Monday, but in the end still granted him relief. "We have also determined that the execution should be stayed in light of the current health crisis and the enormous resources needed to address the execution," the ruling said. Hummel, 44, was sentenced to the death penalty for the 2009 killings of his pregnant wife, their five-year-old daughter and his father-in-law. He was scheduled to receive a lethal injection at a prison in Huntsville, Texas. Like every execution, Hummel's would involve many people — prison guards, lawyers, witnesses, his family and that of the victims — to be present, at a time when health authorities have warned against large gatherings in order to stop the spread of virus.

### PROBABILITY EXPERTS WIN ABEL MATHS

**Oslo, March 18:** The Abel Prize for mathematics was on Wednesday awarded to Israeli-American Hillel Furstenberg and Russian-born Gregory Margulis, both probability experts, the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters said. The pair were honoured "for pioneering the use of methods from probability and dynamics in group theory, number theory and combinatorics," the Academy said in a statement. Furstenberg, 84, is affiliated with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, while Margulis, a decade younger, is at Yale University. Furstenberg and Margulis invented so-called random walk techniques, or a path consisting of a succession of random steps. The study of random walks is a central branch of probability theory. The pair used the technique "to investigate mathematical objects such as groups and graphs, and in so doing introduced probabilistic methods to solve many open problems," the statement said. Their work "has opened up a wealth of new results" in diverse areas of mathematics and "brought down the traditional wall between pure and applied mathematics". Born in Berlin, Furstenberg and his Jewish family fled Nazi Germany for the US just before the start of World War II. After starting his career at top universities like Princeton and MIT, he left the United States for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1965 and stayed there until his retirement in 2003.

### Cherry blossom



The Washington Monument is visible behind a man walking along an almost empty Tidal Basin lined with cherry blossoms that are about to peak, on Wednesday. — AFP

## Iraq's Shiite parties line up to oppose new PM-designate

**Baghdad, March 18:** Iraq's typically divided Shiite political parties lined up on Wednesday to signal their opposition to premier-designate Adnan al-Zurfi, less than 24 hours after his nomination. The 54-year-old lawmaker and former Najaf governor was nominated Tuesday to be Iraq's new prime minister, the second attempt to replace outgoing premier Adel Abdel Mahdi this year. Zurfi has 30 days to form a cabinet, which must earn a vote of confidence from Iraq's 329-member parliament. But several Shiite blocs have already signalled their displeasure with the way Zurfi was selected. On Wednesday, the State of Law coalition, led by ex-prime minister Nuri al-Maliki, and lawmakers linked to the relatively



Adnan al-Zurfi

moderate cleric Ammar al-Hakim said they opposed the president's unilateral selection of the prime minister. President Barham Saleh, they insisted, should have referred to parliament's largest bloc to select a nominee. The powerful Fatah bloc, the political arm of the Hashed al-Shaabi military network, had also slammed Zurfi's nomination as unconstitutional. Along with some smaller parties, those

**ZURFI HAS 30 days to form a cabinet, which must earn a vote of confidence from Iraq's 329-member parliament. But several Shiite blocs have already signalled their displeasure with the way Zurfi was selected.**

opposed could add up to more than 100 lawmakers voting against a Zurfi-led cabinet. One key Shiite leader, cleric Moqtada Sadr, said Wednesday he would not announce a position on Zurfi's nomination. Kurdish and Sunni blocs, meanwhile, will likely be supportive of the candidate. Zurfi was a longtime member of the Dawa party, the historic opposition force to dictator Saddam Hussein, who was ousted in a 2003 US-led invasion. A dual US-Iraqi national,

Zurfi spent roughly a decade in the United States and returned after the invasion to serve as governor of his native city of Najaf under the US-dominated occupying force. Respected as a statesman focused on improving public services and security, many hope he could shelter Iraq from spiralling tensions between Tehran and Washington. In his first public statement late Tuesday, Zurfi pledged to hold elections within a year of forming his cabinet and vowed to respond to the demands of protesters hitting the streets for months over government graft and inefficiency. He also promised to improve security in the country, which has seen more than two dozen rocket attacks targeting foreign installations since late October. — AFP

### NEW ZEALAND DECRIMINALISES ABORTION

**Wellington, March 18:** New Zealand's parliament voted Wednesday to decriminalise abortion, in a move Justice Minister Andrew Little said modernised legislation and gave women control over their bodies. Despite its progressive reputation, New Zealand had until now maintained abortion as an offence under the 1961 Crimes Act, with jail terms of up to 14 years for those who procured a termination. While the law was never enforced and women who underwent abortions were not liable for prosecution, Little said the change was needed. "From now abortions will be rightly treated as a health issue," he said in a statement. "The previous law required a woman seeking an abortion to go through many hoops. The changes agreed to by parliament will better ensure women get advice and treatment in a more timely way." — AFP

