

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | MONDAY 26 | APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Max: 36°C
Min: 26°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Chithirai 13
Tithi: Sathurthasi
Star: Chithirai
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.39 am
Luhar: 12.13 pm
Asar: 3.13 pm
Maghrib: 6.23 pm
Isha: 7.36 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.50 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 5.45 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 6.43 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+3,52,641)	(+2,688)
1,73,04,308	1,94,988

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+15,659)
TN: 10,81,988 13,557

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

14,76,31,219

DEATHS

31,19,171

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

Covid is mild disease, don't panic: AIIMS chief

New Delhi: Covid-19 is a mild disease and there is no need to panic, said AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria on Sunday while addressing issues related to coronavirus with Chairman of Medanta Dr Naresh Trehan, Professor and Head of Department of Medicine AIIMS Dr Naveet Wig and Director General Health Services Dr Sunil Kumar. "If we talk about the current situation of COVID-19, there is panic in public. Due to this panic, people are putting injections in their houses, hoarding of the Remdesivir drug and oxygen cylinder has started with this. And because of this, we are facing a shortage of supply and unnecessary panic is being created," Guleria said.

COUNTER

POINT



We will give 2 oxygen cylinders to each family if voted to power!

Jadéjà vu magic, and CSK drub Royals

Mumbai, April 25: Ravindra Jadeja's brilliant all-round show helped Chennai Super Kings drub Royal Challengers Bangalore by 69 runs in their Indian Premier League here on Sunday. Jadeja smashed 62 runs off 28 balls, including a 37-run blitzkrieg the final over off purple cap holder Harshal Patel, as CSK made 191 for four. It's the joint highest for the most runs scored in an over in IPL. Playing for RCB, Chris Gayle had scored 37 against Kochi Tuskers Kerala in 2011. Jadeja then returned to rip through the RCB batting line-up by finishing with excellent figures of 3/13 in four overs. He took the big wickets of AB de Villiers and Glenn Maxwell. CSK opener Faf du Plessis scored 50 off 41 balls and shared a first-wicket stand of 74 runs with Ruturaj Gaikwad (33). — *Agencies*



CSK's Ravindra Jadeja celebrates his half-century against RCB in an IPL game in Mumbai on Sunday. — *IPL*

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Launch hunt for missing fishers, TNCC chief pleads



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Flipkart to get \$1 bn more from Walmart

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Our responsibility to keep people happy, says Morris



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Stop O2 diversion, CM tells Modi

Redraw TN's allocation as state has higher active cases: EPS

R. MOHAN | DC

CHENNAI, APRIL 25

In a blunt letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami blew the lid off the oxygen allotment and diversion. Exercised by the issue of diversion of 80 KL (kilolitres) of liquid oxygen to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh from a manufacturing facility in Sriperumbudur near Chennai, the Chief Minister has demanded that the Centre redraw Tamil Nadu's allocation upwards from 220 Metric Tons (MT) and also stop the order diverting oxygen to neighbouring states.

To make the Prime Minister aware of the oxygen needs of the state in the course of the ravaging pandemic that has seen active cases go past the one lakh mark on Sunday, the Chief Minister as also pointed out the states that were to receive oxygen from Tamil Nadu have a lesser number of active cases while a few major steel industries are located in those states or nearby. The consumption of oxygen as the virus spreads in its second wave has already crossed 310 MT in the state and the Mr Palaniswami sees "no justification" for the diversion of oxygen to neighbouring states when Chennai is seeing the second highest case-load in south India. ■ **P3**



The ECR, usually a busy road on weekends, was deserted on Sunday when a full lockdown of the State was in force on April 25. — *E.K. Sanjay*

People keep off roads on curfew day

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI, APRIL 25

The complete lockdown in a 'Sunday curfew', the first in seven months, saw a very high degree of compliance with only those who needed to be out of their homes venturing on to the street in all parts of the State.

Essential services were still running and the airport was the busiest place in the city with as many

as 84 domestic flights arriving and an equal number departing. The airport handled as many as 5,200 departing passengers and 4,500 arriving passengers who used prepaid taxis to get to the city.

