

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 5 MARCH 2020



WEATHER

Max: 35.1°C
Min: 21.4°C
RH: 36%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 34/21°C

ASTROGUIDE

Vikari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Shuddha Dasami till 1.12 pm
Star: Arudra till 11.20 am
Varjyam: 10.57 pm to 12.29 am (Friday)
Durmuhurtam: 10.30 am to 11.17 am; 3.12 pm to 3.59 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
NIZHI CALENDAR
Rajjab 9,1441 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.32 am
Zohar: 12.38 pm
Asar: 4.44 pm
Maghrib: 6.29 pm
Isha: 7.36 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.22 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.31 AM
MOONRISE TODAY NA
MOONSET TOMORROW 2.38 AM

COUNTER POINT

Only Ygrade? You should work harder to get Z-plus security cover!

US uses airstrike against Taliban

Kabul: The US launched an airstrike against Taliban fighters to defend Afghan forces on Wednesday, an American military spokesman said, as violence spirals after a string of deadly attacks by the insurgents, threatening the country's nascent peace process into grave doubt.

Global virus toll touches 3,123

Belling: The death toll across the world due to Covid-19 mounted to 3,123 and confirmed cases surpassed 91,783. A total of 81 countries have been affected. Iran said pm Wednesday that the contagion has killed 92 people amid 2,922 confirmed cases, the most in the world outside of China.

First animal gets Covid-19

Hong Kong: The pet dog of a coronavirus patient in Hong Kong was confirmed to be infected with the disease in a likely case of human-to-animal transmission, authorities said on Wednesday. The canine, belonging to a 60-year-old woman, had repeatedly tested "weak positive" for the virus since Friday, when it was quarantined at an animal centre.

INSIDE

NATION - PG8
JK lifts ban on social media

BUSINESS - PG13
SC sets aside RBI ban on cryptocurrencies



WORLD | 11
Biden wins nine of 14 states



SPORTS | 15
Indian women vs England in T20 World Cup semis

TABLOID
Fear in the time of the coronavirus

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Vol. 83 No. 64 Established 1938 | 32 PAGES | ₹6.00

IT corridor feels Covid-19 jitters

Employee in Mindspace tests positive for virus, IT firms ask staff to work from home

ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Panic spread, first across the Raheja Mindspace IT Park, and then the rest of the software hub of Cyberabad, on Wednesday when a company in one of its many buildings announced that one of its employees has been found tested positive for Coronavirus (Covid-19).

HOUSEKEEPING STAFF SECOND PATIENT IN CITY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

TECHIES RISK LIVES EN ROUTE GANDHI

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

ETALA PUTS UP BRAVE FRONT AS VIRUS SPREADS

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

A city already on the edge since Tuesday, when the first positive case was confirmed in Hyderabad, IT employees and their management from all over the city pressed the panic button. Many offices asked their employees to work from home for the next few days.

The mayhem began with the company DSM, which has an office in Mindspace's building number 20, had one of its employees, who had recently travelled to Italy, reportedly tested positive for Covid-19.

In the morning, the company sent an internal mail to all its employees, asking them to leave the office immediately and work from home instead.

The screenshot of this email went viral on Twitter and was shared widely on WhatsApp and other social media platforms.

Several vernacular TV news channels also ran with this image.

Within an hour, employees of all companies in the building had learnt of the development.

Technologies, which has offices on the sixth and tenth floor of the building, asked all its employees to leave immediately as a precautionary measure, telling them to work from home.

Cognizant, which has an

A housekeeping staffer of a private hospital, who had come in contact with the confirmed case of Covid-19 while mopping and cleaning the floor of the patient's room, was declared on Wednesday to be the second positive case of Coronavirus (Covid-19) in the city based on preliminary tests.

The techie (patient zero), from Mahendra Hills was admitted to the private hospital in Secunderabad for three days for treatment for cough and cold. The samples of the staff were sent to the National Institute of Virology, Pune, for a second and final round of testing.

A lopsided approach to testing possible Novel Coronavirus cases (Covid-19), could have already left hundreds of city people in the lurch with potential victims of the disease being asked by authorities to go to the Gandhi General Hospital for check-ups and drawing of samples.

In making this trip, and a return trip back home to begin a mandatory self-

quarantine period, such individuals have been coming into contact either with cab drivers, fellow passengers in the metro trains or buses.

This mode of travel, using public or private transport has the potential to expose more people to the possibility of catching the disease in the event any of the suspects is later proven to have the disease.

For instance, on Wednesday, 72 employees of an IT firm in Jubilee

Hills rushed to the Gandhi General Hospital (GGH) to get themselves evaluated as the sample of one of their employees was sent to the National Institute of Virology for a second test for Covid-19. The techies' colleague had tested positive for the disease and was currently in Gandhi hospital for treatment.

Since there is no provision in place at present for collecting samples from potential disease victims at their homes, such individuals have no option but to visit the hospital using the mode of transport they can either afford, or find convenient. These employees were asked to come via their own transport to Secunderabad.

"They might have used public transport like the metro rail, cabs, in unlikely cases maybe an RTC bus, and some of them came in a car pool to the hospital."

Even as the state government awaits Covid-19 test results from the sample of two more patients, both women, who are currently admitted to the Gandhi General Hospital (GGH), an employee of DSM, an IT company, and a housekeeping department staffer from Apollo Hospitals in Secunderabad, health minister Etala Rajendar on Wednesday braved to say that he was hoping that the results would come in the negative.

Samples collected from the two patients were sent to the National Institute of Virology in Pune for confirmation tests. "We expect the results would come in the negative."

Telangana has so far one positive case of Covid-19, a 24-year-old male techie who is said to have contracted the disease while in Dubai recently on a work related trip.



Techies leave their offices in the middle of work at Mindspace after a co-worker in their building was confirmed to have contracted Covid-19 on Wednesday. — R. PAVAN

Page 3: Second test to ensure no false positives

Page 8

- Indian cases jump to 25
- All airports to screen for virus

Page 2: Tension in software firm palpable

Masks, sanitisers are a sell-out

Docs upset with isolation wards

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

With Coronavirus (Covid-19) scare rising in the city, pharmacies are having a field day with people walking in as late as 11.30 pm, looking for masks and hand sanitisers. Ever since a resident of Mahendra Hills was confirmed positive to be carrying the virus strain, hand sanitisers and face masks have been flying off shelves, say pharmacists.

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Members of the Telangana private hospitals and nursing homes association (THANA) found fault with the location of isolation wards in core city hospitals like Gandhi Hospital, Government General and Chest Hospital, Erragadda and Fever Hospital in Nallakunta has been creating panic among citizens. Dr Rao said that the government could have instead established these isolation wards in thousands of empty Rajiv Grahakalpa houses located in the city outskirts.

Page 3: 32,144 flats vacant on city outskirts

"We do not get people coming in this late normally. But on Tuesday, people came into the store and bought off the entire stock of face masks we have. It seems more like panic buying, but it is good for business," said Arun, a pharmacist, who works in a store next to Shenoy Hospital.

Maybe that is what explains the sudden rise in price of face masks, which used to sell for ₹10 per piece to ₹20 in a matter of days. Even residents of the area rue that the positive case in Mahendra Hills has forced them to come out in the night to buy stocks, and houses away from this. This has created a certain

gical masks, as Coronavirus is six feet between 400 and 500 microns.

Dr Vishnum Rao Veerapaneni, pulmonologist, said that the decision to set up isolated wards in core city hospitals like Gandhi Hospital, Government General and Chest Hospital, Erragadda and Fever Hospital in Nallakunta has been creating panic among citizens. Dr Rao said that the government could have instead established these isolation wards in thousands of empty Rajiv Grahakalpa houses located in the city outskirts.

"They appealed to citizens to use handkerchiefs to cover their faces, saying it was sufficient and there was no need for surgical masks, as Coronavirus is six feet between 400 and 500 microns.

Dr Vishnum Rao Veerapaneni, pulmonologist, said that the decision to set up isolated wards in core city hospitals like Gandhi Hospital, Government General and Chest Hospital, Erragadda and Fever Hospital in Nallakunta has been creating panic among citizens. Dr Rao said that the government could have instead established these isolation wards in thousands of empty Rajiv Grahakalpa houses located in the city outskirts.

"I heard of the person, who came back from Dubai and brought along the virus. So in a bid to

keep ourselves safe, we are purchasing masks and sanitisers. Since, the pharmacy over here has run out of sanitiser, we will pick it up first thing tomorrow," said Ashwin, a resident of East Marredpally.

It was not just residents taking precautions. Even schools in Marredpally, like the Auxilium High School and Amrita Vidyalaya declared a holiday for its students.

The situation was no different further westwards in the city. "Hand sanitisers are something that I would not generally use, but fear of the virus has forced most of us to bring them out of cold storage and use them. If pharmacies are running out of these stock, then it would be difficult to run back to the sink and wash hands frequently," said Aarti, a resident of Madhapur.

Apart from shortage of peripheries, those living in Kukatpally, too have expressed their concern about the spread of the virus. "We need to have sanitisers and masks as Kukatpally is a place where there are many students. We don't know who may have contracted the virus," said Siva Sai, a resident of Kukatpally.

Techies risk lives en route Gandhi

Page 2: Virus not transmitted locally: Etala

Page 2: Techies exposed to many passengers

Page 2: Tension in software firm palpable



Etala Rajendar

Lifebuoy

A public service message from Lifebuoy.

PREVENT THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS

Wash hands frequently with soap.

Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer for instant germ-kill when out of home.

Consult your doctor if you have cough, cold, fever or feel breathless.

Available at SMART SUPERSTORE

*Washing hands with soap and water or use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is one of the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended measures to help reduce risk of Coronavirus infection. *Please follow additional guidelines recommended by health authorities like WHO, C.D.C./Local health authorities.

EXPELLED BJP MLA SENGAR CONVICTED FOR HOMICIDE

New Delhi: A court in Delhi on Wednesday convicted expelled BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar of culpable homicide not amounting to murder in the death of the Uttar rape victim's father. District Judge Dharmesh Sharma said Sengar had no plan of killing him.

Report on Page 9

CONGRESS ALLEGES BJP BID TO PULL DOWN MP GOVT.

New Delhi, March 4: Nine MLAs of the Madhya Pradesh Congress did a disappearing act out of which four were "rescued" by party leaders in a midnight fracas on Wednesday putting the state government on the edge.

Report on Page 8

PREZ REJECTS LAST NIRBHAYA CONVICT'S MERCY PETITION

New Delhi, March 4: The Delhi government on Wednesday moved a city court seeking a fresh date for execution of the four convicts in the 2012 Nirbhaya gangrape and murder case, after President Ram Nath Kovind rejected the last remaining mercy plea in the case.

Report on Page 9



Kamal Nath

24x7 control centre set up for Covid-19

Etala says if situation warrants, top health department officials will stay put at the command control centre for as long as it is required

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

In what appears to be clear preparation for possible worsening of the situation with respect to potential increase in Covid-19 cases and controlling the spread of the disease in the state, the Telangana Government on Wednesday announced that it was setting up a Covid-19 Command and Control Centre (C19CCC) that will work round-the-clock.

The C19CCC will function from the Directorate of Medical Services office in Koti and will begin functioning from Thursday.

With the state already recording one positive Covid-19 case, the government is learnt to be fearing the worst with respect to samples from two more patients, both described as "carrying heavy viral load" by Government of India on Wednesday - that were sent to the National Institute of Virology in Pune for confirmation tests. "The results of tests on these samples are expected on Thursday. The final results will be announced by Government of India," Health Minister Etala Rajendar told a news conference.

The awaited test results pertain to possible Covid-19 disease-carrying individuals, a woman housekeeping staff member of Apollo Hospital in Secunderabad, and the other a software company employee who recently returned from Italy. Mr Rajendar said if the situation warrants, he, along with top Health Department officials will stay put at the C19CCC for as long as required from where he and others will monitor the Covid-19 situation in the state, and coordinate with hospitals and officials from various departments on the field.

AP BABUS FLOUT NORMS ON COVID-19

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 4

Acting in a highly irresponsible manner, a team of senior civil servants from Andhra Pradesh violated Central government guidelines relating to Coronavirus and skipped the mandatory self-quarantine period after returning from South Korea, one of the worst Covid-19 virus hit countries marked by 26 deaths so far.

Making matters worse, one of the team members, Rajat Bhargav, special chief of the industries department, proceeded to Saudi Arabia within a few days after returning from South Korea and have now been attending court at the Andhra Pradesh High Court. As per health guidelines issued by the centre, "those who have arrived from any of the countries affected by Coronavirus should remain under strict home isolation for 28 days from the date of arrival in India, irrespective of whether they are symptomatic or asymptomatic."

Mr Bhargav, along with P Madhusudan, managing director, AP High Grade Steels Limited, visited a steel plant in Dangin, South Korea, between February 16 and 18. Though industries minister Mekapati Gautham Reddy was also scheduled to go to Decan, he opted out due to the outbreak of Covid-19.

"I came back (from South Korea) before the outbreak," Mr Bhargav tried to rationalise while speaking to Decan Chronicle. "Guidelines in this regard came when I was in Saudi Arabia and we all followed those," he claimed. But both his contentions are not true.



Many Covid-19 suspects visited the Gandhi Hospital on Wednesday to undergo tests.

- S. SURENDER REDDY

Report to work without virus fear, techies told create anxiety

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

IT and Industries Secretary, Jayesh Ranjan, and Cyberabad Police Commissioner, VC Sajjanar, on Wednesday appealed to the people from the city not to get carried away about reports on Covid-19 and its reported effect on the IT sector.

Addressing a crowded press conference, Mr Ranjan said many IT companies were unnecessarily in panic, and creating confusion by asking their employees to leave office and work from home. He added that the case pertaining to a DSM employee that created panic was not confirmed.

"The samples, according to our tests here, showed a borderline case. We have sent them to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune. We will get a clear picture on Thursday when the results come to us," he said.

"There are multiple reports which suggest Mind-space has been evacuated fully. This is not true. Only one building, Building 20, has been evacuated. Once the building is sanitised properly, employees can return to work."

They stated that Sajjanar's office would be the nodal agency, where companies are required to ask before taking such measures in the future. They said that companies would be told to check with the commission's office whether they could order the evacuation. The Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC) would work closely with the companies to educate them on these matters, they stated.

Mr Ranjan, referring to Shamsabad, has been referred to visit the hospital for checks because of exhibiting some symptoms.

However, a senior health department official sought to allay any fears of possible suspects using public transport. "Till now there has been no local transmission of the virus. In Hyderabad, so far there is no local transmission meaning of person to person without a travel history abroad."

"The 29 techies whose samples were collected "are those who were in close contact with the one suspect, whose final test results are awaited from NIV Pune. These were identified as attending meetings with this individual, using the same lift, being near a water cooler, sharing lunch and having travelled in the same cab. Others who were advised to home quarantine did not have any close contact with the potential victim," the official explained.

The fear of being quarantined is spreading as people are spreading false rumours that suspected cases are being tied and treated in Gandhi Hospital. Doctors have strongly refuted these false reports and stated that an isolation ward in a normal hospital room with bed and the patient is just kept alone. The staff nurse and doctors check vitals like blood pressure and heart rate every one hour and if the patient is on saline, the drip is checked. Doctors and nurses have to enter the room only in uniform and masks. They have to maintain a distance of two metres, according to World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines. The hospital serves food and water and medicines are also provided to those who are placed on medication. Once a Covid-19 case is confirmed, there are no medicines but only symptomatic treatment of anti-viral as recommended by the WHO. Interestingly, all the anti-viral medicines are produced in Hyderabad by pharmaceutical companies based here and that is a relief as there are sufficient stocks, stated senior doctors.

Mr Rajendar reiterated that there was absolutely no need for any panic or fear over Coronavirus as the "government had put in place every possible measure for treatment and containment of the disease."