## Russia behind Turkish soldiers' deaths: Pompeo

**Washington, March 18:** The United States for the first time held Russia responsible for the deaths of dozens of Turkish troops in Syria as it vowed accountability. An airstrike last month in the Idlib region killed 34 Turkish soldiers, although Ankara blamed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and reached a new ceasefire deal with Moscow. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, announcing new sanctions on Syrian officials on Tuesday, placed blame on Russia, which along with Iran has backed Assad in his bloody quest to crush rebels. "We believe Russia has killed dozens of Turkish military personnel in the course of their military operation," Pompeo told reporters, without naming a specific incident. "We stand with our NATO ally Turkey and will consider additional measures that support Turkey at the end of the violence," he said. Analysts widely doubted

that Assad's rundown air force could effectively hit Turkish forces but until now the United States had steered clear of blaming Russia, mindful of official statements by Ankara. After the killings, Turkey killed dozens of Syrian government troops as retaliation but President Recep Tayyip Erdogan flew to Moscow to negotiate a ceasefire with his counterpart Vladimir Putin that includes joint Russian-Turkish patrols. Idlib has been the last major battleground between Assad's forces against jihadists and their rebel allies, who are backed by Turkey. The offensive launched in December caused a new humanitarian crisis in Syria's brutal nine-year civil war with close to one million people fleeing in the dead of winter. Pompeo announced new sanctions against Syrian Defense Minister Ali Ayoub, accusing him of destroying an earlier truce through the offensive. — AFP

### US NAMES I.S. CHIEF ON TERROR BLACKLIST

**Washington, March 18:** The US has placed the new ISIS leader on its blacklist of terrorists, naming him as Amir Mohamud Abdul Rahman al-Mawli. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that al-Mawli was named the group's leader after an October raid by US commandos killed its chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The organization had earlier named Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi as its new head, but US officials acknowledged they knew little about him — and later came to believe that ISIS was using his nom de guerre. Al-Mawli "was previously active in al-Qaeda in Iraq and is known for torturing innocent Yazidi religious minorities," Pompeo said. — AFP

### NEW | STUDY When we sleep, the brain cells that hold onto a particular memory reactivates

## Scents can alter how our brain processes

**Boston, March 18:** Scents can alter how memories are processed in the brain, according to a study that suggests odours may be used to treat memory-related mood disorders. The traditional theory suggests that our memories start out being processed by a small, horseshoe-shaped brain area called the hippocampus, which infuses them with rich details, noted the researchers from Boston University in the US. Over time, especially when we sleep, the set of brain cells that holds onto a particular memory reactivates and reorganises. The memory then becomes processed by the front of the brain — the prefrontal cortex — instead of the hippocampus, and many of the details become lost in the shuffle, the researchers said. "If odour could be used to elicit the rich recollection of a memory — even of a traumatic experience — we could take advantage of that (therapeutically)," said assistant professor Steve Ramirez, senior author of the study published in Learning and Memory.

The researchers created fear memories in mice by giving them a series of harmless but startling electric shocks inside a special container. During the shocks, half of the mice were exposed to the scent of almond extract, while the other half were not exposed to any scent. The next day, the researchers returned the mice to the same container to prompt them to recall their newly formed memories. Once again, the mice in the odour group got a whiff of almond extract during their session, while the no-odour group was

not exposed to any scent. However, this time neither group received any new electric shocks. Consistent with the systems consolidation theory, both groups exhibited significant activation of the hippocampus during this early recall session, indicating they remembered receiving the shocks from the day before. During the next recall session 20 days later, the researchers found that in the no-odour group, processing of the fear memory had shifted to the prefrontal cortex as expected. — PTI

Picture for representation only

# Biden sweeps three US states

## 1,991 votes needed to clinch Dem candidature

**Washington, March 18:** Former vice president Joe Biden has claimed victory over rival Bernie Sanders by sweeping three key primaries in Florida, Illinois and Arizona, inching closer in the race to become the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee to face US President Trump in November's election. Biden, 77, won the three primaries with an impressive margin, trouncing Vermont Senator Sanders, 78, to become the Democratic party's presidential nominee. Whereas Ohio, which was supposed to hold a primary on Tuesday, postponed it due to the coronavirus pandemic. As of Tuesday, Biden had 1,121 pledged delegates in his kitty with Sanders trailing behind with 839 delegates. Either of the two presidential aspirants need 1,991 of the 3,979 pledged delegates to win the nomination during the Democratic National Convention in Wisconsin in July. In his speech, Biden laid out his vision for America, call on Americans to come together to address this global health pandemic, and describe how we will come out of the crisis stronger as one nation. Biden spoke from his home in Delaware keeping the guidelines of avoiding a gathering of 10 or more people. He urged supporters of the Sanders campaign to join him. Commending the remarkable passion and tenacity of Sanders' supporters, he said that they have shifted the fundamental conversation in this country. "I hear you. I know what's at stake. I know what we have to do," Biden said in an impressive speech. "This is over. It's over. The election is over tonight. I think that is very clear," former US president Barack Obama's adviser David Axelrod said. In his brief address, Biden said that tackling this pandemic is a national emergency akin to fighting a war. It will require leadership and cooperation from every level of government. "It will require us to move thoughtfully and decisively to quickly address both the public health crisis and the economic crisis we're in. It will require us to pay attention to the medical and scientific and health experts". — PTI