Healthcare and civic body workers were out tending to their tasks. The vaccination programme went on for those who could make it to the vaccine centres and Amma Unavagams operated so

that none of the needy went hungry on a day of total lockdown of the State.

There was strict policing with the cops putting up several roadblocks where anyone driving or riding a bike was checked and allowed to proceed only if he had a genuine reason; vehicles were impounded if the person could not explain his presence.

Saturday had proved a bonanza day as drinkers

stocked up for Sunday by buying liquor worth Rs 252 crore from the government-run Tasmac stores. Along with retailers, bars were shut on Sunday while many restaurants worked to fulfil parcel service requirements through online food order and delivery firms.

A number of weddings took place on roads near temples throughout the state in unique "curfew" marriages.



A relatives of a Covid-19 patients along with others waits to refill cylinders with medical oxygen at Badarpur during the second wave of coronavirus pandemic in India, in New Delhi, Sunday. — *PTI*

Mamata confident as WB to vote in 7th phase today

RAJIB CHOWDHURI, PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC
KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE, APRIL 25

A day before the seventh phase of the Assembly election in West Bengal, chief minister Mamata Banerjee declared that there was "no alternative" to the Trinamul Congress in the state, and that it would return to power. "There is no reason to feel scared. There is no alternative to the TMC in view of the way the previous phases recorded voting and the remaining ones that are going to the polls. The TMC will retain power here," she declared at Berhampore in Murshidabad on Sunday. The TMC supremo sounded confident of her third term in power as 34 seats, spread over four districts, will go to the polls in the seventh round on Monday. Among these, four -- Bhowanipore, Rashbehari, Ballygunge and Kolkata Port -- are in Kolkata. Known to be TMC bastions, these are all set to witness a close fight between heavy-weight candidates.

While state power minister Sovande Chatterjee, a two-time MLA of Rashbehari, is contesting against Bengali actor Rudranil Ghosh at Bhowanipore, from where Ms Banerjee won the last two consecutive terms to become CM, Indian Army veteran Lt. Gen. Subrata Saha (Retd) is fighting for the BJP against councillor Debasish Kumar of the TMC at Rashbehari. State panchayat minister Subrata Mukherjee, who won from Ballygunge twice since 2011, is fighting at the same seat while another state minister and outgoing Kolkata mayor Firhad Hakim is seeking his re-election at Kolkata Port, from where he has also won twice. Besides, nine seats each in Murshidabad and Burdwan West and six each in South Dinajpur and Malda will go to the polls. The TMC supremo also accused the Election Commission of becoming a "mirror" of the BJP and intimidating her party workers through Central paramilitary forces and state police personnel. She promised to provide them

relief from the EC's actions, including cases against them, after the polls. Ms Banerjee alleged: "A retired officer, Vivek Dube, as EC special police observer, is controlling serving ones. Our state police personnel also feel shaky, fearing action. This is illegal and unconstitutional. But the EC is not paying heed as it has become a mirror of the BJP. Only a day before I learnt the EC sent police personnel to all homes, including those of our polling agents in Burdwan West, where polling will be held tomorrow. They ordered them to stay at home during the voting." She told the TMC rank and file: "Why should they not step out of their homes? They should, for the peaceful conduct of the polls. If any case is filed against you, we will take care of it since we will return to power. There is no reason to worry." Training her guns at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the CM wondered: "The Covid-19 pandemic would not have resurfaced had Mr Modi and his clan acted in time."

New Delhi, April 25:

Twitter and other social media platforms have removed about 100 posts and URLs after the government asked them to remove content that was critical of the handling of the current medical crisis or spreading fake news around the pandemic.