He appealed to the public to cover their mouth while coughing or sneezing and practice good hand hygiene. "If anyone feels they have any symptoms of the disease or fear that they may have caught it, we urge them to call 144 helpline for advice and guidance," Mr Rajendar said.

Asked if the decision by the government to send all its employees home was correct and its announcement of a positive Covid-19 result of its employee before the second test was completed, the health minister said that the company may have acted in this manner as a matter of abundant precaution.

He made it clear that only the central government was authorised to announce positive case test results, adding that unless it was confirmed that the IT employee had a travel history from abroad, it would be incorrect to make such an announcement.

Mr Rajendar had earlier told that given the summer had set in, it was unlikely there would be any case of the virus in the state.

Mr Rajendar said that the organisation had already distributed over 5,000 masks across the city. However, he also admitted that the move could be misused by the drivers. "The drivers could claim the masks for themselves instead of giving them to sick passengers. I hope they act in good faith," he added.

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DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

At Deloitte, whose mega office is near Meeanakshi Tech Park, employees were sent detailed mails listing out measures the company was taking against spread of Covid-19. One email listed out restriction of locations from where none of its employees could travel to and from.

An employee added that a large party for employees, scheduled in a convention centre nearby, has also been cancelled. While Adobe sent a reassuring email to all employees, folks working at HSBG remained calm and braved the day. People at Oracle were allowed to leave but no one was asked to go.

The panic having set the fallout on the technology district and its various companies would be clearer tomorrow.

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COVID-19 SCARE GRIPS TAXI DRIVERS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Taxi drivers across the city are wary of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis in Hyderabad. They fret that people involved in their profession in cities such as Beijing and Bangkok across Asia have been at a higher risk of infection due to the nature of their job. They plan on handing out masks to their passengers, who exhibit signs of being unwell, to prevent the possible transmission of the virus.

Shaikh Salauddin, national general secretary of the Indian Federation of App Based Transport Workers said, "The drivers must get a repeat of the phenomenon in these cities in Hyderabad. This is why we are distributing masks to cover the face and mouth. These masks are intended for the drivers to be given to passengers. This is our way of reminding them to be socially responsible."

Mr Salauddin said the organisation had already distributed over 5,000 masks across the city. However, he also admitted that the move could be misused by the drivers. "The drivers could claim the masks for themselves instead of giving them to sick passengers. I hope they act in good faith," he added.

VIRUS NOT TRANSMITTED LOCALLY: ETALA

From Page 1

Mr Rajendar reiterated that there was absolutely no need for any panic or fear over Coronavirus as the "government had put in place every possible measure for treatment and containment of the disease."

He appealed to the public to cover their mouth while coughing or sneezing and practice good hand hygiene. "If anyone feels they have any symptoms of the disease or fear that they may have caught it, we urge them to call 144 helpline for advice and guidance," Mr Rajendar said.

Asked if the decision by the government to send all its employees home was correct and its announcement of a positive Covid-19 result of its employee before the second test was completed, the health minister said that the company may have acted in this manner as a matter of abundant precaution.

He made it clear that only the central government was authorised to announce positive case test results, adding that unless it was confirmed that the IT employee had a travel history from abroad, it would be incorrect to make such an announcement.

Mr Rajendar had earlier told that given the summer had set in, it was unlikely there would be any case of the virus in the state.

I think screening at airport has to be much better. Worried about the school going kids as they have exams. There are also travel plans for the summer but now it has to be put on hold."



BHARATHI SHUSHEEL Architect

I shudder every time I have to answer the door or go outside, now since they are saying that opening the door could also expose me to viruses. But, in this day and age where almost everything is made in China, I hope that this virus would break as easy as Made in China products.



AARTI VISHAL MITAL

As we have seen, how the government mechanism functions, more than search for the cure, we see nothing, just the statements and social media promotions.



D. RAMA KOTESWARA RAO Air-Condition Solutions consultant

Impact of media over the outbreak, misinformation creating panic, the sales in many sectors have gone down. Before posting anything on social media, do re-check it. By proper information we can fight it.



DIVYA MANDALI Designer

The government will definitely control this virus as it was able to control deadly diseases like Dengue, Swine flu. Prime Minister Modi introduced Swachh Bharat, through this everyone learnt hygiene and health.



Y. WINDHYA VASINI Retired Principal

Right information has to be given out to people. Presently, there is panic mode. Children are not being sent to school, professionals are opting for work from home and many others are cancelling their social events as they fear for the spread of the virus. This is scary. The response of the people is appreciated but for how long can it be done.



B. MADHAN GOUD Businessman Wellness Industry

Covid-19, its entry is like a wild fire and I am not sure if the government can handle it. The normal viral fevers and dengue were not controlled by the government, how will they control coronavirus which is much lethal and has no antidote yet. We saw unavailability of beds in government hospitals when the viral broke out, now this is an epidemic.



DEEPTHI NIHARAKA Engineering Graduate

India is pioneer in the field of Medicine. Definitely the government is ready to harness this Covid-19. It's just a matter of time. Only thing is people should cooperate with the system. They have to also self-isolate and follow all the guidelines. Till they do that, it will not help.



SNIGDHA ADDALA Law Student

Businesses have come down drastically, because the situation is scary and families fear moving out. Socializing is totally suffering the most because of this virus.



ADIYA NARAYANA Businessman

I am scared as infants have immunity problems and there is a shortage of sanitizers and masks, adding to our panic. Rumours are causing distress. The government should start massive awareness drives to bring some comfort to the anguished lot. Our ignorance is being exploited. UMA DEVI Mother of an infant baby



UMA DEVI Mother of an infant baby

(As told to Sanjay Samuel Paul)

SHORT TAKES

32,144 FLATS VACANT ON CITY OUTSKIRTS

From Page 1

Dr Vishnu Rao Veerapaneni, pulmonologist, opined that setting up isolation wards in isolated places would be ideal as it would not create any inconvenience to citizens who visit government hospitals.

As many as 32,144 flats were lying vacant at Mylardevulapally, Laxmignoti, Almassuda and Ahmedguda Kuntur, Annogidda, Vikarabad and Tandur other places in the outskirts of the city.

Mr M.V. Prasad, general secretary, THANA said that the chance of survival of Covid-19 in the city was very low. He said that the virus cannot survive if temperature goes beyond 27 degree Celsius. There is hardly any chance therefore of its spread now as average temperature in the city for since past one week has been 35 degree Celsius.

Mr Prasad advised citizens not to attend public meetings, weddings, any mass gathering and use public transport like metro and RTC sparingly. He said that it could be safe if citizens wash their hands once in an hour, especially at teaching surfaces at public places.

THANA members said that private hospitals would give initial treatment for Covid-19 suspect cases under corporate social responsibility (CSR), since government hospitals cannot meet public demand. They said that they have given representation to city mayor Bonthu Rammoan about the voluntary treatment during ongoing crisis.

● COMMENTING ON surgical masks, Dr Vishnu Rao Veerapaneni said that citizens can use handkerchiefs in absence of surgical masks in the market

● HE ADDED that citizens can either stand in the sun for two hours or use sanitizers to prevent the virus from spreading

Court steps in to contain Covid-19

Issues riders for Holi celebrations, rallies

VJUNJI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

As more possible positive cases of Covid-19 are found in the state and it spreads its wings through different cities in the country, the Telangana High Court on Wednesday directed the state government to be cautious in giving permissions for public gatherings and assemblies, whether for festivals or protests.

The court ordered the state to take preventive curative steps to further adversely affect the number of infections. The court also advised the issuing of advisories to all state departments to be careful and has given advisories to the lower courts in the state.

A division bench, comprising chief justice Raghavendra Singh Chathan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy, was dealing a PIL which sought directions from the court to order the state government to prohibit the conduct of celebrations of Holi festival in the coming week, to prevent the spread of the virus.

The court, while adjudicating the PIL, asked the state to conduct meetings with all the stake holders of the state along with DG, prisons, today in the evening to develop an action plan to tackle the spread of the virus.

Further, the court asked the state to make sure that no undertrial prisoner should be produced before the trial court, unless it is found necessary by the concerned authorities. It also directed the state judiciary not to take adverse steps against any accused on the grounds that they do not appear

BENCH DIRECTIVE TO ADMIN ON ASSEMBLIES OF ANY KIND

● The bench directed the state to take precautionary steps and to issue advisories to any organisation that has planned to hold Holi celebrations on a large scale to inter-mingle, interact, and gather as little as possible.

● It further directed the government to review the permissions that government agencies may have given for gatherings of people in assemblies of any kind.

● The state was also directed to immediately issue advisories to all the schools, colleges, old age homes, orphanage shelter homes and jails with regard to the preventive and curative measures that can be taken by such institutions.

● The court stressed that the government must immediately consider whether it was feasible to set up the exclusive isolation wards or to have exclusively dedicated hospitals which with spread of the virus.

before the court.

The court requested the members of the high court bar association and the bar associations of the lower courts in the state to call their parties/clients not to come to the court unless it is absolutely necessary. The court also directed the registry of the high court to make masks available at the reception of the high court free of cost.

However, the bench said that the court can't prohibit any celebration of festivals. The court appointed S. Niranjan Reddy, designated senior counsel as amicus curiae, to assist the court to proceed further on the covid-19 issue.

Reddy informed the court that two more covid-19 cases have been detected in Hyderabad and 17 contacts out of 36 are found with early symptoms. It may be recalled that

before the finding of positive cases of Covid-19 in the state, the High Court had asked the state to take war-footing steps to combat it and had enquired whether thermal scanners had been set up in railway and bus stations to detect virus-affected persons entering into Telangana state.

In an advisory to the lower judiciary, on the direction of Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chathan, the High Court registrar general issued a circular asking not to insist on the presence of litigants and accused in cases and to take steps to reduce footfall in the court premises. He directed the unit heads of the lower judiciary to take necessary steps to keep the court premises clean and sanitised and to depute at least two doctors at the district court and distribute preventive homeopathic pills for the Covid-19.

Private hospital doctors to treat virus patients in TS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

In a significant development in management of potential Covid-19 cases in the state, the government has announced that hence forth, private hospitals "that have the capacity for isolation wards and treatment facilities for patients either suspected to be carrying the disease or diagnosed - after tests - with the disease," will be allowed to admit and treat such individuals.

Health minister Etala Rajendar told a news conference here on Wednesday that the state government discussed the issue with the centre earlier in the day and the proposal was approved by the central government. "This will help in better disease management. There may be suspected Covid-19 patients who

might prefer going to private hospitals," he pointed out.

The health minister, however, made it clear that while private hospitals will be allowed to collect samples from such individuals to test for presence of novel covid-19 and Covid-19 disease, the tests will only be performed at nationally accredited central government-run lab in the Gandhi General Hospital.

The director of medical education has spoken to management of private hospitals and private teaching hospitals. Many of them have come forward to provide Covid-19 management and treatment facilities. "They said they will be happy to join the efforts of the government in containing and stopping the disease," Rajendar said. "Twenty two private hospitals have agreed

to provide a total of 1,800 beds for Covid-19. They have promised to equip isolation wards with all necessary equipment, including ventilators. We think them for their socially responsible response to the current situation," the minister stated. "These hospitals are spread across the state, including in the state capital and six other districts. While 21 of these hospitals have promised to set aside 50 beds each for COVID-19 cases, one hospital in the city has said that it will be able to provide only 30 beds.

When a reporter asked whether the government would foot the bill for people who check out to private hospitals, the minister said the priority was to ensure care and treatment of possible victims and, if confirmed, patients carrying the disease.

SECOND TEST CARRIED OUT TO ENSURE NO FALSE POSITIVES AT NIV

From Page 1

The second test is carried out at NIV to ensure that there are no false positives.

The housekeeping staffer, a lady, was in contact with the Covid-19 positive patient for three days at a stretch. As a part of frequent cleaning of the room, she had had close contact with the patient. Each contact with the patient is estimated to be more than 10 minutes.

The health officials collected the samples yesterday. There were a total of 20 medical staffers from the hospital who gave their samples. While the other 19 have not undergone a re-test, it was only one sample which raised concern. The other 19, who are in self-isolation at home, are being routinely followed up with and have so far not shown any symptoms.

A senior doctor from the private hospital, explained, "The testing of one sample going to NIV has led to panic. It is a close call for the staff. Despite counselling that has been taken up, there is panic and an element of fear."

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KTR asks HMRL, RTC to keep premises clean

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

With reports of Covid-19 cases emerging from across the state, Municipal Administration Minister K.T. Rama Rao on Wednesday took to social media to direct Hyderabad Metro Rail (HMRL) and Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar to take up cleanliness measures inside Hyderabad Metro trains and state-run Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) buses.

● HMRL SAID the employees have all been made aware of preventive steps to be taken, including hand-hygiene, and reporting sickness.

He referred to media reports that Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTTC) had issued a circular to depots directing them to maintain cleanliness inside buses. "Request MDs of

@hmgov or @tmhyd to start the same in HYD Metro Rail immediately. Also Request Transport Minister @puvvarda.ajay.kumar to take the same up (sic)," said the minister.

The Hyderabad Metro Rail has initiated preventive measures to prevent the spread of the virus. It said the employees have all been made aware of preventive steps to be taken, including hand-hygiene, and reporting sickness.

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IN BRIEF

SHAH CANCELS MARCH 15 VISIT TO HYDERABAD

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

The first positive case of Covid-19 in the city, has hit Union home minister Amit Shah's visit to Hyderabad. The BJP state wing arranged a massive pro-Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) public meeting at LB Stadium on March 15 in which Mr Shah was to address the gathering. The home minister's decision to stay away from the Hyderabad meeting came just after his tweet advising people to keep away from mass gatherings on account of Holi. In a statement here on Wednesday party spokesperson K. Krishna Sagar Rao confirmed that Amit Shah's programme has been postponed and they would announce a new date later.

DRAW FOR HAJ VOLUNTEERS PLANNED TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

TS Haj Committee on Wednesday interviewed 159 applicants to assess their physical and mental fitness for selecting 18 of them for becoming Khadim ul Hujaj (Haj volunteers). The selection would be done through a draw on Thursday. The state Haj Committee sends one Haj volunteer for 200 pilgrims to the holy cities. Haj Committee chairman M. Masihullah Khan informed that flights for the Hajis from Hyderabad are likely to start from the second week of July.

Six held for picturing farmhouse with drone

Revanth Reddy used pictures to corner a big TRS leader

JAYENDRA CHAITANYA T. | DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

In the recent case of the usage of a drone camera to take pictures of a prominent TRS leader located at Miyakhangadda in Narsingi, the Cyberabad police arrested six persons on Wednesday. The police also have booked Malkajgiri MP A. Revanth Reddy, his brother A. Krishna Reddy and other aides and said that they are carrying out an in-depth probe before proceeding further in the case. On March 1, the police registered a case

under relevant sections of the IPC and the Aircraft Act, for the illegal use of a drone camera at Miyakhangadda area, near the cricket grounds. The Cyberabad police said that during the investigation, it was found that Krishna Reddy reportedly instructed one Vijayal Reddy, a resident of Upparally, to send his brother Praveen Reddy to the office of MP Revanth Reddy located at Jubilee Hills, along with a car and an extra person. When Praveen along with his friend Vijay Simha Reddy, D. Rajesh, E. Shiva and Om Prakash Reddy were

arrested and produced before the court. Narsingi inspector, M. Gangadhar said, "After returning to Jubilee Hills, the video content of the drone was allegedly given to MP Revanth Reddy who also said to have instructed the drone operator to delete the footage. We recovered the video content and are sending it to the forensic sciences laboratory for analysis." The inspector said that based on the investigation done so far, MP Revanth Reddy is also booked and after a thorough investigation, necessary action will be initiated against him and the others.