Democratic presidential candidate and former vice president Joe Biden gestures as he speaks during a campaign rally in Detroit. — AP

## Trump is tentative Rep. Prez nominee

**Washington, March 18:** US President Donald Trump has become the Republican party's presumptive presidential nominee after his home state of Florida awarded him with enough numbers to cross the pledged delegate threshold. As per the national delegate count, Trump on Tuesday had 1,330 pledged delegates in his kitty. A Republican presidential aspirant needs 1,276 of the total 2,550 pledged delegates. A formal nomination would be announced at the Republican National Convention in August. Trump's campaign in a statement said that the primary in his home state

of Florida put him above the delegate threshold to become the presumed 2020 Republican nominee for president. The primary season saw him shatter records for vote totals and vote percentages. With Florida's 122 delegates awarded to the President, he has 1,330 delegates, above the 1,276 needed to win the nomination. "The Republican Party is more unified and energized than ever before and it's because of President Trump's leadership and clear record of accomplishment on behalf of all Americans," said Brad Parscale, Trump's 2020 campaign manager. — PTI

## Sanders to assess campaign after loss

**Washington, March 18:** Leftist Bernie Sanders was under fresh pressure Wednesday to bow out of the race for the Democratic White House nomination after losing the three latest primaries in contests hobbled by the coronavirus pandemic. Political moderate Joe Biden swept all three of Tuesday's contests, building a solid lead in delegates to the party's July nominating convention as Democratic voters appeared to coalesce around him as the best chance to defeat President Donald Trump in November. Sanders, once the race's frontrunner, was consid-

ering his options as more states postponed their primary votes amid a national shutdown for the COVID-19 emergency. "The next primary contest is at least three weeks away," said Sanders' campaign manager Faiz Shakir in a statement. "Sen. Sanders is going to be having conversations with supporters to assess his campaign." Biden handily trounced Sanders in each of Tuesday's battlegrounds. In the biggest prize of Florida, the 77-year-old former vice president grabbed 62 per cent of the vote against 23 per cent for 78-year-old Sanders. — PTI

## Spanish royals cancel US visit

**Madrid, March 18:** Spain's King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia cancelled Wednesday a planned visit to the United States on April 21 where they were due to meet with US President Donald Trump due to the coronavirus outbreak. The royal palace said in a statement that the goal was to allow "the United States and Spain to continue to dedicate all of their resources and attention to the response to COVID-19." Trump and his wife Melania hope to host the

Spanish royal couple in the United States in the future, the statement added. Spain is the fourth hardest-hit nation in the world by the coronavirus pandemic, with over 13,700 confirmed cases as of Wednesday and the number of deaths rising to almost 600. The nation of around 46 million people is on a near total lockdown since the weekend, with people allowed out of their homes only to buy food, medicine or to go to work if they can not do so from home. — AFP



Gulnara Karimova, Uzbekistan ex-leader's daughter jailed

**Tashkent, March 18:** A court in Uzbekistan on Wednesday sentenced the daughter of the country's late longtime leader Islam Karimov to more than 13 years in prison for extortion and embezzlement. Gulnara Karimova, the 47-year-old daughter of Islam Karimov, who died in 2016, is a former diplomat and pop star whose legal problems began in 2014 as rumours spread that she could become her father's successor. In a closed-door session, a court in the Uzbek capital Tashkent convicted Karimova of fraud and sentenced her to 13 years and four months in jail. The court said it found Karimova guilty of extortion and embezzlement among other crimes. It did not say what activities led to the charges she was convicted of. It was the latest case against Karimova, who had already begun serving time for earlier sentences. — AFP