Twitter said it has notified the impacted account-holders of its action taken in response to a legal request from the Indian government, while Facebook did not comment on the issue. Sources said the companies have complied with the order. ■ **P4**

NO SHORTAGE OF OXYGEN IN UP, SAYS YOGI

SANJAY BASAK | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 25

At a time when Uttar Pradesh has recorded over 35,000 new Covid cases and over 200 deaths in just 24 hours, the highest since the pandemic broke out a year ago, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath asserted that there was "no shortage of oxygen" in the state and asked officials to invoke the National Security Act and the "Gangsters Act" against all those spreading "rumours" on the social media and attempting to "spoil the atmosphere". For the chief minister, who announced this at a virtual press conference with select journalists Saturday, the actual problem is "black marketing and hoarding" of oxygen cylinders. Claiming that there was "no shortage of oxygen at any Covid hospital, be it private or government", he said the "main problem is black marketing and hoarding, and stern action will be taken against the culprits".

It was reported in a regional paper that the chief minister had said the "state government will pay for the treatment of those Covid patients who could not get hospital admission". According to the local daily, the CM said those who failed to get admission into hospitals should get themselves "treated on their own and the state government would bear the medical expenses". The chief minister said it would be a "huge mistake to take Covid as a normal viral fever. I am also in its grip. I have been following all Covid protocols since April 13 while in isolation".





Velachery flyover.

— E.K. Sanjay



Broadway bus stand.

— DC



Ooty-Mysuru NH.

— DC

Life in city freezes; Traders report serious loss in business

Chennaiites comply with total lockdown norms

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 25

After a seven-month gap, Sunday's lockdown meant to contain the spread of Covid-19, left the city looking deserted. Though the government allowed people to travel for essential services and emergency purposes, which included weddings and funerals with SoPs, it looked like that residents had largely chosen to stay indoors.

Ever since the morning, all roads across various zones including Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR), Poonamallee High Road, East Coast Road (ECR), Anna Salai, Egmore, GST Road and Kamaraj Salai, were empty, as only a few people ventured out. A few food delivery agents and lots of Greater Chennai Corporation sanitary workers, were seen on the roads. Most of the shops except pharmacies were closed.

Shops located in key places like Koyambedu, Parry's Corner and T. Nagar, remained shut. The popular beaches including Marina and Elliotts, which are the most crowded places in the city on weekends, wore a deserted look.

V.S. Jayaraman, a T. Nagar resident, said, "The entire area is calm and quiet since the morning. None of the shops except medical stores, opened. Even morning walkers are missing on the arterial roads. Almost all residents have been staying indoors throughout the day. Only food delivery agents and corporation sanitary workers were seen on the roads."

Small teams of cops were deployed at every road junction to check and curb curfew violations. They allowed employees with genuine reasons to travel to their workplaces. But, there was intensified crack down on people who ventured out without wearing masks.



Koyambedu flyover wears a deserted look.

— N. SAMPATH

V. Rama Rao, Nanganallur Resident's Welfare Association, said that the lockdown was total in the area. "Since all grocery and vegetable shops were closed, people did stay indoors. Only migrant labourers were seen walking to the 'Amma canteens' in the area, seeking food. Even the number of morning walkers was very low. Compared to the

previous lockdowns, the compliance of people is very high, as they have learned lessons from their past mistakes," he said.

Sunday's lockdown was declared along with the various new restrictions by the government. Shutdown has been announced on all weekdays between 10 pm to 4 am the next day as part of the containment strategy to prevent Covid-19 spread. As many as 12,000 police personnel were deployed by setting up 192 checkpoints across Chennai to implement lockdown norms. GCC Commissioner, G. Prakash, and City police

Commissioner, Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal, had carried out inspections in various parts of the city. While Joint Commissioner (Central) P. N. Sridhar, inspected the special vaccination centres, Regional Deputy Commissioner (North) P. Akash, went on a door-to-door survey on Covid-19 and lockdown impact.

Meanwhile, traders and merchants across the state had to suffer huge losses due to the lockdown.

A. M. Vikramaraja, president, Tamil Nadu Vanigar Sangankalin Peramaippu, pointed out as many as 37 lakh shops were closed across Tamil Nadu.

"Every Sunday, each district earned good income through good businesses. At least, business of over Rs 25,000 crore across the state has been lost. In Chennai alone, over five lakh shops were shut due to the lockdown, that alone had to pay over Rs 10 crore Goods and Service Tax to the government," he said.