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CM KCR MEETS GOV AHEAD OF BUDGET SESSION

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu met Governor T. Ram Rao on Wednesday ahead of the State Legislative Assembly's Budget Session being scheduled from March 6. The Governor will address a joint session of the Assembly and Legislative Council on March 6 at 11 am. The CM handed over a copy of the Governor's address approved by the cabinet to Tamilisa. Later, he held review meeting on the budget with senior officials of the state government as also finance minister T. Harish Rao at Pragathi Bhavan. The budget session is likely to continue till March 20. The finance minister is expected to introduce budget for the 2020-21 financial year on the same day. legislative affairs minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy will introduce the budget in the Legislative Council. Hyderabad city police have made elaborate security arrangements. They have promulgated prohibitory orders barring processions, protests and rallies near the assembly council and the secretariat. Meanwhile, Speaker Pochannam Reddy and YSRC leader Raja also attended the programme. Ms Soundararajan asked women to give utmost priority to their health. Reminding her days as a gynaecologist, the governor said women often neglected their health.

KTR emerges most powerful

S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU | DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

When the CM is not available to party leaders and cadre who want to narrate their grievances or request a nominated post, it is Mr Rama Rao who steps in. DCMSs in the state. In the government Mr Rama Rao is taking the lead in attacking the Central government on several issues. When Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the details of funds released by the centre to Telangana state, Mr Rama Rao countered her. He has been to Delhi to meet Union ministers to discuss pending issues. Mr Rama Rao is also very active on social media and responds to issues relating to the state including the recent cooperative elections. He has played a crucial role in the TRS's winning spree. He held teleconferences daily with lower rung party leaders and workers to coordinate them. It is largely due to his efforts that the TRS has created a record by winning all the zilla parishes, district cooperative central banks (DCCBs) and district cooperative marketing societies (DCMS) in some municipalities there are no opposition members. This is a record not only for Andhra Pradesh but even before, in the combined Andhra Pradesh. No political party thus far had won all the zilla Parishes, DCCBs and

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Women's day fete



Women's Day celebration at the Government College of Arts and Crafts, Hyderabad. The women performed traditional dances and songs.

Governor Tamilisa Soundararajan felicitates 21 women achievers of different fields of life at the Raj Bhavan on Wednesday ahead of International Women's Day Celebrations on March 8. Telangana education minister Sabitha Indira Reddy, tribal welfare minister Satyavathi Rathod, and YSRC leader Raja also attended the programme. Ms Soundararajan asked women to give utmost priority to their health. Reminding her days as a gynaecologist, the governor said women often neglected their health.

Govt introduces bill to curb caste discrimination

The government on Wednesday introduced a bill in the Legislative Council to curb caste discrimination. The bill aims to provide for the prevention and prohibition of caste discrimination in public places. It also provides for the punishment for such acts. The bill is expected to be passed in the next few days.

CM KCR meets Gov ahead of Budget session

Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu met Governor T. Ram Rao on Wednesday ahead of the State Legislative Assembly's Budget Session being scheduled from March 6. The Governor will address a joint session of the Assembly and Legislative Council on March 6 at 11 am. The CM handed over a copy of the Governor's address approved by the cabinet to Tamilisa. Later, he held review meeting on the budget with senior officials of the state government as also finance minister T. Harish Rao at Pragathi Bhavan. The budget session is likely to continue till March 20. The finance minister is expected to introduce budget for the 2020-21 financial year on the same day. legislative affairs minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy will introduce the budget in the Legislative Council. Hyderabad city police have made elaborate security arrangements. They have promulgated prohibitory orders barring processions, protests and rallies near the assembly council and the secretariat. Meanwhile, Speaker Pochannam Reddy and YSRC leader Raja also attended the programme. Ms Soundararajan asked women to give utmost priority to their health. Reminding her days as a gynaecologist, the governor said women often neglected their health.

TRS has too many Kattapas, says BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Bharatiya Janata Party state president Dr K Laxman said on Wednesday that there was no need for anyone to mobilise the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) government in the state, as the TRS had a sufficient number of "Kattapas" who are capable of doing so. He was addressing a dharna of retired teachers at Indira Park in the city. Dr Laxman said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a Brahmin and the BJP will definitely use the Brahmin against the TRS to shake it to its roots in the coming day. The state BJP president said that his party will break this gaadiala gana (donkey's rule) and bring the garib palana (rule of the poor) in Telangana. He said TRS MLAs and ministers are busy doing "K.T. Rama Rao Bhajana".



Dr K. Laxman

He made it clear that the BJP will continue to fight until the government announces it will implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced 21 per cent interim relief for government employees and the Telangana Chief Minister should learn from his friend Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy, Dr Laxman said.

sacrifices and role played by teachers in the state and has started abusing them, he alleged. He made it clear that the BJP will continue to fight until the government announces it will implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced 21 per cent interim relief for government employees and the Telangana Chief Minister should learn from his friend Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy, Dr Laxman said.

Cong asks KCR to spell out CAA stand

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

If the JD(U), which is a part of the BJP-led NDA, can pass a resolution in the Assembly rejecting CAA, NRC and NPR, which TRS, which claims to be secular and anti-BJP could not pass a similar resolution in the Telangana Assembly? Reminding that the Bihar Assembly had passed a unanimous resolution against implementation of NRC and NPR on February 25, the Congress leader asked, "If the Janata Dal (United), which is a part of BJP-led NDA, can pass a resolution in the Legislative Assembly rejecting CAA, NRC and NPR, why TRS, which claims to be secular and anti-BJP could not pass a similar resolution in Telangana Assembly?" He regretted that the Cabinet did not even dis-

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CMR INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL advertisement listing affiliation and contact details.

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WALK IN INTERVIEWS advertisement for various roles.

Client Interview On 11th March 2020 advertisement for various services.

SHORT TAKES

REGISTRATION WORKS ON BS IV VEHICLES REVIEWED

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

The state transport department on Wednesday held a video conference to review the progress of registrations of BS IV vehicles before the Supreme Court's mandated date of March 31.

The Supreme Court, had in October 2018, prohibited the sale of non-BS-VI (the latest standard) after April 1, 2020.

At the meeting, which was presided by transport commissioner M.R.M. Rao, it was decided that the registrations of all vehicles be finished by March 20 to avoid last-minute rush. The 2.6 lakh pending vehicles are expected to bring in ₹394 crore in revenue by the end of the month. Until February 29, the department had brought in ₹3,320 crore.

● SUPREME COURT, had in Oct. 2018, prohibited sale of non-BS-VI after April 1, 2020

● THE 2.6 LAKH pending vehicles are expected to bring in ₹394 crore in revenue by the end of the month



Students appear for first day of intermediate exam in Secunderabad on Wednesday. — S.SURENDER REDDY

4.5 lakh students take inter exams

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Intermediate examinations began with as many as 4.5 lakh first-year students appearing for their exam across the state on Wednesday.

Absenteeism was 4.7 per cent, with more than 22,000 students not taking their exam in the state. Six cases of malpractice and cheating were reported — five in Suryapet and one in Warangal Urban district.

An official of the Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE) dismissed reports on social media that 4.7 per cent absentee rate was high and due to Covid-19 scare in Hyderabad.

"The absentee rate has always been between four and five per cent. This year's figure is not an anomaly," he maintained. There were some instances of students being denied entry into the examination centre for being late by more than a minute. Similar instances were reported from districts of Manthani, Nalgonda and Peddapalli, among others.

GSI EMBARKS ON FOCUSED RESEARCH IN TS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

The Geological Survey of India (GSI), commemorating its 170th Foundation Day, on Wednesday said that it had taken up 162 programmes across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Goa, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. They have carried out focused research on fluoride contamination and studies related to Chronic Kidney Disease in Nalgonda and Prakasham districts of Telangana and AP. Studies have also been conducted in Kozhikode district to identify areas susceptible to seismic hazard.

Three mineral resource bearing reports, one manganese (Devada, AP), two limestone (Puthupalayam, Tamil Nadu and Bahamamballi, Karnataka), have been generated. They are based on G2 stage of exploration work and will be submitted to the respective State Governments next month.

SATS monetary crunch turns students' diet stale

ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

For the past few months, the Telangana State Sports School at Hakimpet has been reeling under a massive funds crunch. Its student athletes are not getting food according to their dietary needs. Its teachers and other staffers have not received their salaries for three months.

In fact, students of the sixth, seventh and ninth standards have been asked to go home for a month until their annual examinations. School officials said these holidays have been declared in light of the school being declared an examination centre for the tenth and intermediate board exams scheduled next month.

However, other employees said the students have been asked to go home since the school doesn't have the money for regular operations.

Officials from the hostel and mess told Decan Chronicle that the students' diets have been severely affected. In the last two weeks, students have been given no

milk or bananas. Curd is too expensive and so they are given buttermilk instead. One official said on condition of anonymity, "Under normal conditions, students are served three kinds of meat (chicken, mutton and fish). Now, they are being served only one kind of meat a day."

Several older students at the school said they felt a change in their performance because of the new diet.

One intermediate student, a track athlete, said, "Since exams are around the corner we are not training at full steam. If we did train properly, we would faint after a workout."

The mess official agreed. "Their current poor diet will have far-reaching consequences in June, when most competitions and events are held. The body has to be maintained well till then. If they don't get protein-rich food now, their muscle gains will be wasted," he said.

Parents have also criticised the school for sending their children home just before the annual examinations scheduled in April. One of them said, "This is

revision time for the students, and teachers are supposed to guide them at this time."

Teacher and other staff have not got their salaries. One teacher admitted that expenses at home had become hard to manage due to pending salaries. A hostel staffer said he borrowed money from his family last month.

Yadav, a parent of one of the students, rued the state of affairs: "I expected my son to be taken care of and encouraged as an athlete. I hoped this would help him get a sports-quota job when he grows up. If this is how he is treated, how will he achieve this?"

A senior administrative official said bills have piled up to enormous proportions. "We are supposed to pay our caterers more than ₹30 lakh. The caterers have been sending us notices regularly but we are pleading with them to consider the children's plight. In fact, we have taken loans from external sources to pay some bills," he said.

The official said all academics and schools run by SATS have been facing similar problems.

Elephant and white tiger of zoo adopted

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Elephant Sita and white tiger Khavi of the Nehru Zoological Park here have been adopted by different organisations on Wednesday. While Sita was adopted by Gaja, an organi-

sation of eminent artists of Hyderabad, Khavi was adopted by NASR Boys School in Gachibowli.

The artists of Telangana had organised an art exhibition Gaja in Hyderabad last January and as part of their programme adopted Sita for a period of eight

months. Bolgum Nagesh Goud, organiser of Gaja, presented a cheque of ₹3.5 lakh to N. Kshitija, curator, Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad, for adoption of Sita.

Similarly, NASR Boys School, Gachibowli, adopted Khavi, the white tiger,

for a period of one year. Khavi was born in the zoo itself and is now three years and 10 months old. The school presented a cheque of ₹1 lakh for the white tiger's upkeep.

Speaking on the occasion, the zoo curator thanked Gaja and students of NASR

school for adopting the animals, thereby strengthening the Wildlife Conservation Programme. Kshitija hoped many more citizens would come forward to adopt animals of the Nehru Zoological Park as part of the Wildlife Conservation Programme.

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SHORT TAKES

ONE DIES DURING FLASH STRIKE BY TRANSPORT STAFF

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 4

A 60-year-old passenger died after he collapsed during a flash strike called by the staff of Kerala State Transport Corporation to protest against the arrest of three of their colleagues over a scuffle with private bus operators.

The man identified as Surendran from Kachani in the outskirts of city, fainted in the commotion and chaos during the flash strike. Though he was taken to the general hospital, his life could not be saved.

BAN ON SOCIAL MEDIA LIFTED IN J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, MARCH 4

Exactly seven months after a complete communication blackout as part of security lockdown ahead of abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution there is a gear in Jammu and Kashmir, the authorities on Wednesday apparently lifted ban on the use of social media by people in the Union Territory.

However, the curbs on high-speed 3G and 4G Internet services have been extended till March 17.

As regards service to pre-paid SIMs card, the service providers have been asked to provide access only after SIMs are "verified as per norms applicable to post-paid connections."

The 2G which is synonymous to slow internet was earlier restricted to 1,674 white-listed websites approved by the government.

The service providers were in a series of orders issued by the Home Department from time to time not to allow access to any social media applications allowing peer-to-peer communication and Virtual Private Network (VPN) applications.

There is no such mention in the latest order issued by Principal Secretary, Home Department, Shaheen Kabra, in winter capital Jammu on Wednesday.

The order, however, says "in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of the State (read Union Territory) and for maintaining public order" the internet speed will continue to be restricted to 2G only.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said efforts are on to check and screen 88 people who came in contact with the infected person in Kerala. Ministry of External Affairs said 17 Indians abroad have been notified by the government.

POWER GAME

Local leaders attribute disappearing of MLAs to RS polls in MP

Digvijay rescues 'poached' MLAs

SHREKPARNA CHAKRABARTY & RAJENDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC NEW DELHI/BHOPAL, MARCH 4

RS polls on March 26 and a feud is on within the party on the likely outcome of a scheduled election. Senior Congress leaders Jyotirajiv Scindia and Digvijay Singh are the two main contenders. The state leadership read Chief Minister Kamal Nath has been keen on inducting a local leader for one of the seats leaving the 230-member state government on the edge.

Congress leaders in the state, however, appeared confident about the stability of the government with a section even indicating that the clamor for seats in the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections was the reason for the ongoing political fracs.

The Congress has a tenuous majority in the 230-member state government with only 114 seats and relies on the support of independent and SP MLAs to pull it through. Congress is supposed to get two seats out of three in the upcoming



Young tourists wear face masks as a preventive measure against the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak at the Bangalore City Railway Station on Wednesday.

Do not get up in Covid-19 scare: Lower 25 test +ve President, PM, HM call off Holi celebrations

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

Samples of all six persons taken to check for coronavirus (Covid-19) infection from Noida have tested negative. However, officials said that these people have been kept for self-quarantine their homes for the next 14 days. These six had come in contact with a Delhi-based man who has tested positive for the Covid-19 infection during a party thrown by him on February 29.

A total of 28 Covid-19 cases were detected in India so far. Among them, one person was from Delhi, six of his relatives in Agra, 16 Italians and their Indian driver, one in Telangana and three earlier cases in Kerala.

The service providers were in a series of orders issued by the Home Department from time to time not to allow access to any social media applications allowing peer-to-peer communication and Virtual Private Network (VPN) applications.

There is no such mention in the latest order issued by Principal Secretary, Home Department, Shaheen Kabra, in winter capital Jammu on Wednesday.

The order, however, says "in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of the State (read Union Territory) and for maintaining public order" the internet speed will continue to be restricted to 2G only.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said efforts are on to check and screen 88 people who came in contact with the infected person in Kerala. Ministry of External Affairs said 17 Indians abroad have been notified by the government.

POWER GAME

Local leaders attribute disappearing of MLAs to RS polls in MP

SHREKPARNA CHAKRABARTY & RAJENDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC NEW DELHI/BHOPAL, MARCH 4

RS polls on March 26 and a feud is on within the party on the likely outcome of a scheduled election. Senior Congress leaders Jyotirajiv Scindia and Digvijay Singh are the two main contenders. The state leadership read Chief Minister Kamal Nath has been keen on inducting a local leader for one of the seats leaving the 230-member state government on the edge.

Congress leaders in the state, however, appeared confident about the stability of the government with a section even indicating that the clamor for seats in the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections was the reason for the ongoing political fracs.

The Congress has a tenuous majority in the 230-member state government with only 114 seats and relies on the support of independent and SP MLAs to pull it through. Congress is supposed to get two seats out of three in the upcoming

There is no need to panic, he said. Noida and adjoining Delhi was caught in panic after samples of six people, including three children, were sent for coronavirus test on Tuesday four days after they came in contact with a Delhi-based man who has tested positive.