## SHORT TAKES

## My focus is on IPL for now: ABD

**New Delhi:** Even as the world is engulfed by the coronavirus pandemic, a burning question in every cricket fanatic's mind is whether AB de Villiers will indeed come out of retirement and represent the country in the World T20 that is slated to be played in Australia later in the year. While there have been quite a few opinions on the matter, the former South Africa skipper is keen to follow the "wait and watch" policy rather than making a statement. De Villiers said that he is taking things slowly, he will assess the situation only after playing the Indian Premier League and check what is possible and what isn't. "Let's wait and see what happens. My focus is on the Indian Premier League at the moment, and helping Royal Challengers Bangalore realise our full potential. Then we will sit down and have a look at the rest of the year and see what is possible," he explained. The fate of the 13th edition of the IPL though hangs in balance due to the coronavirus outbreak. And while the BCCI and the IPL franchises are keeping no stones unturned to ensure that the tournament is played, it will all depend on the calls taken by the Indian government and the health department. While the South African feels that workload management is a personal call, he does believe that the mental and physical demand on the top stars is massive thanks to the non-stop cricket action. — Agencies

## Finch not sure of IPL participation

**Sydney:** Australian captain Aaron Finch spoke about the coronavirus pandemic and how it has been affecting cricketers in the country. Finch, the limited overs captain of the team, said that Australia's travel advisory issued on Tuesday makes things uncertain for those in the country who have contracts with Indian Premier League (IPL) teams. The 2020 season of the IPL has been postponed from an April 15 start and Finch, who has been signed up by Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) this season said that it is hard to plan anything under the circumstances. "We've never seen anything like this," Finch told SEN. "That (travel advice) has changed over the last couple of hours. That could change in two weeks or three weeks, it's hard to plan anything. But it's just about making sure everyone around you personally is safe and you're doing everything you can to stop the spread," he said. Paine said that while he would love to be playing in the Sheffield Shield now for Tasmania, the shutdown right now is for reasons bigger than cricket. — Agencies



Former national volleyball player and secretary of the Sarojini Cricket & Fitness Academy G. Kiran Reddy (right) felicitates former volleyball coach I. B. Rajendra Prasad on his appointment as Sports Director of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation in the City on Wednesday.

## HCA matches off due to coronavirus

**Hyderabad:** Owing to the pandemic coronavirus, the Hyderabad Cricket Association have cancelled all their one-day knockout and league matches. The association have also put off biometric attendance for its employees for now.

## U-15, U-18 football trials on Sunday

**Hyderabad:** The Reeds Football Academy is organising football trials in the boys Under-15 and Under-18 categories at their Bowenpally Ground in the city on Sunday. Players born between 2006 and 2007 are eligible for the U-15 trials and those born in 2003 can participate in the U-18 category. Interested footballers must reach the venue by 7 am along with a photocopy of their Date of Birth proof and one passport size photo. For further details contact 9030035854 or 9030815397.

## Count(y) on it

Vihari says he is gearing up for a County stint

**New Delhi, March 18:** Gade Hanuma Vihari wanted to utilise the summer months playing county cricket in England but the Covid-19 pandemic has put paid to the India allrounder's plans for the time being.

Slowly becoming a key member of the Indian Test side, the 26-year-old wants to hone his skills with a prominent county side but now the deal will be inked when the situation comes under control and travel bans are lifted globally.

"I was supposed to play four English county games this season. I would only be able to tell you the name when all the paperwork is complete. Right now, it's on hold due to the unavoidable situation (COVID-19)".

The Andhra man is confident that he will be able to travel to the UK during the later part of the county season which is played from April to September. "Hope once it's under control, I will be able to play those games. It will be a learning experience for me," said the soft spoken Vihari.

The BCCI, in recent years, has allowed top cricketers who are not playing in the IPL to compete in county cricket during the summer months. The likes of Cheteshwar Pujara, Ishant Sharma, Ravichandran Ashwin and Ajinkya Rahane are some of the prominent Test specialists who have plied their trade in division 1 and 2 of English county.

Vihari's commitment to the game can be gauged from the fact that he played for his employers Nelson CC in the Tamil Nadu CA league on Tuesday. He scored 202 not out against Alwarpet CC in a drawn game. "I work for Nelson and I am committed to play when I am available. It was good match practice. Now I am back in Hyderabad. I will be taking a break for the time being," he informed.

Talking about his 55 off 70 balls against New Zealand on a green top at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch, the gutsy right-hander was a touch disappointed. "I wouldn't call it my best innings. Yes, I was playing well but that innings didn't get a victory for my team. It was good to score runs in tough conditions but you value it more when the team wins," he said.

Vihari, who made his debut in England, has a decent Test record of 552 runs in nine games with an average of just under 37. Incidentally, he has eight of his nine Tests abroad. "I have the self belief and the team believes that I have the technique to get success in overseas conditions," he said.

## BANGAR TURNS DOWN BATTING CONSULTANT ROLE FROM BANGLA

**New Delhi, March 18:** Former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar has decided against taking the Bangladesh Cricket Board's offer to become its Test team's consultant citing his personal and professional commitments.

Bangar was offered to coach Bangladesh batsmen in red-ball cricket eight weeks ago but he could not take up the offer as he signed a two-year contract with Star Sports in the interim. "They offered me the position eight weeks ago."