Rise in Corona cases in Nilgiris worrisome

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, APRIL 25

The first full day lockdown this year on Sunday saw normal life come to a standstill in the Nilgiris. However, the increasing Covid-19 count here has indeed become a cause of concern.

With just a week away for vote counting in the TN assembly elections, Sunday turned out to be silent, as everyone here seemed to have decided not to take any risk while fighting the Covid-19 spread.

From Saturday night, the hills fell silent as curfew started. It was a different sort of feeling waking up on lockdown Sunday.

With just a week to go for vote-counting in TN assembly elections, Sunday turned out to be silent, as everyone here seemed to have decided not to take any risk while fighting the Covid-19 spread

Memories ran back to the lockdown moments last summer as Corona had virtually locked the world last summer.

Sunday's lockdown seems to have reminded residents here to be prepared for a repeat of such a situation in the coming months due to the second

wave of Covid-19.

Meanwhile, the ever rising Covid-19 count here is certainly a worrisome fact. While the hills maintained an enviable Corona control measures last summer in 2020, this summer the reverse is the case as the region has recorded a little over 1,000 positive cases in the past one month. This would indicate that the situation is not normal here.

The Nilgiris recorded 84 Covid-19 positive cases on Saturday, the highest daily count so far this year. The only solace is that the recovery rate is also very impressive, as only around 418 positive cases are under treatment in the Nilgiris now.

TN Daily Covid19 case count crosses 15,000

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 25

The daily positive cases count in the state climbed to yet another high on Sunday in crossing the 15,000 mark. According to data provided by the Health department, the state added a total of 15,659 new cases and 82 deaths, up from 14,842 and 80 deaths on Saturday. With this, the tally in the

state has touched 10,81,988 while death toll reached 13,575 including 4,567 in Chennai.

Chennai registered 4,206 new cases and 30 deaths. The Saturday's figures in the district were 4,086 new cases and 25 deaths. The total new cases in the district touched 3,09,899.

New cases in Chengalpattu district continue to rise and touched 1,242 on Sunday. Total

cases in the district now stand at 73,861. The number of daily cases in Coimbatore has also gone up from 1,004 on Saturday to 1,038 on Sunday with one death. Chennai, Coimbatore, and Chengalpattu districts, which reported over 1,000 cases each, together added a total of 6,486, a surge from the cumulative total of 6,253 on Saturday. While Kancheepuram,

Madurai, Thiruvallur and Tirunelveli districts recorded over 500 cases each. Erode, Kanyakumari, Thanjavur, Thiruvannamalai, Thoothukudi, Thirupur, Trichy and Vellore districts recorded 300 plus cases.

Active cases, which crossed 1 lakh mark on Saturday, reached 1,05,180 on Sunday. The total active cases in the Chennai dis-

trict now stands at 31,535, a slight increase from 31,506 on Saturday.

While Thiruvallur recorded six deaths, Madurai had five. Four people succumbed in Trichy and three in Vellore. Districts like Krishnagiri, Thiruvannamalai, Thoothukudi, Villupuram, and Virudhunagar reported two deaths each.

Lockdown complete in Central districts

R. VALAYAPATHY/
G. SRINIVASAN | DC
TIRUCHY, THANJAVUR,
APRIL 25

The total lockdown declared by the government after a gap of seven months in view of the rapid spread of the second Covid-19 wave, evoked cent percent response among the people in the central districts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai, Tiruvarur and the integrated Nagapattinam and Mayiladuthurai districts, on Sunday.

Not even a single untoward incident reported in these districts. Petrol bunks, hospitals, medical shops remained open as usual. Supply of essentials like milk and vegetables were maintained as usual in the early hours of Sunday

There was not even a single untoward incident anywhere in these districts. Petrol bunks, hospitals, medical shops remained open as usual. Supply of

essentials like milk and vegetables were maintained as usual in the early hours of Sunday.

Since there is no movement of passengers and goods, all arterial roads in these districts wore a deserted look. All bus terminals, railway junctions and stations also were deserted.