The possibility of a coronavirus outbreak had triggered widespread panic in Noida, on the outskirts of Delhi, as hundreds of people rushed to pharmacies to buy safety masks and hand-sanitisers.

In Noida, as many as 373 people who have travelled abroad since January 15 have been kept under surveillance so far as possible carriers of Covid-19.

All international passengers will henceforth be screened at airports. Vardhan said. Earlier, travellers from only 12 countries were screened at airports for the disease.

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LENS ON 55 RETURNEES FROM CHINA IN ASSAM

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MARCH 4

Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Wednesday said that 55 people who have returned from China recently have been kept under observation as preventive measures from the outbreak of deadly Coronavirus.

Informing that 46 suspected cases are under the surveillance of doctors, Sarma in the state assembly said that nine suspected individuals are kept under observation at their respective homes.

Pointing out that all 55 people are international tourists who were identified during the screening at the Guwahati airport, sources in the health department, however, said that they have been quarantined as precautionary measures.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY CORRIDOR

1. U.S. Letter to notify that a tender No. No. 407-24-2019-2020... 2. Tender value: Rs. 1,20,00,00,000... 3. Estimated tender value in Rs. 1,20,00,00,000... 4. Earnest Money Deposit in Rs. 1,20,00,00,000... 5. Similar nature of work: Applicable... 6. Period of completion in years: 36 months...

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. M.M.W21 PFTR/MAS... 1. Location: MGR Chennai Central Station Platform... 2. Estimated tender value in Rs. 8,17,25,596.40... 3. Earnest Money Deposit in Rs. 4,08,627.98... 4. Similar nature of work: Applicable... 5. Period of completion in years: 36 months...

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. M.M.W21 PFTR/MAS... 1. Location: MGR Chennai Central Station Platform... 2. Estimated tender value in Rs. 8,17,25,596.40... 3. Earnest Money Deposit in Rs. 4,08,627.98... 4. Similar nature of work: Applicable... 5. Period of completion in years: 36 months...

EMPLOYEES PROVISIONAL PUNJAB ORGANISATION

Attention of public at large is invited that the Punjab Organisation, Regional Office, Hyderabad, has received a tender for the supply of... 1. Name of work: Supply of... 2. Estimated tender value in Rs. 1,00,00,00,000... 3. Earnest Money Deposit in Rs. 50,00,00,000... 4. Similar nature of work: Applicable... 5. Period of completion in years: 36 months...

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

Notice regarding extension of date for filing Annual Statements... Under Section 19-D of the Press & Registration of Books Act (PRB Act), 1967... 1. Name of work: Supply of... 2. Estimated tender value in Rs. 1,00,00,00,000... 3. Earnest Money Deposit in Rs. 50,00,00,000... 4. Similar nature of work: Applicable... 5. Period of completion in years: 36 months...

MAXIMUS ARC LIMITED... CORRIDOR TO PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION... Notice is hereby given that the proposed auction of secured assets of M&A Technologies Pvt Ltd scheduled on 11th March 2020 at 11:00 AM on 15th February 2020 in Deccan Chronicle and Andhra Jyothi in Hyderabad.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY... E-TENDER NOTICE NO. M.M.W21 PFTR/MAS... 1. Location: MGR Chennai Central Station Platform... 2. Estimated tender value in Rs. 8,17,25,596.40... 3. Earnest Money Deposit in Rs. 4,08,627.98... 4. Similar nature of work: Applicable... 5. Period of completion in years: 36 months...

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Urban Development and Housing Department... 1. Name of work: Urban Development and Housing... 2. Estimated tender value in Rs. 1,00,00,00,000... 3. Earnest Money Deposit in Rs. 50,00,00,000... 4. Similar nature of work: Applicable... 5. Period of completion in years: 36 months...

Government of India... Office of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting) 9th Floor, Soochana Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi-110003.

Notice regarding extension of date for filing Annual Statements... Under Section 19-D of the Press & Registration of Books Act (PRB Act), 1967... 1. Name of work: Urban Development and Housing... 2. Estimated tender value in Rs. 1,00,00,00,000... 3. Earnest Money Deposit in Rs. 50,00,00,000... 4. Similar nature of work: Applicable... 5. Period of completion in years: 36 months...

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SHORT TAKES

NO CHANGE IN NUCLEAR DOCTRINE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

India has made it clear that "there is no change" in the country's nuclear doctrine and that it is "committed to the policy of no-first use of nuclear weapons." The government also said "India is committed to maintaining credible minimum deterrence" Minister of External Affairs (MEA) V. Muralidharan informed the Lok Sabha, "There has been no change in India's nuclear doctrine. India is committed to maintaining credible minimum deterrence and the policy of no-first use of nuclear weapons."

There had been speculation earlier on whether there was any move by India to change the nuclear doctrine in the wake of a "two-front war" scenario, something that refers hypothetically to the scenario of a joint Sino-Pakistani attack on India. Both China and Pakistan are nuclear weapon powers. But India has now set the record straight.

KERALA CM RECEIVES DEATH THREAT

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 4

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday received death threat. A letter received at CPM youth wing Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) state committee office threatened the Chief Minister would be done away with if he continued to criticise the Popular Front of India (PFI). DYFI state secretary A A Rahim also received death threat. The letter has been handed over to police which ordered a high level investigation. Vijayan has been in the forefront criticising the communist leadership of SDPI and PFI during the anti-CAA protests in the state.

In a speech made in Assembly, the Chief Minister had alleged that members of Muslim hardline organisations like Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) are linked to Popular Front of India (PFI), were infiltrating into anti-Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAA) protests to create trouble in the state.

The Chief Minister was responding to allegations of Congress-led UIDF that the police was registering cases against persons who had taken part in anti-CAA agitation in Alamedu, near Ernakulam district. The matter was raised by opposition during question hour.

1 KILLED, 4 INJURED IN J&K FIRING

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, MARCH 4

A civilian was killed and four others were injured when Pakistan troops fired small arms and mortars to target Indian forward posts and civilian areas in Karnah in the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district on Wednesday, the officials here said.

They said that the Pakistan Army violated the November 2003 ceasefire understanding and resorted to indiscriminate shelling and firing in Karnah, prompting a "quick and befitting" retaliation by the Indian troops. This was the fourth such violation by Pakistan troops during the last 48 hours in which several Indian military houses were also damaged, the officials added.

There were no immediate reports of any injuries or damage to Pakistani army infrastructure in the Indian firing and shelling, the officials said. The shelling was while confirming the civilian casualties and damage to the properties on the Indian side of the de facto border, and that the Pakistan troops intermittently resorted to unprovoked shelling and firing, targeting Indian forward posts and civilian areas in Karnah since Tuesday morning. "Several mortar shells fired from across the LoC landed on Indian areas on the peripheries of Karnah town killing and injuring residents and damaging their houses," the officials said. The deceased was identified as 60 year old Saleem Ahmad. "He was killed and four other civilians were injured when a few mortar bombs landed in Tad village of Tangdhar area in Karnah," the police said.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi inside a private school, in the Brijpuri area that was vandalised and burnt during the riots, during his visit to one of the riot-affected areas in North-East Delhi on Wednesday. The school suffered massive damage and the delegation went around gutted classrooms and also surveyed burnt buses. — PTI

HC told to hear pleas filed by riot victims on March 6

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

In its disapproval of the long adjournment of cases relating to Delhi violence by Delhi High Court, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said that such adjournments for "long periods" is "not justified" as it directed the High Court to hear on Friday (March 6) petitions seeking registration of case against BJP leaders for making inflammatory speech leading to violence.

"We feel adjournment for such long period is not justified", Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a bench also comprising Justice B.R. Gavi and Justice Surya Kant said as court was told that in the matter relating to registration of cases against BJP leaders was adjourned till April 13, 2020.

Saying that they are not on the merit of the case, Bobde said, the long adjournment "is something that concerns us. We aren't saying the HC doesn't have any reason but the period for which the hearing has been adjourned may not be good. We propose HC should hear this on Friday."

In other case relating to violence in Jamia Millia Islamia University, the court was informed that the matter too was adjourned till April. Transferring the petition that was being heard by it on Wednesday to HC, CJI Bobde said that it would be heard along with other matter relating to the same subject.

The order said that the High Court would hear the matter as expeditiously as possible. "Friday we will require Chief Justice of Delhi High Court to take up these matters and deal with these as expeditiously as possible," ordered CJI Bobde.

In a power from the CJI Bobde said "to file reply" by the government. He directed the petition by the violence victims. Gonsalves appeared for nine riot victims who have moved the SC.

The riot victims are seeking registration of case against BJP leaders Kapil Mishra, Anurag Thakur, Praveesh Verma and other leaders who were seen making inflammatory speeches since January this year.

Delhi: BJP hyping on virus to divert attention from riots

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 4

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday accused the Centre of creating a hype on novel coronavirus outbreak to divert the attention from the Delhi riots.

Asking the BJP to reveal the identities of the riot victims whose bodies are yet to be found, she took an U-turn on her comments about the Bangladesh refugees' Indian nationality a day before and threatened to take legal steps for distortion.

"Many people are thinking too much about corona. Definitely it is a disease. The whole world is worried about it. Do not get panicked about it however. To divert attention they (Centre) are doing 'corona, corona' so much so that people forget the Delhi incident. They should talk about it when it happens," the Trinamool Congress supreme alleged at a party rally in Buniapur of South Dinajpur.

Banerjee, who is also the state health minister, claimed, "We also want its medicine be discovered. We deal with disease in this way. We do not want a single person to fall ill to this disease though it is created a fear across the world." Referring to the Delhi riots, Mamata

argued, "But those who died there have not suffered from corona. Those who were killed did not suffer from dengue or swine flu or encephalitis."

The Trinamool Congress supreme reasoned, "Had someone died of coronavirus, it would have been suitable to offer sympathy to heal the mind as it is a new disease which has neither any medicine nor any treatment. So many people were burnt to death. Still they (BJP) are yet to apologise. Nearly 700 people have gone missing while thousands of people have become homeless during the violence. Many victims' bodies are yet to be found."

Court takes note of remarks by Mander

M.K. ASHOKA | DC
BENGALURU, MARCH 4

Amulya Leona, 19-year-old girl arrested on charges of sedition after shouting "Pakistan Zindabad" slogans repeatedly had stunned investigating officers of SIT. The law officer read out certain excerpts from alleged speech of Mander and said that they included objectionable remarks against the apex court, Parliament and the government.

"We have seen the track record of the SC. We have no faith in the SC but we will go there as we have no choice. But ultimate justice will be done on the streets," Mehta said quoting Mander's alleged hate speech.

He also referred to the speech which was allegedly provocative and was being used to instigate Muslims. "If this is what you (lawyer for Mander) think of this court then you should be ashamed of yourselves. You heard the allegations and now, before we start the suit, you are questioning and respond to them," the bench said.

Mercy plea of convict rejected

Fresh death warrant in Nirbhaya case soon

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

After exhausting almost all legal remedies, a Delhi court is all set to sign the final death warrant for the execution of all the four convicts in the Nirbhaya gangrape and murder case.

On Wednesday, soon after President Ram Nath Kovind rejected the mercy plea of Pawan Kumar Gupta (25), one of the four convicts, the Delhi government approached the sessions court to issue fresh death warrants against the convicts.

Nix will be the 4th time that the court will be issuing death warrants against the convicts. The first death warrant for their execution was for January 22, second for February 1 and the latest was on March 3.

The 23-year-old physiotherapy intern, who was gangraped and savagely assaulted in a moving bus in South Delhi on December 16, 2012, has come to be known as Nirbhaya. The President, as she herself had given a detailed account about the horror she and her friends went through on the fateful night. Her statement was recorded by a sub-divisional magistrate at Safdarjung hospital.

The case which shook the conscience of the nation was tried in a fast-track court. After the trial proceedings, the case again hogged the headlines to delay the hanging. But the courts maintained they cannot afford to adversely discriminate any convict including death row convict, in pursuit of his or her legal remedies, by turning a blind eye towards them.

Now, the only legal option left with Pawan is to challenge the President's order on his mercy petition before the SC, which had earlier rejected similar plea by the other three convicts—Akshay Thakur (31), Vinay Sharma (26) and Mukesh Singh (32). Once President rejects a mercy petition, the convicts are to be given at least 14 days' time before hanging to make their last wish.

On Wednesday, the prosecution told additional sessions judge Dharmendra Kana that all legal remedies of the convicts have been exhausted and nothing survives now. At this point, the court directed the convicts to file their response by Thursday.

When the prosecution contended that no such notice was required, the judge said the principles of natural justice are part of Article 21 right to life and personal liberty of the Constitution and the sacrosanct principle of

Sengar convicted for Unnato father's death

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

A court in Delhi on Wednesday convicted expelled BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar of culpable homicide, not amounting to murder in the death of the Unnato rape victim's father. The rape victim's father had died in judicial custody on April 9, 2018. District Judge Dhammesh Sengar said Sengar had no intention of killing the victim's father.

"He was beaten in a brutal manner that led to his death," the judge said. The court had on December 20 sent Sengar to jail for the "remainder of his natural biological life" for raping the woman aged in 2017, when she was a minor.

The Central Bureau of Investigation had examined 55 witnesses in support of the case and the defence examined nine witnesses. The court had earlier the statements of the rape survivor's uncle, mother, sister and one of her father's colleagues who claimed to be an eyewitness to the incident.

The charge sheet said that all this while Kuldeep Sengar was in touch with the district police superintendent and Mahki police station in-charge against Singh Bhaduria. Charges were framed against Sengar, his brother Atul, Bhaduria, sub-inspector Kamta Prasad, constable Amir Khan and six others in the case.

Nirbhaya's mother and father at the Patiala House Court, in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

"Audi alteram partem" (listen to the other side) cannot be ignored. Nirbhaya's parents said they were now hopeful that the convicts would be hanged this month and justice would be finally delivered to them after a long wait. Earlier in the day, the Delhi High Court declined to entertain a plea seeking directions to the NHRC to intervene and enquire into the mental and physical state of the four convicts.

MEA: ₹446 crore spent on Modi's foreign visits

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) informed Parliament on Wednesday that at least ₹446 crore has been spent on the foreign visits of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ever since he assumed office in May 2014.

In case of some of the visits, the bills have not been received so far, the government informed the Lok Sabha. As per official statistics on the foreign visits made by PM Modi during the last five years, Minister of State for MEA V. Muralidharan said the figure

was about ₹446 crore, adding that "bills for some of the visits, the bills have not been received so far."

PM Modi is expected to make two more visits later this month, one to the Belgian Capital Brussels for the India-European Union (EU) Summit and the other to Bangladesh.

Asked about the total expenditure on the foreign visits made by PM Modi during the last five years, Minister of State for MEA V. Muralidharan said the figure

was about ₹446 crore, adding that "bills for some of the visits (made in the financial year 2019-20) were not received" so far. This figure includes "expenditure on chartered flights (as well as) hotline costs (services of TCL for hotline services discontinued since June 2017)," the MO informed the Lok Sabha. As per the break-up of figures, about ₹121 crore was incurred in the financial year 2015-16, about ₹76 crore in 2016-17, about ₹100 crore in 2017-18, about ₹100 crore again in 2018-19, and about ₹46 crore in 2019-20, wherein bills for some visits have not been received so far.

WOMEN | SAFETY Bike rider, social activist, & artiste take solo walk on deserted streets of Thiruvananthapuram

3 women check safety measures past midnight in Kerala

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
TRIVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 4

Three women took solo walk past midnight on deserted streets of Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday night for a reality check on women safety in Kerala's capital city. The women were Shynee Rajkumar, social activist Liji Sreedhar and cine artiste Vineetha Deepak. They were accompanied by a police officer. They were not without experiencing issues that often haunt women on deserted roads.