But in the interim, I finalised my contract with Star which gave me the opportunity to balance out my personal and professional commitments.

However, I look forward to working with BCB in the future," Bangar said.

Former South Africa batsman Neil McKenzie is primarily working with the Bangladesh side for the shorter formats. Bangar was with the Indian team from 2014 to 2019. The West Indies tour, which took place after the World Cup, was his last assignment with the Indian team.

Bangar was the only one whose contract with the Indian team was not renewed with head coach Ravi Shastri, bowling coach Bharat Arun and fielding coach R Sridhar retaining their roles. He has been busy commentating on the game ever since he was replaced by Rathour. The 47-year-old played 12 Tests and 15 ODIs for India between 2001 and 2004.

"We have spoken with Bangar (for Test batting consultant) but nothing is finalised yet," BCB chief executive Nizamuddin Chowdhury told reporters in Dhaka earlier on Wednesday.



Sanjay Bangar

## CORONA EFFECT

## DADA GETS MUCH NEEDED BREAK

**New Delhi:** With the IPL postponed to April 15 and the BCCI office shut down in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, board president Sourav Ganguly has got a welcome off day from his busy schedule. With the sporting world going into a complete shutdown, the ever-busy former India captain got a chance to cool his heels on Wednesday. "Corona virus scare... happy to sit in the lounge at 5pm... free... can't remember when I did last," Ganguly posted on Instagram. The BCCI employees have been told to work from home while there has been no headway about the fate of IPL even though a curtailed one looks imminent if the situation comes under control. Ganguly himself had indicated that a shortened IPL is a possibility if things improve after April 15. — PTI

## CORONA IS BIGGER THAN THE GAME: PAINE

**Melbourne:** Australian Test captain Tim Paine on Wednesday said the threat of COVID-19 pandemic is bigger than the game of cricket and needs to be taken seriously, justifying the suspension of almost all the ongoing action. "As hard as it is for all cricketers at the moment I think it is time that we take a break. I know it's even harder this time of year when you've got finals and trophies are on the line and it's all there to be won but this is bigger than us, bigger than the



game of cricket but it's something that needs to be taken very seriously," Paine said via Twitter.

## PROTEA CRICKETERS TOLD TO SELF-ISOLATE

**Johannesburg:** The South African cricket team has been asked to self-quarantine for the next 14 days after returning midway from an ODI tour of India due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Cricket South Africa's chief medical officer, Dr Shuaib Manjra, was quoted as saying that the players have been told to isolate themselves and will be tested for the deadly virus in

case any symptoms show up. "We have recommended the players social distance themselves from others and self-isolate for a minimum of 14 days. I think that is proper guidance to protect themselves, people around them, their families and their communities," he was quoted as saying by the media here.

## PCB AWAITS TEST RESULTS OF PLAYERS

**Karachi:** The Pakistan Cricket Board on Wednesday said around 100 people, including players, associated with the now-suspended Pakistan Super League have undergone Covid-19 tests. PSL was postponed on Tuesday after the country's Cricket Board revealed that a foreign player showed symptoms with former captain-turned-commentator Ramiz

## Monkeygate lowest point: Ponting

**Melbourne, March 18:** Australia's two-time world Cup-winning former skipper Ricky Ponting considers the 2008 'Monkeygate' scandal the lowest point of his captaincy stint as he feels he was not in control of what was happened at that time. The scandal unfolded when senior Indian off-spinner Harbhajan Singh was charged with racial-

ly abusing Australian all-rounder Andrew Symonds during the second Test at Sydney.

"Monkeygate was probably the lowest (point) in career as captain). Losing the 2005 Ashes series was tough but I was in full control of that. But I wasn't in full control of what happened during the Monkeygate thing," Ponting, who led Australia to 48 wins from

77 Tests and 164 triumphs in 228 ODIs, said. Harbhajan was eventually cleared of the charge and Symonds' career went into a downward spiral after the incident.

"It was a low point and also because it dragged on for so long. I remember coming off the ground during the Adelaide Test match and speaking to Cricket Australia officials about the case because the hearing was at the end of the Adelaide Test match," Ponting added. The incident created a lot of bitterness between the two teams with India threatening to pull out of the tour before the ICC intervened.

"We all felt let down by the end result (of the Monkeygate controversy)," Ponting added.



Vrinda Rathi (left) and Janani Narayanan.

## Vrinda &amp; Janani make ICC grade

**UMPIRES | PANEL**

**Dubai, March 18:** The number of women match officials across different International Cricket Council panels has gone up to 12 as Chennai's Janani Narayanan and Mumbai's Vrinda Rathi were on Wednesday named in the International Panel of ICC Development Umpires.