In Tiruchy town, all shops in the usual crowded areas like Malaivasal, Big Bazaar street, Gandhi market, Woriyur and Main Guard gate, remained closed. However, 'Amma Unavagams' functioned with a lot of

restrictions.

Police slapped fine on a few two-wheeler riders in different parts of the city who were moving around violating the lockdown norms. In general, police allowed the people proceeding to attend marriage functions and hospitals, after verifying their credentials.

Thanjavur district also remained deserted on Sunday. Except drug stores, all the other shops including provision, vegetable shops, meat shops etc., remained closed. As train services

were maintained by the Southern Railway, the Cholan and Jan Shatabdi Express trains reached Thanjavur railway station with less passengers. The station also remained deserted. Buses, lorries and autorickshaws did not ply. A few two-wheelers and some private cars were seen in the town. Main roads in Thanjavur town remained deserted with only policemen keeping vigil in some vantage points. Similar was the case with Kumbakonam and Pattukottai towns, and almost in the entire district.



Vellore Green Signal Road.

— K. Senthil Nathan

A silent tragedy plays out in rural India



R. Mohan

Namma Chennai Diary

The greatest fear is not the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. It is the third. If the second catastrophic wave has devastated urban India, particularly in the west and north, imagine the scenario in rural India where we have no idea of the extent of the sweep and the deaths. Having contributed already to the virus spreading to the

nooks and corners of India thanks to the Kumbh Mela and the never ending West Bengal elections, besides returning migrant workers possibly taking back the virus with them to their rural homes, there is no way a non-existent system can hope to cope with an explosion of cases in the hinterlands.

The rural spread of the

pandemic has probably happened already but it is well hidden as the worst affected may die at home, such deaths attributed conveniently to other causes, that is, if they are recorded at all. There is little testing in remote areas, which should lead us to the conclusion that the real extent of cases in India is about 5 to 10 times the official figures that are crunched from somewhat wide testing in urban areas. Since there are no facilities, there is no politicisation of events in the heart of rural India where more than two-thirds of India lives, no scrambling for beds, oxygen, life-saving anti-viral drugs and

competent medical care.

There is a silent tragedy taking place and it does not even draw empathy for distressed people who don't have the basic medical facilities to know how sick they are and what might happen to them in the long run even if the infection subsides on its own. The Establishment is so uncaring of the consequences of its actions as evidenced by the news just emerging that the Kumbh Mela was advanced by a year because the seers said 2021 was more auspicious than 2022, the scheduled year in the divine cycle of 12 years. Those reading the almanac must have been stone deaf to projections by

the scientific community of a second Indian wave, made as early as at the beginning of the year.

The fact is we learnt nothing from the early super spreader events like the Tablighi and went ahead with the Kumbh Mela and the polls with their rallies and campaigning in four States plus Puducherry. The people are far from blameless in all this as they too got carried away by the government's triumphalism in the wake of falling caseload by the end of January and they let their collective guard down. Where Rahul Gandhi seems to make sense is in beating the drum over the vaccine being the

only route out of further pandemic waves. In the UK, the virus is now endemic after more than 33 million people have received at least one jab, which means they are planning to open the country up in mid May and are even contemplating allowing people to go on European holidays.

On the other hand, India's vaccine hubris seems to be unending as the government trots out figures of fastest vaccination. But, calculated as a percentage of total population, India's vaccination programme has a long way to go. Amid the oxygen shortages and the logistics of getting it to those who need it the most now,

what should not be lost sight of is that vaccination is the only route to achieve passable immunity. India may well see 5 lakh new cases daily by mid May when even a 1% fatality rate would translate to 5,000 deaths a day. The key now lies in at least managing the second wave from devastating the people by mending the glaring inadequacies shown up in the healthcare system.