All three are members of Junior Chamber international. The event was participated in the night walk organised by social welfare department on December 29. They had 10,000 women took part across 200 centres. But this time they were keen to do the walk alone. They were in six places, most areas are under pitch darkness. A middle aged on scooter offered to drop them home. At the bus stand a youth called on me. Another youth took three

rounds and made some gestures. But he fled the place when I started recording the events live on social media," said Shynee. She said women need to be more vigilant when they are out at night. They are drunk or under influence of drugs. They can turn violent and pose serious threat to women's safety. Shynee took the stretch from Thampannur, Mettukada, Thycaud and

Vazhuthacaud which even men hesitate to take during midnight. "Men are hesitant to approach us in areas which are properly lit and when we go live," she said. The Pattom - PMG route taken by actor Vineetha Deepak was better in terms of lighting. However, she had her share of problems. "Many on two wheelers slowed down to say hi, hello. Two youths came on a bike and whistled at me. When I looked at them they showed some obscene gesture. But dur-

ing the walk no one chased me or tried to attack," she recollected. According to her one the major threats during night is from strays. "A pack of strays came after me near Museum police station. But fortunately they returned after following me for a short distance," she said. Liji Sreedhar was lucky to walk on Peroorkada-Kawdiar. Velayambal stretch which has maximum concentration of CCTV cameras along the route.



Shynee Rajkumar, Vineetha Deepak and Liji Sreedhar after completing night walk. — DC

DECCAN Chronicle

5 MARCH 2020

Can govt answer the moral question on CAA?

The Government of India has been steadfast in defending the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in the face of domestic and international criticism, insisting that it goes very well with the ethos of the Indian Constitution and the legacy of this land in accommodating refugees from all over the world...

As is expected of it, the government has no plans to take the lying down. The Act was an internal matter of India and concerned the sovereign right of Parliament to make laws, the ministry external affairs has said, reacting to the development. It has questioned the very locus standi of a foreign party "on issues pertaining to India's sovereignty" and said the CAA is constitutionally valid and complies with all requirements of our constitutional values...

How to destroy coronavirus

After staying relatively unscathed for over three months — the earliest reported symptoms occurred in December 2019 in the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan, China — the virus has now spread to India. The case count at home is 28, and though the global mortality rate is still at 3.4 per cent — with the elderly having a chronic illness such as cardiovascular disease being at particular risk — state administrations have got into a frenzy in Telangana, Karnataka, Rajasthan, indeed wherever patients have been diagnosed as having this influenza-like infection...

DECCAN CHRONICLE

ADITYA SINGHA Editor

T. VENKATESWARLU Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

- Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-2780930-4, Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No. 7-8, 4 Patnam, Industrial Estate, Auro Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2552828, Telefax: 0866-2552234
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Kochi: No.3-48, 3rd Floor of DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloo-Kalavandaram Road, Erumakulam, Ph: 0484-4894868
Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph's Press, TC 15/1040, Cotton Hill, Thycad (PO), Thiruvananthapuram 695 014
Kozhikode: Door No 61002 E, First Floor of City Mall, Opp. YMCA, Kamar Road, Kozhikode - 673 001, Fax: 0495 4019118
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. HSD-348/2006-08

Subhani

Taliban accord won't be easy to implement

Syed Ata Hasnain

The "last helicopter" is a term often used to symbolise the departure of a foreign force from an occupied land. How that helicopter departs actually denotes the status and future prospects of peace in a zone wracked by war and instability. The Afghanistan peace deal, long in the making, gives no indication that the "last helicopter" of the US and its allies will leave Afghanistan in peace and tranquility. The deal is, of course, welcome but the uncertainties revolve around the confidence and thus the cautious Indian reaction is quite natural...

Interestingly, the "Agreement for bringing Peace to Afghanistan" somewhat awkwardly states that it is with the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" a term the Taliban should be reasonably delighted with because it accords to it a certain legitimacy that eluded it for long. Peace deals are not always neat arrangements, especially when they are against renegade non-state organisations like the Taliban, but such deals are usually preceded by a decision on the rules of engagement for a negotiated ceasefire. In this case, many things about the end state seem to have been outlined without the takeoff point of the ceasefire being defined. The Taliban occupies a major part of Afghanistan and would not like to lose the military initiative; it will demand a ceasefire on its terms which will perforce have a linkage to the other provision, the demand for it to prevent the use of its territory for the targeting of foreign troops. These two issues will go hand in hand as the process proceeds ahead; a ceasefire and means of credibly monitoring it will need to be established early if anything is to be achieved. If next lines are to be expected, the Afghan National Army, all of 180,000 strong, should see a partial demobilisation with a merger of some Taliban forces. In the tribal and ideological complexity of the situation up Afghanistan, such an arrangement is considered utopian. This is why the deal will be a road well travelled. Demobilisation and rehabilitation are again complex and expensive exercises which the United Nations is adept at. Will the UN and its subsidiaries find a place

(The Taliban) will hold the key for the international community's hopes for a full implementation of the peace deal. Although India was invited for the signing ceremony, it now has to tread a careful path.

In the processes which will emerge soon? The Taliban can easily play out 14 months with full cooperation to see the last US helicopter leave before it initiates civil war-like conditions to meet its aim. The party which benefits the most will obviously be Pakistan, which has been the key interlocutor, but a relationship when they are against each other can be tricky. No doubt it will hold the key for the international community's hopes for a full implementation of the peace deal. Although India was invited for the signing ceremony, it now has to tread a careful path. If it wishes to continue playing a role, engagement with the Taliban will need initiation, something Pakistan will ensure it scuttles before it reaches any realisation stage. India's soft power efforts in the past have been appreciated by the Afghan people and the international community but these also ensured that Indian consulates exist at Mazhar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Herat, through direct engagement could be carried out along with easy visa management for travel by Afghans to India. For Pakistan this is anathema, and some pressure to withdraw the consulates can be expected. The fear in India that the deal will provide enough resources for reinitiation of a hybrid conflict in Kashmir may be a boost for its election prospects. Yet equally the chances of the deal failing and the likely entanglement of American troops in that eventuality could be his worst nightmare.

Syed Ata Hasnain, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former commander of the Stringer-based 15 Corps. He is also associated with the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies.

LETTERS

EXAMS & COVID-19

In the wake of panic caused by Covid-19 in Hyderabad, is there any way to ensure the safety of students gathering to write exams? What precautions are taken? After seeing the pace at which it is spreading, it would be better if exams are postponed till the situation is under control. Reserving 3,000 beds for patients is not a criteria to go ahead with the exams (3,000 beds ready in TS for coronavirus cases, DC, March 4).

Atkuri Sandhya Hyderabad

COVID-19 SAFETY

Will the GHMC which doesn't carry out fogging operations to control mosquitoes be able to handle the spread of Covid-19? How many private and government hospitals are equipped with thermal testers? Why allow Covid-19 affected people from airports into hugely populated areas like the city instead of making a quarantine facility near the airport? Is there any mechanism to control the spread at railways and RTC stations? The seriousness with which the government and private hospitals are taking this issue cannot be taken for granted.

Venkat Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

No increase in third class train fares

NEW DELHI, March 4. Railway Minister G.L. Nanda today announced concessions amounting to Rs 100 crore in his Railway Budget, including withdrawal of increase in third class fare for all classes of trains and rise in freight rates in respect of foodgrains including pulses.

In a six-page statement just before the House started discussion of the Railway Budget, Mr. Nanda said he was modifying some of the original proposals in view of the strong feelings expressed against the proposals by leaders of various political parties and individual members of Parliament. Mr. Nanda said there would be no increase in third class tickets whether by ordinary passenger or mail or express trains. The third class sleeper charges would continue at existing rates. There would also be no increase in the third class suburban and non-suburban monthly and quarterly season tickets.

When 'Shakespeare' speaks on Indian politics

Sriram Kari

William Shakespeare, as all of the alumni of WhatsApp university would know, was born in India. As per Wiki, he was born in Hampstead in the Tiruchirappalli district as Shesha P. Iyer. Working as a financial journalist, covering the banking sector and its woes with non-performing assets, he wrote, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be". They transferred him to the political beat, where while covering a rally of a now deceased political leader, he observed, "...hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." He had to run away from Tamil Nadu, changed his name and identity to Sheikh Mohd. Peer, and settled in Hyderabad. Sheikh M. Peer, confronted by a GHMC official during a routine survey with lots of suspicious questions, that after having just returned from an anti-CAA protest, famously hailed, "Touba, no touba, touba-na-touba", whose English translation "to be or not to be"

would come later. It was his piece for the Deccan Chronicle, in which he depicted: "We have seen better days", and was misinterpreted by some, especially the aache din part, post which, financially exploiting the coronavirus scenario, he got cheap international airline tickets and made his way to London, where he took the name of William Shakespeare of course. And all this, as we all know, is UNESCO certified. Before he left India, for a post-Brexit Britain, that "undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns" I tried to interview him, but given his state of mind, who knew what he was talking about, or if his responses were really about Indian politics. At first, he said, a bit reflective and puzzled, "an ambitious young man brooding about his father's murder in opposition? I cannot handle that in one plot. It would take two plays, at least, but of

When asked about 9 pm primetime TV debates, [Shakespeare] said, 'It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing', and added, 'The empty vessel makes the loudest sound'.

Rahul Gandhi has been missing from the anti-CAA protests, I posed. "Ambition should be made of sterner stuff," he replied. To my question, "The second stint has been all action. Article 370, Ram Temple, CAA, NPR," he said, "through this he madness, yet there is method in it". On fake news, he was confronted. "What! Can the devil speak

true?" Any message for Indian minorities feeling insecure currently? "When sorrows come, they come not single spies. But in battalions!" When asked about 9 pm primetime TV debates, he said, "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," and added, "The empty vessel makes the loudest sound". What about Indians who choose to be neutral and silent? He sadly mused: "If you have tears, prepare to shed them now". On the Delhi violence, he softly whispered, "Confusion now hath made his masterpiece". What about the youth of India still waiting for the promise of jobs, I asked the bard, to which he hollered back, "Lord, Lord, how subject we old men are to this vice of bit reflection". On Indian secularism, he merely sighed, "What is done cannot be undone". And on the WhatsApp university, he observed, "There is no darkness but ignorance".

On the politics of hate, he was direct: "In time we hate that which we often fear". On those who lead lynchings mobs, he was contemplative, and finally spoke thus: "Lawless are they that make their wills their law". He sounded profound on the re-evaluation of deeds of icons of the past, unfairly, saying, "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones". Asked what should a common man do in times of collective madness engulfing society all round, he reminded me, "I dare do all that may become a man; who dares do more, is none". As his name was announced for boarding his flight, before he put on his mask, he screamed, "Farewell, fair cruelty. Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall say good night till it be morrow". I had more to say, but felt some inspirations turning into words for myself: "The rest is silence".

IN BRIEF

US to give KC-46 aircraft to Israel

Washington: The US Department of Defence has approved Tuesday approval to lease KC-46 Pegasus aerial refuelling aircraft to its staunch Middle East ally Israel...

Amnesty says Iran killed 23 children

Paris: Human rights group Amnesty International on Wednesday accused the Iranian security forces of killing 23 children...

NZ TEEN HELD AFTER THREAT TO MOSQUE

Wellington, March 4: New Zealand police arrested a 19-year-old man over an "abhorrent" threat made this week against one of the Christchurch mosques...

US strikes back at Taliban insurgents

American move to defend Afghan forces after the fighters launched 43 attacks on Helmand checkpoints

Kabul, March 4: The US launched an airstrike against Taliban fighters to defend Afghan forces on Wednesday, an American military spokesman said...

ence against Afghan forces, causing a pause in peace talks between Kabul and the Taliban, due to begin on March 10...

insurgents killed at least 20 Afghan soldiers and policemen in a series of overnight attacks in other provinces, government officials said on Wednesday...



Afghan security forces stand guard after an attack by Taliban militants near an Afghan National Army (ANA) outpost, in Kunduz Province on Wednesday. — AFP

insurgents killed at least 20 Afghan soldiers and policemen in a series of overnight attacks in other provinces, government officials said on Wednesday...

Tuesday night, with the governor's spokesman Zergal Ebad said: "Unfortunately six police were killed and seven wounded..."

"#Afghans & US have complied w/ our agreements; however, Talibs appear intent on squandering this (opportunity) and ignoring the will of the people for #peace..."

Super Tuesday: With nine wins, Biden on top

Washington, March 4: The race to win the Democratic Party's nomination to challenge President Donald Trump in the November election has effectively narrowed down to a direct contest between ex-vice president Joe Biden and Senator Bernie Sanders...

President overturned predictions to narrowly take the key states of Texas from his main challenger, Sanders, 78. He also won the primaries in Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Minnesota and Massachusetts...

it, this campaign will send Donald Trump packing. According to NBC News projections, Biden gained 342 on Super Tuesday, bringing his delegate total to 365. Sanders, meanwhile, so far won 245 delegates and is now at 305...

Migrant entry: Clashes erupt

Kastanies, March 4: Greek authorities were firing tear gas and stun grenades Wednesday morning to repulse a push by migrants to cross its land border from Turkey, as pressure continued along its frontier after Turkey said its own border with Europe was open to whoever wanted to cross...

THE GOVERNMENT has called the situation a direct threat to Greece's national security and has imposed emergency measures to carry out swift deportations and freeze asylum applications for one month.

SYRIAN, TURKISH ARMIES CLASH, 2 SOLDIERS DIE

Ankara, March 4: Turkey said that two more of its soldiers were killed Wednesday in a Syrian government attack in northwestern Syria, as steady clashes between the two national armies continued to rack up casualties...

EQUALITY ISSUE

Hong Kong's HC rules govt ban unlawful

Houses for same-sex couples

Hong Kong, March 4: Hong Kong's high court ruled Wednesday that the government ban on providing same-sex couples should be allowed to apply for public housing after a government ban was found to be unconstitutional...

husband-and-wife relationship, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, a husband refers to "a married man especially in relation to his wife"...

order to quash the authority's decision and the public housing application has been remitted to the authority for "fresh consideration"...

to be heterosexual. "Progress was made, one step at a time," Chan said. "Every judicial victory comes at a great cost in terms of legal fees, time, and stress for the plaintiffs..."

Advertisement for 'Inspire Change Through Lens!' Short Film Competition. Prizes include 1st place (5 Lakh), 2nd place (3 Lakh), and 3rd place (2 Lakh). Submission deadline is 17th April, 2020.

Advertisement for 'Hyderabad Images and Memories' book. Celebrating 75 years of Deccan Chronicle. The book contains 75 stories from the first days of the Nizam's rule, including police mysteries and murder plots.

IN BRIEF

Adopt Namaste, says Netanyahu

Jerusalem: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday encouraged his countrymen to adopt Namaste — the Indian way of greeting — instead of the normal handshake as one of the measures to prevent the spread of the deadly coronavirus. At a press conference following a virtual meeting to fight the spread of coronavirus, Mr Netanyahu said that several measures will be announced to prevent the spread of coronavirus but some simple measures like avoiding the normal handshake while greeting people may possibly be replaced with other forms of greetings like the Indian namaste. He also demonstrated at the press conference as to how the Indians do 'Namaste' while greeting people. Netanyahu said that Israel has done well as it was quick in taking action. — P77

Hong Kongers hit hiking trails

Hong Kong: Hong Kongers are escaping the Covid-19 anxiety that has gripped the crowded city by heading for the hills to find fresh air and space to exercise. While the financial hub is known for soaring skyscrapers and cramped housing blocks, its steep mountains and scenic hiking trails offer welcome relief from the Covid-19 fears which triggered the closure of public facilities. A narrow nature trail that winds up to High Junk Peak, overlooking the turquoise shoreline of Clear Waterford, offers a queue on the steep and rocky path up to the summit. "I've been staying at home for too long. Going out hiking, I think everyone shares the same thought — that is to breathe some fresh air, make ourselves comfortable, enjoy the breeze and the view," 25-year-old Sadie Lam tells AFP. Over the weekends, long, snaking lines of people have been seen on popular trails like Lion Rock and Dragon's Back.