The announcement comes soon after the launch of 100 per cent Cricket, a 12-month campaign anticipated to build on the momentum of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2020. The campaign, launched just before 86,174 people watched the final of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2020 final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on International Women's Day, aims to create more excitement around the women's game ahead of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2021 in New Zealand.

Adrian Griffith, ICC Senior Manager-Umpires and Referees: "These are exciting times for women's cricket, and it is only appropriate that we have more women officials at the international level," she said.

## WHEN VIRAT'S ANTICS IRKED AUSSIE COACH LANGER DURING TEST SERIES

**New Delhi, March 18:** Australian coach Justin Langer has revealed that he felt like a "punching bag" after Virat Kohli's aggressive celebrations during India's 2018-19 tour while also calling out the "double standards" when it comes to sledging in cricket.

India, led by Kohli, enjoyed an unprecedented summer Down Under, winning the Border

Gavaskar Trophy 3-1, their first-ever Test series win in Australia.

"We can't fight back because it felt like we had our hands behind our backs and we just had to take it. You must be feeling the double standards the way their captain is carrying on and we sort of have to be careful," Langer said in Amazon's released docu-series titled 'The Test'.

— Agencies

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**SHORT TAKES**

**No plans to push Wimbledon yet**

London: Wimbledon organisers are still planning to play the Grand Slam this year, despite the coronavirus chaos that led the French Open to be pushed back until September. Wimbledon is scheduled to run from June 29 to July 12, but All England Club chiefs are aware the sporting schedule has been decimated by the deadly pandemic. Wimbledon remain hopeful that play at the grass-court tournament will be able to go ahead if the spread of the virus is slowed.

**UNCERTAINTY LOOMS OVER US OPEN**

The US Tennis Association acknowledged Tuesday that developments in the coronavirus pandemic could dictate moving the US Open, now scheduled to start in August. But the American federation said it wouldn't determine any new date for its flagship Grand Slam without consulting the other major championship organizers, the International Tennis Federation and the ATP and WTA tours. — AFP

**Berlusconi, Agnelli donate big money**

Milan: Italy's former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and the country's multi-industry Agnelli dynasty have pledged 10 million euros (\$11 million) each to fight the coronavirus crisis. The Turin-based Agnelli family, whose business interests include the Fiat Chrysler group and football giants Juventus, matched the donation made by the former AC Milan owner Berlusconi. AC Milan forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic set up an online fundraiser on Wednesday to help hospitals at the center of the coronavirus outbreak in Italy, with the target of raising 1 million euros (\$1.09 million). "Italy has always given me so much and, in this dramatic moment, I want to give back even more to this country that I love," Ibrahimovic said in a video message to launch the fundraiser. — AFP

**Roger, uncle of Mayweather, dies**

Los Angeles: Roger Mayweather, a two-time world champion turned trainer and uncle of unbeaten boxing great Floyd Mayweather, has died at the age of 58. "My uncle was one of the most important people in my life inside and outside of the ring," said Floyd Mayweather, who was trained by his uncle for much of his illustrious career. "Roger was a great champion and one of the best trainers in boxing," Floyd Mayweather said. "Unfortunately, his health was failing him for several years and now he can finally rest in peace. Roger meant the world to me, my father Floyd Sr., my uncle Jeff, our whole family, everyone in and around the Mayweather Boxing Gym and the entire boxing world." Roger Mayweather won world titles at super featherweight and super lightweight, earning 59 wins in a 20-year ring career. — AFP

**TWO MORE JUVENTUS MEN REPORT SICK**

Rome: Juventus's France World Cup winner Blaise Matuidi and Hellas Verona's Mattia Zaccagni have both tested positive for coronavirus, their Italian League clubs confirmed on Tuesday. "Matuidi has undergone medical tests that have revealed his positivity to the Coronavirus-Covid-19," the Italian champions said. Juve added Matuidi is asymptomatic and currently "in voluntary home isolation". Daniele Rugani was the first top-flight footballer to be diagnosed with coronavirus last Wednesday, sending the entire team into quarantine. In total 13 Italian League players have officially been diagnosed with the illness including seven from Sampdoria and three at Fiorentina. Zaccagni had already been in self-isolation as a precautionary measure after Verona played Sampdoria on March 8. — AFP