Only widespread and quick vaccination in urban and semi-urban areas can a third wave be staved off. The governments and politicians may be too busy politicising issues while India bumbles along but they must not lose sight of

the national vaccine programme that will help get most Indians safely behind the line against this infernal pathogen. The countries lagging behind in dispensing shots like India and Brazil are seeing the worst disasters while those with high vaccination rates like Britain, US and Israel are seeing lesser mortality and hospitalisations. Time then to not lose a minute in stepping up vaccinations to cover the nearly 100 crore people who are eligible for the jab from May 1.

(R. Mohan is the Resident Editor of Chennai and Coimbatore editions of Deccan Chronicle)

OTHER STORIES

SC can order Sterlite to open for oxygen

From P1

An enquiry is still going on into the law enforcement tragedy caused by trigger happy cops.

Will the state relent in a national emergency when India is in dire need of oxygen to boost its normal 7,000 MT capacity a day or will it stick to its guns on a polluting plant with a chequered history of stops and starts? If the state refuses to countenance the factory opening, the top court could still order that it be operational to produce oxygen. It stands to reason that a source of 1,000 MT oxygen be exploited in the dire situation India finds itself in.

IOB appoints digital consultant

Chennai: To transform its banking services into digital, IOB has appointed Ernst & Young as its digital consultant. The consultant would help the Bank to stay more focussed on leveraging and adopting new technologies and to enhance the service quality and service delivery to customers. The initiative would also help the Bank to accelerate digitalization in all the areas of Banking including its assets and liability products and services. According to MD & CEO of IOB, Partha Pratim Sengupta, the Bank is poised to attract millennial customers who are tech savvy.

Firm globally ranked 4th among private water companies

Chennai: VA TECH WABAG LIMITED ('WABAG'), a leading Pure Play Water Technology Multinational, has been ranked 4th globally by Global Water Intelligence (GWI) (www.global-waterintel.com), London, under "The world's top 50 private water operators" for ensuring safe and clean drinking water and Sanitation for over 71 million people across the globe. It is the only Indian organization to be featured in the top 25 water companies globally.

Today WABAG is producing 26 million cubic meters of clean water every day to quench the thirst of millions of people, treating 30 million cubic metres of wastewater every day to ensure clean and healthy environment, desalinating 1.2 million cubic metres of seawater every day to supplement the freshwater sources, treating 2 million cubic metres of industrial effluent every day to safeguard the water bodies and recycling 2.5 million cubic metres of wastewater every day for industrial and non-potable reuse.

CSK Chairman Sabaretnam dead

Chennai: L Sabaretnam, director and chairman of Chennai Super Kings Cricket Limited, and a cement industry veteran, died here on Sunday following a brief illness, family sources said. He was 80. Sabaretnam is survived by two sons and a daughter.

He served in Chettinad Cement Corporation and was Executive Director of the Company for a long period. He was formerly director of Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. Sabaretnam was advisor for India Cements and Director and CEO of Coromandel Sugars.

— PTI

Association wants addition to curriculum

DC CORRESPONDENT

TIRUCHY, APRIL 25

The Litigants Welfare Association here appealed to the government to include the basic constitutional rights and responsibilities of the citizens within the curriculum from Standard 9 to Standard 12. In a letter to the government's principal secretary for the school education, citing a communication of the National Human Rights Commission, which gave a direction in this regard, based on the association's plea, Association president M. Sekaran, submitted that now these subjects are included within selected courses, but wanted the government to include the subject to all students irrespective of courses in the larger interest of the younger generation, and make them empowered citizens by extending these syllabus, (rights and responsibility) to all students from class 9 to class 12, he added.



A man resting in front of a shop without facemask at Thoraipakkam.

— DC

Launch hunt for missing fishers, TNCC chief pleads

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI, APRIL 24

TNCC President KS Alagiri has urged the Government to direct Coast Guard personnel to search for 11 missing fishermen who ventured into deep sea fishing from Kanyakumari three weeks ago.

In a release on Sunday Alagiri demanded that the Government provide relief to the family members of missing fishermen. He said on April 6, the 11 fishermen, including Joseph Franklin, left from Thengapattinam fishing harbour in the coastal district for deep sea fishing. According to news reports on Sunday, the fishermen were missing. Based on the news reports, assistant director for fisheries, Colachel wrote a letter to Director Fisheries regarding the missing fishermen.