Mountaineer faces probe

Marysville: An Arizona mountaineer is under federal investigation after an expedition to the Himalayas to recover the remains of a B-25 bomber shot down in World War II, a newspaper reported. Clayton Kuhles was met by federal agents when he returned from India to the United States in January with small plastic bags containing what he said were the remains. The Columbus Dispatch reported Tuesday. The remains should have been turned over to the FBI in India for verification so they could be returned in flag-draped coffins, said JR Rausch, a city council member in Marysville, Ohio, whose residents had raised \$44,000 to fund the expedition and return the remains of the airman, two of whom were from Marysville.

25 KILLED IN TENNESSEE TORNADOES

Washington, March 4: Tornadoes ripped through Tennessee early Tuesday, leaving at least 25 people dead, destroying buildings and toppling power lines before heading south. The US state voted in Super Tuesday primaries. Voting hours were extended due to the devastation the twisters have wrought when they touched down shortly after midnight — rubble was strewn across the state capital Nashville. Residents ran for their lives as their homes came down around them. Tens of thousands lost power to their homes, officials said. "TAKE COVER NOW! THIS IS AN EXTREMELY DANGEROUS STORM!" the National Weather Service tweeted as one tornado tore through an area west of Nashville. Television broadcast showed cars piled up, hangars destroyed and what appeared to be dozens of aircraft smashed into each other at Nashville's John C. Tune Airport. The Nashville Police Department circulated aerial photographs of many homes with missing roofs and homes destroyed — standing next to houses that escaped damage. "In the hours ahead, we will continue deploying search and rescue teams, opening shelters across the state, and sending emergency personnel to our communities hit hardest," Governor Bill Lee wrote on Twitter.



People wear face masks, amid concerns about the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus, during the evening rush hour in Hong Kong on Wednesday.

Roche Arthritis drug for China patients

Treatment for those in severe condition as country seeks to build regimen to help infected recover

Beijing, March 4: China will use a Roche Holding AG arthritis drug to treat some Covid-19 patients in severe conditions, health authorities said on Wednesday, as the country seeks to build up treatment regimens to help the infected recover. Tocilizumab, sold by the Swiss pharma giant under the trade name Actemra, has been prescribed to Covid-19 patients who show serious lung damage and show elevated level of a protein called interleukin 6, which could indicate inflammation or immunological diseases, the National Health Commission said in the latest version of its treatment guidelines published online. Actemra can help contain inflammation related to interleukin 6, according to Roche. There is no clinical trial evidence yet that the drug will be effective on Covid-19 patients, however, Actemra also has not received approval from China's National Medical Product Administration to be sold for use for Covid-19 infections. Chinese researchers recently registered a three-month clinical trial for Actemra that will recruit 188 Covid-19 patients and take place from February to May 10, according to Roche. The drug is also used to record on China's clinical trials registration database. Roche could not be reached for comment.



The bar area for visitors and press stands empty at the European Parliament in Brussels, Wednesday, as the European Parliament is limiting access to its premises to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Iraq confirms first death, Argentina has initial case

Sulaimaniyah (Iraq), March 4: Iraq said a 70-year-old Muslim cleric died on Wednesday from the novel Covid-19, the first death from the outbreak in a country where 31 people have been infected. The Iraqi preacher had been quarantined in the northeastern city of Sulaimaniyah before his death, a spokesman for the Kurdish autonomous region's health authority said. According to local sources, he had recently met with Iraqis returning from neighbouring Iran, which has recorded the third deadliest outbreak outside China, the epidemic's epicentre. Across the world, 3,155 people have died from the virus, with China recording 2,943 deaths, Italy 79 while 77 people have died in Iran from the disease.

A SINGAPORE Minister has warned of spikes in Covid-19 cases in the country as the health ministry reported two new cases. National Development Minister Lawrence Wong asked people and authorities to be prepared for "new spikes" in cases in Singapore. "We will be exposed to new waves of infection and it will not be possible to stop the virus at our borders. We also cannot isolate Singapore and shut ourselves from the world," the Health Ministry said.

to operate normally. Responding to Wednesday's death, Sulaimaniyah Governor Haval Abu Bakr told reporters that all rallies in the province will be banned and that all football matches will now be held behind closed doors. Local religious authorities announced a ban on prayers, including on Fridays, till further notice. The outbreak has fuelled public panic among Iraqis who say the war-ravaged country's healthcare system cannot handle the epidemic as many hospitals are poorly equipped or in total disrepair.

Argentina joins list of affected nations Buenos Aires, March 4: Argentina on Tuesday said it has confirmed its first case of new Covid-19 in a 49-year-old man who had returned from Italy. Health Minister Gines Gonzalez Garcia said the man has been in isolation since presenting himself to a health clinic. — AFP

Epidemic shows signs of abating

Beijing, March 4: The Covid-19 infections showed signs of receding in China with 38 new fatalities, taking the total number of deaths to 2,981. Chinese health officials have said even as countries grappled to contain the fast-spreading deadly virus that has claimed over 3,100 lives globally. By the end of Tuesday, 2,981 people died of the Covid-19 and total of 80,270 confirmed cases of the virus were reported in China, National Health Commission (NHC) reported on Tuesday. The death toll due to the deadly disease across the world mounted to 3,123 and confirmed cases surpassed 91,783, official media here reported. NHC received reports of 119 new confirmed cases in China on Tuesday from 31 provincial-level regions and Xinjiang, including 115 from Hubei province and its capital Wuhan, the epicentre, taking the total number of deaths to 2,981. Chinese health officials have said even as countries grappled to contain the fast-spreading deadly virus that has claimed over 3,100 lives globally.

2nd case in EU Brussels institutions Brussels, March 4: A second case of novel Covid-19 has been confirmed among the staff at European Union institutions in Brussels, a European official said on Wednesday, just hours after the first. The victim works in a security unit of the European Council, and is believed to have been in contact with a previous case in Belgium, he said. — Agencies

HALF A MILLION MASKS SEIZED IN INDONESIA

Jakarta, March 4: Indonesian police seized over half a million face masks from a Jakarta-area warehouse after the country's first confirmed cases of Covid-19 sparked panic buying and sent prices for prevention products skyrocketing. Authorities were questioning two people after the Tuesday evening raid at a warehouse in satellite city Tangerang, where nearly 600,000 surgical masks were found. The owners did not have permission to distribute the masks. "Mask prices have skyrocketed and there are shortages, most likely because hoarders are trying to make money from the public's expense," Jakarta police spokesman Yuri Yunus said. — AFP



EMMANUEL MACRON French President

We have entered a phase that will last weeks and, undoubtedly, months

79 Italy has most deaths outside China and the figure surpasses Iran.

Iran has counted 2,336 cases of the contagion and reportedly even infected at least 23 members of parliament.

South Korea reported 5,621 infections with 435 new cases on Wednesday.

In Daegu, a shortage of hospital beds meant about 2,300 patients were being cared for in other facilities. The government proposed a near-\$10 billion additional budget to try to address the epidemic's impact.

In the US, 9 people have died, all in and around Washington. On Capitol Hill, lawmakers were expected to finalise an agreement on a \$7.5 billion emergency bill to fund work on vaccine and other measures.

Despite government assurances, there has been a run on some items at supermarkets, with images on social media showing shelves stripped of goods such as toilet paper, pasta and canned food.

OZ TOILET ROLL RATIONING AFTER PANIC BUYING

Sydney, March 4: Australia's biggest supermarket on Wednesday announced a limit on toilet paper purchases after Covid-19 sparked panic buying. Under Woolworths said the restriction of four packs of toilet paper per person would apply "to ensure more customers have access to the products". "It will help shore up stock levels as suppliers ramp up local production and deliveries in response to higher-than-usual demand," the company said. Despite government assurances, there has been a run on some items at supermarkets, with images on social media showing shelves stripped of goods such as toilet paper, pasta and canned food. — AFP

Many countries have recorded temperatures seven to eight degrees higher than normal Northern Europe poised for one of its warmest winters

Stockholm, March 4: Northern European countries known for long and often snowy pursuits are poised to record one of the warmest winters ever after a week of unusually high temperatures. In Sweden's capital Stockholm, cherry trees bloom in January as much of the country recorded temperatures six to seven degrees Celsius higher than normal since December. "It is the warmest winter in recorded history in southern and central Sweden," the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) said in a

statement to AFP. Sweden's neighbours Norway, Denmark and Finland have also seen high temperatures. Some companies have given away ski suits, bonnets and other winter attire well before the season ends. In Uppsala, about 70 kilometres north of Stockholm, this is the warmest winter since 1722, or nearly 300 years. Across the border in Finland, more than half of the country recorded the mildest January ever. Temperatures were seven to eight degrees higher than average, the country's meteorological institute said.

Norway experienced its mildest winter since recorded keeping began in 1960. The same goes for Denmark. Winter, which officially ended on the last day of February, saw temperatures five degrees above normal. "If this winter remains etched in memory, it will be as the winter which never arrived," said Mikael Scharling, of the Danish Meteorological Institute. "We have just experienced the first January-February period without any measurable snow in Helsinki," said Mika Rantanen, of the Finnish Meteorological Institute. — AFP



Cherry trees in full blossom at Kungstradgraben in central Stockholm.

Stop 'pretending' on climate: Greta

Brussels, March 4: Teenage eco-warrior Greta Thunberg braced the EU's grand plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 in adequate on Wednesday and said Europe is falsely claiming to lead the world on climate. The European Union must stop "pretending that you can be a climate leader and still go on building and subsidising

new fossil fuel infrastructure," the activist told a committee hearing at the European Parliament. Thunberg was addressing MEPs as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced a new draft law that Brussels has hailed as the cornerstone of Europe's "Green Deal" to fight climate change. — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS

	%
Sensex	38,409.48 -0.55
Nifty 50	11251.00 -0.46
S&P 500*	3,054.24 1.69
Dollar (₹)	73.40 -0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	94.06 0.08
Euro (₹)	81.97 0.20
Gold (10gm) (₹)	44,383.1,155 2.59
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	52.51 0.65
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.226 -0.116
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.010 -0.007

* As of 9:30 pm IST

Deloitte, KPMG pleas in IL&FS case dismissed

The NCLAT dismissed the pleas of IL&FS auditors—Deloitte Haskins & Sells and KPMG arm BSR & Associates—along with independent directors challenging their impeachment in the case of alleged fraud at a group firm IFIN. The NCLAT bench upheld the directions of the Mumbai bench of the NCLT, saying it cannot be termed as “illegitimate”. NCLT had directed them to impeach the auditors and independent directors as parties.

Karnad joins Puri successor search team



HDFC Bank has reconstituted the search panel instituted to find the successor to Aditya Puri, the MD & CEO of the 25-year-old bank. Keki Mishra has been replaced by Renu Karnad of parent HDFC in the search panel. Mishra leaves the bank's board after completing eight years as director—the maximum that regulation allows. On Nov. 28, the bank had set up a panel to find a successor to Puri who turns 70 on Oct. 26 this year.

Govt to bring settlement scheme for LLPs

The Centre will come out with a one-time settlement scheme for Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs). The scheme will provide them more time to submit pending documents as well as immunity from prosecution for defaults. The LLP settlement Scheme, 2020—to be in force from March 16 to June 13—would permit a “one-time condonation of delay in filing statutory required documents” with the Registrar of Companies.

Gold prices jump ₹1,155 to ₹44,383 in Delhi

Gold prices zoomed Rs 1,155 to Rs 44,383 per 10 gram in the national capital as the rupee depreciation and strong buying in global safe-haven assets, according to HDFC Securities. On Tuesday, the precious metal had closed at Rs 43,228 per 10 gram. In the international market, gold was trading flat at \$1,638. “Gold prices rallied sharply after the Fed delivered surprise rate cut of 50 bps,” the firm said.

Printed & Published by T Venkateswarlu on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press at Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd., #563/9/D&E, Behind Andhra Bank Pet Basheerbagh, Kompally, Ranga Reddy Dist. Editor: T Venkateswarlu. Reg. No. APENG/2008/24282. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of the Editor. Financial Chronicle® is prohibited.

More private players expected to bid for carrier NRI stakes can own 10% stake in Air India

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

Opening the doors wider for prospective buyers, the government on Wednesday allowed non-resident Indians (NRIs) to own up to 100 per cent stake in Air India against 49 per cent permitted earlier. The government decision comes at a time when it has sought preliminary bids for 100 per cent stake sale in the national carrier.

The decision was taken in a meeting of the Union cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. “The decision on Air India is one milestone decision where NRIs and they will get permission to invest 100 per cent in the airline,” Union minister Prakash Javadekar told reporters briefing about the cabinet decision.

“Non-resident Indians (NRIs), who are Indian nationals, will get permission to participate in Air India’s strategic sale. Earlier, they were allowed to own up to 49 per cent stake. Now, they can take 100 per cent,” he added.

As per the existing norms, 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) is permitted only for the scheduled domestic carriers, subject to conditions, but not in Air India. The government now



plans to divest its entire stake in the national carrier and has set a March 7 deadline for receiving

Changes to Cos Act to decriminalise offences

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

Briefing reporters after the cabinet met, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who is also the corporate affairs minister, said changes to the Act pertains mostly to removal of those sections which result in criminalisation of an offence.

“As many as 72 changes to the Companies Act 2013 have been approved by the Cabinet, which had suggested 72 changes to 65 sections of the Companies Act, with a priority on decriminalising the Act. Out of the 66 compoundable offences, 23 have been decriminalised,” Sitharaman said, adding that these 23 offences will now be dealt with under an in-house adjudicating framework.

series of changes proposed in the Act. Briefing reporters after the cabinet met, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who is also the corporate affairs minister, said changes to the Act pertains mostly to removal of those sections which result in criminalisation of an offence. “As many as 72 changes to the Companies Act 2013 have been approved by the Cabinet, which had suggested 72 changes to 65 sections of the Companies Act, with a priority on decriminalising the Act. Out of the 66 compoundable offences, 23 have been decriminalised,” Sitharaman said, adding that these 23 offences will now be dealt with under an in-house adjudicating framework.

Sitharaman said the government would remove provisions of imprisonment in various sections and also reduce penalties in case of various compoundable offences. She said amendment would be made in Section 23 of the Act for including an exemption provision to allow direct listing of securities by Indian companies in permissible foreign exchange transactions. She also said as part of ease of doing business, “The companies having CSR obligation of less than Rs 50 lakh would not have to constitute a CSR committee.”

The cabinet also cleared separate benches at NCLAT, which would deal with cases under the companies law the IBC and the Competition Act.

Services growth at 7-year high

Bengaluru, March 4: Growth in India’s dominant service sector accelerated at a pace not seen in over seven years last month, boosted by a recovery in foreign demand and solid business confidence, a private survey showed on Wednesday.

The Nikkei/IHS Markit Services Purchasing Managers’ Index climbed to 57.5 in February from January’s 55.5. It was the highest reading since January 2013 and comfortably above the 50-mark separating growth from contraction for a fourth month.

“The resilience in the trend for business activity stands healthy demand for services from both the domestic and international markets,” Pollyanna De Lima, principal economist at IHS Markit, said in a release.

“Positive gains in new work orders, manufacturing and service sectors suggest that private sector output will likely increase markedly again in March, boding well for final quarter GDP growth expectations of a 7 per cent rate in Q3 FY 2019/20.”

“Service providers experienced a marked improvement in workforce productivity, with the sharp rise in business activity happening,” de Lima said. —Reuters

Fed raises RBI rate cut hopes, bonds gain

FALAKNAZ SYED
MUMBAI, MARCH 4

The US Federal Reserve’s move to slash rates by an aggressive 50 basis points to support its economy on account of the spread of the coronavirus has raised hopes of a similar move back home by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) soon.