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# Games on tenterhooks

## Dark cloud over Tokyo Olympics, admits IOC

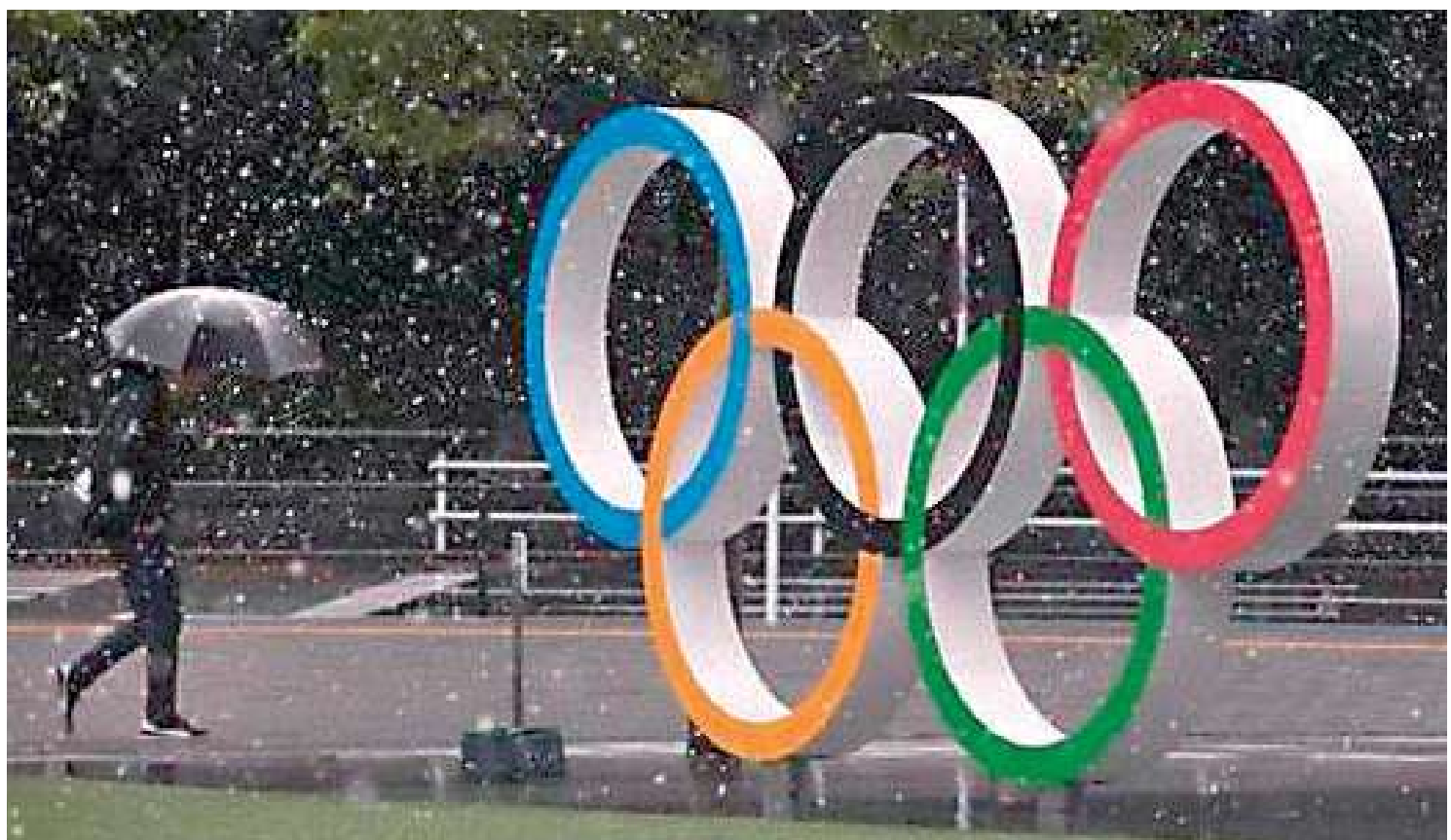
Lausanne, March 18: Olympic chiefs acknowledged Wednesday there was no "ideal" solution to staging the Tokyo Olympics amid a backlash from athletes as the deadly coronavirus pandemic swept the globe. "This is an exceptional situation which requires exceptional solutions," an International Olympic Committee spokesperson said after criticism from top athletes that they were being forced to take health risks should the July 24-August 9 Games go ahead as scheduled during the Covid-19 outbreak. "No solution will be ideal in this situation, and this is why we are counting on the responsibility and solidarity of the athletes," the IOC spokesperson added. Olympic pole vault champion Katerina Stefanidi and British heptathlete Katarina Johnson-Thompson had earlier both voiced concerns after the IOC said it was "fully committed" to running the Games as scheduled for July 24.

**ZERO RISK CONSIDERATION**

On Tuesday, minutes before the IOC statement, the Euro 2020 football tournament was delayed for a year, bowing to the crisis that has paralysed Europe and drastically curtailed international travel. Olympic qualifying tournaments are among the swathe of sports events that have been cancelled or postponed, with only 57 percent of athletes booking their places so far. Johnson-Thompson, the world heptathlon champion, criticised the IOC for telling athletes to train "as best they can", saying it was at odds with stringent government health measures.