Alagiri said the government must direct Eastern and Western Division of Coast Guard to trace the missing fishermen and expedite the work. He also demanded that the Government provide relief to the families of the missing fishermen.

According to sources, damaged boat, 'Mercedes' (registration number IND - TN - 15 - MM - 4775), was found about 600 nautical miles (more than 1,000 kms) off the Goa coast in the Arabian Sea. Experts suspected that the boat

Coast Guard launches search op for 11 missing TN fishermen

Kanyakumari/Kochi, Apr 25 (PTI) Eleven Tamil Nadu fishermen went missing after their boat was allegedly hit by a ship off the Oman coast, prompting the Indian Coast Guard to deploy a vessel to launch search and rescue operations. Quoting fishermen in other boats, fishermen association leader Charles George said in Kochi that the mangled remains of the fishing boat from Tamil Nadu were found 600 nautical miles (over 1,100 kms) off the Goa coast on Saturday.

Defence sources said the Coast Guard has sent a ship from Mumbai on Saturday evening for carrying out rescue operations following the missing complaint received from the fishermen organisations. The Coast Guard vessel is expected to reach the spot on Monday, the sources said in Kochi. However, there is no official information from the government on the nature of the reported

may be involved in an accident involving a ship and the whereabouts of the 11 men on board, all from Vallavilai coastal village in Kanyakumari district, was not known.

A search has been

accident.

South Asian Fishermen Fraternity (SAFF) said 11 fisherfolks from Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu had ventured into deep sea from Thengapattinam Fisheries Harbour, on April 9 in a mechanised boat. In its complaint to Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre of the Coast Guard, Mumbai, the SAFF said the broken pieces of the fishing boat were found floating in the sea on April 24.

"They searched for the 11 fishermen onboard in the fishing boat Mercedes, but couldn't find anyone. They found pieces of a country boat in a distance. Hence we fear that some accident might have taken place in the deep sea to the fishing boat and eleven fishermen who were onboard are missing", it said, seeking necessary action. SAFF said the fishermen were in touch with other fishermen till Friday noon.

— PTI

launched for the missing men by fishermen in other boats. On Friday evening, the fishermen spoke with those on other boats in the vicinity through the wireless device.

Govt affidavit likely to oppose Sterlite opening

ARULOLI M | DC

TIRUNELVELI, APRIL 24

The state government is expected to reiterate its steadfast stand against reopening Sterlite for manufacturing oxygen, at the Supreme Court, on Monday. The government issued a statement on its Covid management plan on April 24, which came as a precursor to the government's affidavit to be filed on Monday (today), in the apex court.

The government totally depends on private companies like the INOX Air Products private limited, Praxair India private limited and JSW steels, which put together, have a production capacity of 400 MTD (Metric tonnes per day).

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In its official statement to the media on April 24, the government said that it had instructed existing private manufacturers to explore ways of enhancing oxygen production capacity, but did not say a word about how it would manage if there is a sudden spurt in oxygen demand, which crosses over 400 MTD.

The existing biggest manufacturer, the INOX plant at SriPerumbudur, having a maximum capacity of 140 MTD of liquified oxygen, cannot even help in a situation like New Delhi, even if it increases its production capacity by 100 percent, said a government doctor at the Tirunelveli government medical college hospital, adding, "permitting Sterlite to operate its oxygen units will be a better option for the government to make Tamil Nadu an 'oxygen sufficient' state now."

It is to be remembered here that the Doctors' Association for Social Equality also expressed its support to allow oxygen manufacturing in Sterlite unit. Association

general secretary, Dr G.R. Ravindranath, in a statement warned that the pandemic could become worse and suggested that the state government explore ways of utilising the existing oxygen manufacturing facility at Sterlite. Dr. Ravindranath suggested that the government could form a committee of all party members to monitor the oxygen production at Sterlite.

A government doctor in Tirunelveli, expressing regret said he suspected that the present Chief Minister and his cabinet colleagues could be attempting to drag the issue and leave it undecided till May 2, so that the responsibility falls on the shoulders of the new government after May 2.