Indian bonds rallied on rate cut hope as foreign investors rushed back to high yielding sovereign paper they had abandoned in the last few days. The Indian 10-year bond yields fell 12 basis points to close at 6.23 per cent.

On the other hand, after a choppy ride, the USD/INR pair put a halt in the rally, ending the session lower by 7 paise compared to Tuesday’s close of 73.29.

Bond yields fall when bond prices rise. The 10-year US treasury yield is now below one per cent for the first time ever after the Fed cut rates.

With US yields falling steeply, the yield differential factor appears to be coming back into play for several Asian currency bonds, including India’s. Most central banks are expected to lower rates with a similar motivation.

According to economists, the spread of Covid 19 in India and growth concerns, which have been amplified by the low GDP number for Q3, may allow the MPC to find room soon

er than expected for incremental rate cuts despite inflation being very high at above 7 per cent and unlikely to come down to the 4 per cent level any time soon.

Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Care Ratings said, “It is understood that India’s enterprise will be impacted by the virus even if the spread is not within the country. Therefore there is reason to believe that the RBI may pitch in for a rate cut up to 50 bps.”

“The interesting thing is whether this will happen before the policy or on the policy date which is April. We believe that the rate cut can come sooner.”

Madhavi Arora, lead economist, Edelweiss Securities, said, “RBI could now front load its impending rate cuts and could further the long term report the rally and could drift the yield towards 6.25 per cent by March end.”

NCLAT asks CCI to probe Flipkart over vendors plea

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MARCH 4

After getting some respite from the competition in November 2019, Flipkart recently e-commerce companies now have something more to worry about. The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has asked the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to initiate a probe against Flipkart in a case filed by the All-India Online Vendors’ Association (AIOVA).

The NCLAT on Wednesday set aside the order passed by the CCI and directed the director general to investigate the business practices of



forms for violating various provisions of the Competition Act,” said Chanakya Basa, counsel for AIOVA. “Based on the order, a Flipkart spokesperson said, “We understand that the NCLAT has issued an order in relation to the AIOVA appeal. We are currently awaiting a copy of the order.”

Flipkart had recently received a respite when Karnataka High Court had stayed a CCI probe against them. It was filed by Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh against the e-commerce biggie, the HC had noted that CCI should have also called AIOVA in the matter before passing the impugned order.

Corona: Sebi assessing situation

ASHWIN J PUNNEN
MUMBAI, MARCH 4

With Corona virus playing havoc with domestic markets, regulators, including RBI and Sebi, are stepping in to salvage the situation.

“The markets regulator Sebi is currently assessing the potential impact of the epidemic on the capital markets, even as the domestic equity market is witnessing huge volatility over the past week when the benchmark Sensex fell by 7 per cent in line with the global meltdown.”

Sebi is aware of coronavirus and the potential impact that it can have on the market. We are taking the necessary steps,” Sebi whole-time member S.K. Mohanty told reporters here. “Whatever has to be done, has to be done. We are internally assessing the situation,” he added.



Market regulators and central banks across the global are taking measures to mitigate the risk of economies getting hit by the outbreak. According to global brokerage firm, Credit Suisse, the impact on Asian economies will be worse than SARS. “We expect a bigger and possibly longer macro impact for Asia than was seen during SARS. Our base case is that 12 months from now markets meeting the RBI standard to the buyer.”

The SARC epidemic had a big but short macro impact with every Asian market except India, Indonesia and Japan seeing a significant fall.

Oyo to cut 5,000 jobs in overhaul

SARITHA RAI & LULU YILUN CHEN
MARCH 4

Oyo Hotels is cutting its global workforce by about 5,000 to 25,000 people, with the deepest reductions in China after business there crumbled in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

The Indian startup, one of the largest in SoftBank Group Corp’s portfolio, is reducing staff in China, the US and its home country as it seeks to boost profitability. Oyo expanded rapidly after its founding CEO Kitesh Agarwal in an interview. “Our first focus of 2020 is growth with profitability.”

Agarwal said the global headcount would fall by about 17 per cent from 30,000 in January. The company is also prioritising improved relations with hotels and stronger corporate governance, he said. The worldwide overhaul was in full swing, he added. —Bloomberg

and SoftBank has pushed portfolio companies to improve profitability. “In our previous phase, we added a lot of properties to our platform and built the brand and mindshare,” said founder and CEO Kitesh Agarwal in an interview. “Our first focus of 2020 is growth with profitability.”

Agarwal said the global headcount would fall by about 17 per cent from 30,000 in January. The company is also prioritising improved relations with hotels and stronger corporate governance, he said. The worldwide overhaul was in full swing, he added.

Pharmaceutical companies, in a letter to the DGT has asked to revisit the effective date of its order restricting the exports. “Most of the manufacturers and exporters have manufactured the supply of all items committed in their contracts. Non-supply of one item would sometimes result in cancellation of entire order for all products and backlisting and huge penalties on the companies by the government along with the restriction on export of the listed items with immediate effect would severely impact our members, as

Pharma exporters fear for legal fallout of restrictions

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MARCH 4

Pharma exporters fear legal proceedings by foreign buyers from the government’s restriction on export of 26 drugs with “immediate effect”, as they are not able to fulfil their previous orders. Several other formulations coming under the same HS Codes of the restricted drugs are also being restricted by the government.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade on Tuesday restricted export of 26 drugs in the backdrop of increasing incidences of coronavirus. Pharmexil, the export promotion body of the

many number of consignments are already lined up for export in the warehouses and ports.” Pharmexil said.

Some of the institutional supplies mandate the supply of all items committed in their contracts. Non-supply of one item would sometimes result in cancellation of entire order for all products and backlisting and huge penalties on the companies by the government along with the restriction on export of the listed items with immediate effect would severely impact our members, as

anyone dealing in digital currencies. The government though is yet to act on these recommendations and is yet to finalise regulations around cryptocurrencies. On several occasions, the government along with the central bank, had cautioned the public about the risks of cryptocurrencies. If the government follows the panel’s recommenda-

Bike-makers told to supply helmets

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, MARCH 4

A court in Maharashtra has directed two-wheeler makers to offer two helmets to every buyer of a new bike.

The Nagpur bench of Bombay High Court on Feb 13 ordered that an infraction be sent to eight manufacturers along with the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) to strictly implement the order of supplying two helmets to the buyer. The two-wheeler manufacturers are Hero MotoCorp, Bajaj Auto, Suzuki Motorcycle India, Royal Enfield, TVS Motor, Piaggio Vehicles, Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India, and Yamaha Motor.

“The dealers had filed an affidavit giving names of these manufacturers, who supplied the vehicles without helmets. A PIL was filed by an activist Saurabh Mahendrasingh Bardwad before the court that two-wheeler makers were not following the Rule 138(4)(f) of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989.

Apex court strikes down RBI ban on cryptocurrency

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

The Supreme Court ruled on Wednesday that private banks to handle cryptocurrency transactions from exchanges and trading platforms. The court on such dealings by the central bank that had come as a major blow to the banking industry. The Reserve Bank of

India had ordered financial institutions to break off all ties with individuals or businesses dealing in virtual currency such as Bitcoin within three months, in April 2018. Cryptocurrencies are digital currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of the currency units and verify the transfer of funds,

operating independently of a central bank. The ban led to plummeting trade volumes and exchanges shutting their businesses. “Investments had stopped and start-ups were staying away from starting their business in the crypto and blockchain space in India which will change now that the Supreme Court has said that the RBI circular was unconsti-

tutional,” said Nischal Shetty, CEO of WazirX, an Indian cryptocurrency exchange. However, the industry still faces hurdles as a government panel, appointed to look into the matter, has recommended that India ought to ban all private cryptocurrencies. In July, the panel also recommended a ban of up to 10 years and heavy fines for

anyone dealing in digital currencies. The government though is yet to act on these recommendations and is yet to finalise regulations around cryptocurrencies. On several occasions, the government along with the central bank, had cautioned the public about the risks of cryptocurrencies. If the government follows the panel’s recommenda-

tions, it could signal the end of the road for these digital currencies in India. The 2018 circular curbed banks from being involved in cryptocurrency transactions. In April 2018, the Reserve Bank of India barred those financial bodies regulated by it to include in “Virtual Currencies (VCs) or provide services for facilitating any person or entity in dealing with or settling VCs.”

SHORT TAKES

Runner Kiranjeet fails dope test

New Delhi: Long-distance runner Kiranjeet Kaur, who won the Tata Steel Kolkata 25K among the Indians, has tested positive for a banned substance and has been provisionally suspended by World Athletics. The 31-year-old Kaur had clocked 13:56 to finish the overall and first among Indians in the Kolkata 25K in December last. "Presence of Prohibited Substances (SARM S22) (Article 2.1) - Notice of Allegation Issued," the Athletics Integrity Unit said. She had won a bronze in 10,000m at the Federation Cup National Championships in March last year in Patiala. Representing Haryana, she originally finished fourth with a time of 35:49.96 but it was upgraded to bronze after Sanjivani Jadhav was stripped off her gold due to a doping offence. Kaur had also taken part in the 5000m race in Patiala and a silver in 5000m in the National Inter-State Championships in Guwahati in 2018. —PTI

Olympic champ banned for 4 yrs

Paris: Olympic 3,000m steeplechase champion Ruth Jebet has been banned for four years after testing positive for banned blood booster EPO, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) announced Wednesday. Hit with a provisional ban in 2018 after a positive test on December 1, 2017, the Kenyan-born Bahraini has the right to appeal the four-year suspension. As it stands the 23-year-old will not be able to defend her title at the July 24-August 9 Olympics in Tokyo. After winning gold in Rio in 2016, she went on to set a new world record in the Paris Diamond League meet of 6min 52sec 78sec, a mark since smashed by Kenya's Beatrice Chepkoech (8:44.32) in July 2019. —AFP

Harika draws again in Swiss

Lausanne: India's number two Dronavalli Harika pushed but could not break the defence of lower-ranked Mariyam Ullah to settle for a second consecutive draw in the FIDE Women's Grand Prix here. The 23-year-old Harika, Grandmaster was also held to a draw by Canal-Sokolosky of France on Tuesday. At the end of the second round, Harika has one point after two games and faces world champion Ju Wenjun next. Four of the 16 players were drawn in the day with only Russia's Alexandra Goryachkina and Georgian Nana Dzagnidze positive alternatives to be in joint lead with 1.5 points. The strong tournament featuring 12 players, including world champion Wenjun, is the third in the series of four Grand Prix from which two with the highest points tally would qualify for the next candidate event. India's world No.2 Koneru Humpy leads the Grand Prix standings after two events with 2.5 points. —PTI

INDIA LOSE 0-2 TO CHINA IN FED CUP

Dubai: Putting up a gutsy show, Anika Raina gave a scare to world number 29 Qiang Wang after the 14-year-old Bhosale suffered defeat in the first singles as India lost the Fed Cup tie against China after conceding an unassailable 0-2 lead, here on Tuesday. Rutuja fought her heart out before losing 4-6, 2-6 to world number 35 Shuai Zhang in the first singles. The onus to bring the team back in the contest was on India number one Anika and she stunned her rival by taking the first set in a jiffy but eventually lost 6-2, 4-6 after battling hard for two hours and 24 minutes. The doubles rubber has been rendered inconsequential. India will take on Uzbekistan on Wednesday. Anika was up against someone, who had defeated both Williams in the third round of the Australian Open in January. The Indian had a break chance in the fourth game but the Chinese saved that with an ace. Anika kept her nerves and her sharp returns converted the second chance to go up 3-1. —PTI



Chelsea's Willian celebrates after scoring his side's opening goal during their English FA Cup match against Liverpool at the Stamford Bridge in London on Tuesday. Chelsea won 2-0. —AP

Blues feel the Blues
Liverpool beaten again, 2-0 by Chelsea

London, March 4: Jurgen Klopp insisted the best of Liverpool's season may still be to come despite a third defeat in four games saw them crash out of the FA Cup 0-2 at the hands of Chelsea. Klopp made seven changes to the side beaten for the first time in the Premier League games at Watford on Saturday, but still named a far stronger XI than the youthful teams that had seen off Everton and Shrewsbury to reach the fifth round. However, goals from Willian and Ross Barkley gave Frank Lampard's men a much-needed lift at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday. "Losing 0-2 is not good, but it is relatively easy to explain. We made two massive mistakes around the goals," said Klopp. Liverpool remain well on course for a first league title in 30 years with a 22-point lead at the top of the Premier League, but run the risk of their competitive campaign coming to an early end once the title is secured unless they can overturn a 0-1 first leg deficit against Atletico Madrid in the Champions League next week. "It is not the best three weeks of the whole season but it is a chance to make it the best three weeks now and that is the plan," added Klopp. A run of five wins in 16 league games and a 0-3 thrashing at home by Bayern Munich in the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie last week meant the pressure was on Chelsea to keep their hopes of silverware this season alive. Chelsea got the lift they



Liverpool's Roberto Firmino (left) is tackled by Chelsea's Marcos Alonso during their English FA Cup match at the Stamford Bridge in London on Tuesday. —AP

THE RESULTS

Chelsea (Willian 13, Barkley 6)	2
Liverpool	0
West Brom (Phillips 74, Zahore 90+3)	2
Newcastle (Almiron 33, 45+, Lazaro 47)	3
Reading (Pascas 43+pen)	1
Sheffield United (McCordrick 2)	1

Kovacic and Willian to injury either side of half-time to further deplete Lampard's midfield options. But that may provide the opportunity Barkley needed from the opening goal as Liverpool's understudy goalkeeper Adrian undid the good work of a brilliant save from Willian within a minute. The Brazilian was gifted possession again just outside the Liverpool box and this time Adrian could only turn his powerful drive into the bottom corner. At the other end, Kepa Arrizabalaga, who had been dropped for the previous five games, showed why Chelsea spent £72 million (\$92 million) on him just over 18 months ago as he made three reaction saves in a matter of seconds to deny Mane, Divoock Origi and Takumi Minamino what seemed a certain goal. Chelsea then lost Mateo

PSG CAN STOP MBAPPE FROM OLY: DESCHAMPS

Amsterdam, March 4: Paris Saint-Germain are "within their right" to not allow Kylian Mbappe to play for France at the Tokyo Olympics, national team coach Didier Deschamps admitted on Tuesday. "PSG, and maybe other clubs elsewhere, have taken a position and that is within their right", Deschamps said in Amsterdam, while attending the draw for the next UEFA Nations League. His comments came after French sports daily L'Equipe reported earlier on Tuesday that PSG had written to the French Football Federation (FFF) to say that the 21-year-old World Cup winner would not be allowed to participate at the Games.