**IOC COULD ADJUST QUALIFYING**

Almost any athlete will concede that getting picked for an Olympic team is as much of a challenge as competing for one. The IOC acknowledged on Tuesday just how frazzling the whole process could be this year, and a few leaders from the athlete community weighed in on how the uncertainty is plaguing them, as well. While pushing forward for its planned July 24 start for the Tokyo Games, the IOC outlined how the invitations might be sorted out if the dozens of Olympic trials and qualifiers slated for this spring and summer around the globe get cancelled or postponed due to the coronavirus. There are still around 4,700 out of nearly 11,000 Olympic spots to be decided. — Agencies



A man walks past giant Olympic rings near the new National Stadium in Tokyo last Saturday.

# Olympic torch relay born in Berlin

Tokyo, March 18: The torch relay was not always a fixture of the modern Olympics, which began in 1896. The relay tradition started at Adolf Hitler's 1936 Berlin Olympics the Games of the XI Olympiad and was the brainchild of Carl Diem, who was the head of the organising committee. The Tokyo Olympic relay is scheduled to begin its Japan leg on March 26 in northeastern Fukushima prefecture. Tony Perrotet, in his 2004 book "The Naked Olympics" published to coincide with the 2004 Athens Olympics captured the paradox of the Nazi regime appropriating the relay. "Ironically, considering its repellent origins, the torch race has come to symbolize international brotherhood today, and remains a centerpiece of our own pomp-filled Olympic opening ceremonies," Perrotet wrote. He added: "The Nazis knew a good propaganda symbol when they saw one." Perrotet recounts how the Olympic flame was run from Greece to Germany over 12 days, ending with the lighting of a "colossal brazier in the Berlin stadium before the Führer's approving gaze." Each of the torches carried the logo of German arms manufacturer



In this file photo, an athlete lights the lamp surrounded by German soldiers before the 1936 Berlin Olympics. — AP

Krupp, Perrotet wrote. The first person to set off on July 20, 1936, was Greek athlete Konstantin Kondylis. The torch meandered through Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Germany with each runner covering a kilometer or 0.62 miles. Perrotet wrote that Hitler admired

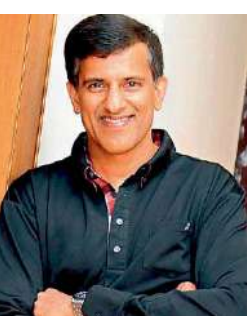
the images of Greek gods and goddesses and wanted the Olympics to promote his idea of the supremacy, the perfection, of the German nation. "Hitler took considerable personal interest in the ritual, and pumped funds into its promotion: The Nazi propaganda machine covered the torch relay slavishly, broadcast

radio reports from every step of the route, and filled the Games with the iconography of ancient Greek athletics." The first Olympic flame appeared at the 1928 Amsterdam Games, and then again in 1932 in Los Angeles. There was no relay until 1936, and it's been continuous since then. The

Olympics were canceled during World War II (Tokyo was to hold the 1940 Games) and resumed in London in 1948. There have been modifications along the way. The flame for the Summer Olympics has always been lit in Ancient Olympia, Greece, but Winter Olympic torches have not always been lit there. — AP

# Vimal lashes out at overseas coaches

New Delhi, March 18: Former India badminton coach Vimal Kumar is extremely disappointed with the way Indonesian doubles coach Flandy Limpele left abruptly in an Olympic year and said foreign appointees must be held accountable for departing without completing their tenures. Limpele, who was hired last March, recently stepped down as India's doubles coach, citing family reasons, becoming the fourth such foreign coach to have resigned without completing the tenure. "It was very unfortunate and unprofessional of Flandy to leave this way. When the doubles players had qualified for Olympics and had chances of doing well, to leave in the middle of it, I was disappointed," Vimal, who served as India's chief national coach from 2003 to 2006, said. "I had a long chat with him in January. He had said then that some players were not disciplined but he said he will work with them and then sud-



denly he left just before All England," he added. Earlier, Korean Kim Ji Hyun, who guided P. V. Sindhu to a world championship gold, made an unceremonious exit last September. Renowned Indonesian coach Mulyo Handoyo also resigned

abruptly in late 2017 before joining the Singapore squad. Malaysia's Tan Kim Her stepped down as India's doubles coach early last year, 18 months before his tenure was to end. "I think they have to be made accountable. We need to be very clear that they stick to the group, or the certain number of players that they have to handle. It should be in the contract," Vimal said. "We are paying them huge money, so we have to take that responsibility. They just can't walk off without notice," he said. Only four Indian shuttlers — Sindhu, B. Sai Praneeth and men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy — are assured of a spot at the Tokyo Games. There is little hope that Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth will be able to make the cut, especially after Badminton World Federation (BWF) was forced to postpone all events due to the Covid-19 pandemic. — PTI

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