Clubs are not obliged to release players for the Olympic football tournament, which does not fall within official FIFA international dates. The Olympics are due to run from July 24 to August 9, but the next French league begins on August 7. Meanwhile, Mbappe will be part of the France squad at Euro 2020. "This concerns me without it concerning me because I am not the coach (of the Olympic team), that's Sylvain Ripoll. These are the Olympic Games, which are happening out with FIFA dates, and the clubs are the employers of the players," Didier Deschamps. —AFP

AIBA CALLS OFF ITS ANNUAL MEET IN BUDAPEST

New Delhi, March 4: The International Boxing Association (AIBA) on Wednesday postponed its annual congress in Budapest by three months to June, citing the novel coronavirus outbreak across the world. The decision, prompted by a request from the Hungarian Boxing Federation, comes a few days after the world body cancelled the European leg of its continental forum in Italy. "Extraordinary AIBA Congress, scheduled in Budapest on March 4, is postponed for three-month period because of Coronavirus outbreak. AIBA Executive Committee took this decision by e-mail vote due to the force majeure," the AIBA said in a statement. "AIBA National Federations are invited to attend an Extraordinary AIBA Congress on June 20th, 2020 in Budapest, Hungary," it added. Due to the postponement, the tenure of AIBA interim President Mohamed Moustahsane has been extended until the end of the year. "With the development of the coronavirus outbreak in Europe, many Governments are considering restrictive measures including cancellation of events in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus..." said Moustahsane. —PTI

Stunning Sakshi surges

Amman (Jordan), March 4: Former junior world champion Sakshi Chaudhary (57kg) stunned Asian silver medalist and fourth seed Nilwan Techasup of Thailand to enter the quarterfinals of the Asian Olympic Qualifiers for boxing here on Wednesday. The two-time youth world champion Indian who is only 19, prevailed in a split verdict against the Asian Games bronze medalist in an engrossing second-round bout after both the boxers got opening-round byes. Sakshi will next be up against Korea's Im Aeji on March 9. Making the semifinals would assure her of a spot in the Tokyo Olympics scheduled in July-August this year. The opening round was fought on even keel for most part but Sakshi managed to be ahead of her fancied rival in a split verdict. Techasup came out all guns blazing in the second round and caught Sakshi off-guard with a barrage of combination straight punches. The Indian was pushed to the backfoot by the aggressive Thai, whose left jab was particularly eye-catching in the first round. But the judges ruled in Sakshi's favour in a 3-2 second round verdict. In the final three minutes, Sakshi's counterattacks proved enough to trump Techasup's consistent aggression. "I stuck to the strategy of counter-attack through the bout and I think she couldn't handle it. My coaches had told me not to deviate from the plan and I didn't." —SAKSHI



India's Sakshi (in red) on route to her 4-1 win over Thailand's fourth seed Nilwan Techasup during her women's 57kg second round bout at the Asian Olympic Qualifiers in Amman, Jordan, on Wednesday. —PTI

Sakshi will take on Korea's Im Aeji for a spot in the women's 57kg semifinal on March 9 in Jordan. Solanki (57kg) and Ashish Kumar (75kg) Sakshi said after the quarterfinals in the men's draw. Earlier on Tuesday, the seasoned duo of Gaurav me not to deviate from the plan and I didn't," Sakshi said after the bout. —PTI

CORONAVIRUS | IMPACT

Shining ball with saliva dangerous

BIPIN DANI MUMBAI, MARCH 4 All players and the visiting England team, which have recently shown more concern over corona virus in Sri Lanka should stop putting saliva on balls, according to Prof Arjuna de Silva, the former member of the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) board medical panel. "Players should also not spit on the grounds and proper disposals be used and should frequently use sanitizers", the sports medicine expert said from Brazil, where he has been attending a medical conference. England players have announced against shaking hands with the players after the matches, though it is not mandatory but a custom. "In fact, the Sri Lankan players should have more worries than England players because we have so far registered a solitary case whereas in Britain 42 cases have already been registered," he added. "Our culture is 2,500 years old ayubowan

Spitting on the ground and on the ball should be avoided. The players will be supplied hand gels. The temperature of the players' body will be monitored twice daily. Players should take maximum precautions. — PROF ARJUNA DE SILVA former member of the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) board medical panel

method of greeting. No germs are transmitted by this method, English team can learn from us," he further explained. "We have all necessary gear in Sri Lanka. Spitting on the ground and on the ball should be avoided. The players will be supplied hand gels. The temperature of the players' body will be monitored twice daily. Players should take maximum precautions," de Silva clarified. "Sri Lanka is currently one of the safest countries regarding COVID-19," de Silva said.



South African cricketer Faf du Plessis uses saliva as he tries to shine the ball in this file photo.

Asian badminton hit amidst others

Shanghai, March 4: Next month's Badminton Asia Championships held out of Wuhan, epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak, to the Philippine capital Manila, officials said on Wednesday. "The Asia Championships will be staged in Manila on April 21-26. Badminton Asia (BA) together with Philippine Badminton Association has been working closely to ensure visa approval for player and officials' entry into Manila for all participants in this important and prestigious Championship," BA said in a statement. The coronavirus has forced the postponement or cancellation of several badminton tournaments, disrupting the build-up to the Tokyo Olympics. "NO RANKING POINTS AT SHOOTING WORLD CUP" The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) on Wednesday said the upcoming New Delhi World Cup will not carry ranking points, even as the organisers remained hopeful of going ahead with the tournament despite a few withdrawals owing to the novel coronavirus threat. "The ISSF said there will no ranking points in the tournament scheduled to be held from March 15 to 26. "Due to local restrictions relating to the COVID-19 virus introduced by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of India, the organisers of the ISSF World Cup in New Delhi cannot guarantee the participation of all the athletes who would like to enter those competitions. Therefore, the ranking points can be earned at this World Cup. Still, it will be possible to achieve the most of the influence on athletes' chances to get the desired Olympic quota places," the ISSF said in a statement. Countries such as Bahrain, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, North Korea and Turkmenistan have already pulled out of the tournament due to the virus. —AFP

BENGALURU BASKETBALL QUALIFIERS POSTPONED

The FIBA 3x3 basketball Olympic qualifying tournament, scheduled to be held in Bengaluru from March 16 to 22, has been postponed, disrupting the build-up to the Tokyo Olympics. "The FIBA 3x3 Olympic Qualification Tournament, which was scheduled to be held in Bengaluru, India, from March 18 to 22, 2020, has been postponed," Fdration Internationale de Basketball (FIBA) said in a statement. Twenty teams each in men's and women's events were to participate in the event. "ITALIAN CUP SEMIFINALS HAVE BEEN PUSHED" The Italian Cup semifinal clash between Juventus and AC Milan has been postponed as fears mount over the coronavirus epidemic in northern Italy. Local authorities in Turin announced. Napoli's Italian Cup semifinal second leg against Inter Milan has also been postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak. —Agencies

OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY CHEERS UP FUKUSHIMA

Tokyo, March 4: Japan on Wednesday lifted an evacuation order for parts of Futaba, one of two towns where the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant is located, ahead of an Olympic torch relay in the region. The city of Futaba, former home to some 7,000 people, was designated a mandatory evacuation zone after a massive quake-triggered tsunami in 2011 hit the Fukushima Daiichi plant, damaging the power supply and cooling system and eventually causing a meltdown. With the lifting of the mandatory evacuation order in a northern part of the town, workers will be able to stay. The move comes as the organisers of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics have added Futaba to its Olympic torch relay route, which begins on March 26. —AFP

SHORT TAKES

IPL cuts prize money by half

New Delhi: The eight IPL franchisees, who are unhappy with the BCCI's decision to halve the prize money corpus to ₹25 crore, will soon meet to decide the course of action over the board's "unexpected" move. While the prize money to be distributed among the top-four teams stays at ₹30 crore, the play-off standing fund to be distributed among the franchisees has been slashed from ₹50 crore to ₹25 crore.

On top of that, they will have to pay ₹50 lakh to state associations for hosting an IPL game, an increase of ₹20 lakh. The IPL 2020 begins on March 29. "We are unhappy that the play-off standing fund has been halved. We were not even consulted. The franchisees have been discussing it informally and will soon have a formal meeting to discuss the issue," an official from a South-based franchise said. The winning franchise now stands to earn ₹10 crore from the play-off standing fund as compared to ₹25 crore earlier, runners-up ₹6.25 crore instead of ₹12.5 crore and ₹4.3 crore each for teams which finish third and fourth (earlier it was ₹5.25 crore). "It is a big hit. We are discussing it internally as well as with other teams. All the teams are meeting soon to discuss it," said an official from another franchise. Mumbai Indians host Chennai Super Kings in the opener at Wankhede on March 29. —PTI



A.V.S. Murthy (left) and Kamalakar Rao pose with their trophies at the Senior Masters Championships at Jaipur.

Kamalakar, Rajeev claim doubles title

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 4 The doubles team of M. Kamalakar Rao and Rajeev Sharma (CAG) combined to beat top seeds Lindeewar Singh (Andhra Pradesh) and Navdeep Singh (Chandigarh) 21-15, 21-15 for the 50+ category title at the recent Senior Masters National Badminton Championships at Jaipur. A.V.S. Murthy and KP Naik (CAG) defeated Suresh Kumar and Atul Binwale 21-16, 21-16 to take the mixed doubles trophy in the 55+ category.

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2018-20 Printed and Published by T. Venkateswara on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Plot No. 9 Alwal Villu (Vidya Nagar Taluk, Medchal Malkajgiri Dist. Telangana and Published at 36, D-2, Road, Secunderabad. RNI Registration No. 3081/1987. Editor: Aditya Sinha

Josh(i) in the panel

Sunil to head selection committee, Harvinder makes cut

Mumbai, March 4: Former India spinner Sunil Joshi was named chairman of the national selection panel by the BCCI's Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) on Wednesday, which also picked ex-pacer Harvinder Singh in the five-member group.

The CAC, comprising Madan Lal, R.P. Singh and Sulakshana Naik, named the two selectors, Joshi replaces MSK Prasad (South Zone), who had an extended run after completing his four-year term. "The committee recommended Mr Sunil Joshi for the role of Chairman of the senior men's selection committee," read a statement from BCCI Secretary Jay Shah.

In an unprecedented decision, the BCCI said the CAC will review the panel's performance after one year and "make recommendations" accordingly.

Harvinder was chosen from Central Zone and replaces Gagan Khoda in the panel. The existing members of the selection panel are Jatin Paranjape (West), Devang Gandhi (East) and Sarandeep Singh (North). "We have picked the best guys for the job. We picked them (Joshi and Harvinder) because they were very clear in their views," Lal said after the interviews.

Specifically on Joshi, Lal said: "We liked his straight-forward attitude. He is experienced also (having been part of the Bangladesh support staff). He has also coached Uttar Pradesh. I asked him how he handled Bangladesh selectors. He has done the toughest of jobs. His thoughts were the best," he added. Lal said candidates playing experience in all three formats was considered. "Their experience in Tests, ODIs and first-class was considered. The rest we will get to know (with their performance). After one year's time, if we find they have not done a good job, we will decide accordingly," he said. The CAC had shortlisted five candidates for interviews: Joshi, Harvinder, Venkatesh Prasad, Rajesh Chauhan and L. S. Sivaramakrishnan — from a list of 40 applicants. The likes of Ajit Agarkar and Nayan Mongia did not even make the short-list but the former could be back in contention after Paranjape's term ends in September along with Joshi and head coach Ravi Shastri. "Their tenure is for one year. Once the tenure of other selectors is over (in September), the CAC will sit again to pick the new selectors in their place and we will review the performance of the selectors that we have picked," Lal said.



Newly appointed BCCI chief selector Sunil Joshi (left) and Harvinder Singh at the BCCI headquarters.

Christchurch, March 4: The Madan Lal-led Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) had two common questions for the potential national selectors: "how will you handle Mahendra Singh Dhoni's future with the Indian team and skipper Virat Kohli's stature?"

Five candidates — Laxman Sivaramakrishnan, Venkatesh Prasad, Rajesh Chauhan, Sunil Joshi and Harvinder Singh were asked a common question on Dhoni, who has not played since the World Cup semifinal loss to New Zealand in July. However, the former skipper will lead Chennai Super Kings in the IPL, beginning March 29. "Yes, the CAC had one common question and that was about their call with regards to Mahendra Singh Dhoni and whether they will select him for T20 World Cup," a senior BCCI official said. Eventually, Joshi and Harvinder were named the two new selectors in the five-member panel.

It is understood that the new BCCI regime wants the selection committee to have a clear cut stand on Dhoni's international future with the limited over teams. "Dhoni is both a sensitive and tricky issue and

LIST OF SELECTORS

- Sunil Joshi (Chairman)
• Harvinder Singh
• Devang Gandhi
• Sarandeep Singh
• Jatin Paranjape
• In an unprecedented decision, the BCCI said the Cricket Advisory Committee will review the panel's performance after one year and "make recommendations" accordingly.

• Joshi's selection from South Zone and Harvinder Singh getting picked from Central Zone also shows that the Board has stuck with the zonal policy to pick the selectors.

Of Dhoni's future & Kohli's stature

Captain matters a lot to the team and so it is important on how you communicate with him. What is gone is in the past, the two selectors that we picked had the best answers on this topic. — MADAN LAL

Harmanpreet-led side face English test at World Cup

Sydney, March 4: Firm title contenders after a sensational unbeaten run in the group stages, India will have to ensure a solid all-round performance to get the better of formidable England in the semifinals of the ICC women's T20 World Cup here on Thursday. India have been the best side so far and they would be seeking their maiden final appearance in the showpiece's history with a win over England on Thursday.

In the earlier seven editions, India have never reached the final but this time, they have emerged as serious title contenders after a string of superlative performances. They began the tournament with a win over defending champions Australia and since then have gathered strength with Surrey match, beating Bangladesh, New Zealand and Sri Lanka to top group 'A' with eight points from four matches. The Indians are in red-hot form, but history favours

Live on TV

SEMI-FINALS
England vs India from 9.30 am on Star Sports 2, HD
Australia vs South Africa from 1.30 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

England as they have won all the five matches played between the two sides in this tournament. The last time, the two teams met in a T20 World Cup, England won by eight wickets in the semifinals in West Indies. Before that, India lost in 2009, 2012, 2014 and 2016 editions, all in group stages. "After losing the last semifinal, as a team we realised we have to work as a unit, and right now you will see that our team is working as a unit and we are not reliant on just one or two players," India captain Harmanpreet Kaur said.

Seven players in this Indian team played in that semifinal and they would be looking to turn the tables on the Englishwomen this time.

ENGLAND WARY OF POONAM AND CO. England captain Heather Knight feels tackling spinners, particularly the in-form Poonam Yadav, will be crucial to her side's chances of upstaging an unbeaten India.

"We've practised for her a lot. I thought we played her outstandingly in the last T20 World Cup and that was due to the preparation we had," Knight said. "We don't have (assistant coach) Ali Maiden anymore, who bowled a brilliant leg-spin, but we've got a few coaches who have bowled it brilliantly and we've been really clear on how we're going to do things against her," she added. "She's a massive threat for our team and is an improved bowler since the last World Cup," Knight said. —PTI

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Unadkat helps Saurashtra make Ranji Trophy final

Rajkot, March 4: Saurashtra entered their second successive Ranji Trophy final with a 92-run win over Gujarat on Day Five of their semifinal here on Wednesday.

Saurashtra captain and lead pacer Jaydev Unadkat led from the front with a seven-wicket haul as Gujarat were bowled out for 234 in the final session on day five. Chasing 327, Gujarat had resumed the day at seven for one. They were down and out at 63 for five before captain Parthiv Patel (83) and Chirag Gandhi (86) shared a 158-run stand to raise hopes of an improbable win. However, Unadkat removed both the set batsmen to fashion a memorable win for his team. Saurashtra will host Bengal in the final from March 9.

Saurashtra had its last year's title clash in Vidarbha. Resuming on seven for one, the visitors lost their second wicket on the same score. Unadkat struck early as he removed Samit Gohil (5), who was caught on second slip. Unadkat had his third scalp when took a return catch to send back Dhruv Raval (1). Gujarat were in their 18 for three. When it looked like Bhargav Merai (14) and skip-



Jaydev Unadkat (right) takes a selfie with his Saurashtra teammates.

per Parthiv were steady Gujarat's ship, Prerak Mankad broke through by trapping Merai in front of the stumps. Unadkat turned the tables in favour of the hosts by dismissing Parthiv and new man Asar Patel (0) in the same over. —PTI

BRIEF SCORES

Saurashtra 304 and 274 bt Gujarat 252 and 234 (Chirag Gandhi 96, Parthiv Patel 93, Bhargav Merai 14, Jaydev Unadkat 7/56, Chirag Jani 1/33).

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