Accident tribunal orders ₹41.70 L compensation for medico's death

A. ARUL PALANI | DC

CHENNAI, APRIL 24

Six years after a third year MBBS course student died in an accident caused by a van, the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, Chennai directed a private insurance to pay a compensation of Rs 41.70 lakh to his parents. The judge directed the insurance company to pay the compensation to his kin at first instance with liberty to recover the amount from the owner of the vehicle since it was not having a valid fitness certificate.

In the petition, M. Natarajan and Velvizhi of Anupuram, Kancheepuram District said their son, Deepak Rajan, 21, was doing his third year MBBS course in Sri Sathya Sai Medical College, Ammapettai. The accident took place while Deepak Rajan was travelling along with seven others from Anupuram township to Mahabalipuram in a Tata Sumo on January 14, 2014 at about 3.45 p.m.

While crossing Manamai village, opposite to Samiyar Thottam on the ECR, the van driver, G.Shankumar, drove the vehicle in a rash and negligent manner as a result of which the vehicle met with an accident causing grievous injuries to Deepak Rajan. He was rushed to Chengalpattu

While crossing Manamai village, opposite to Samiyar Thottam on the ECR, the van driver, G.Shankumar, drove the vehicle in a rash and negligent manner as a result of which the vehicle met with an accident causing grievous injuries to Deepak Rajan

Government Hospital for treatment. Later, he was shifted to private hospital, where he died on January 15, 2014. Deepak Rajan was raised with love and affection and his death had caused them great loss and mental agony, they said.

Natarajan and Velvizhi said the driver of the Tata Sumo was responsible for the accident. Mamallapuram Police station registered a case against the driver. Hence, owner of the van, B. Amsavalli of Madipakkam and insurer of vehicle, Manager, Reliance General Insurance Co. Ltd, Chennai, are jointly and severally/vicariously liable to pay the compensation to them.

In his reply, the manager of Reliance General Insurance Co. Ltd, Chennai submitted that the fitness certificate of the Tata Sumo expired on October 18, 2013 and on the date of accident (January 14, 2014), the

vehicle was driven without a valid fitness certificate. There is a violation of insurance policy conditions and hence B. Amsavalli is liable to pay the compensation.

The Judge, Small Causes Court-III, V.Sutha said this accident occurred due to the rash and negligent act of the van driver and as a result Deepak Rajan sustained fatal injuries. The accident occurred in 2014. According to the facts and circumstances of the case and the socio economic conditions prevailing in future years and considering the professional education course of the deceased, this Tribunal directed the Insurance firm to pay a compensation of Rs 41.70 lakh with interest at 7.5 percent per annum to his parents.

B. Amsavalli has not produced the driving license of the driver of the Tata sumo and also not produced the fitness certificate on the date of accident and has not contested the case. Insurance policy was valid on the date of accident. As the vehicle was driven without a valid fitness certificate, the judge directed the insurance company to pay the compensation to the petitioners at first instance with liberty to recover the amount from Amsavalli without filing any petition.



TN oxygen needs to go up to 450 MT shortly: CM

From P1

"This needs to be immediately corrected. While Tamil Nadu has never imposed any restrictions so far and is always ready to support other states, such mandatory diversion of liquid oxygen from the needs of our State can lead to major crises in Chennai and other districts," the Chief Minister wrote.

Tamil Nadu's oxygen needs have been projected to go as high as 450 MT shortly considering the explosion of active Covid-19 cases. Whereas at its peak in 2020, the virus caseload was only about 58,000, it has gone beyond the one lakh mark in the second wave. The logic of the allotment of 220 MT to the state is being questioned and so too the diversion based on the maths of projected consumption.

The news of the diversion of oxygen ordered by the Centre last week was made public by the health secretary in a media briefing on April 22 but the issue has been escalated to the highest level now with the Chief Minister writing directly to the Prime Minister. The Central allotment of just 220 MT has been made public for the first time as the inter-state oxygen issue arises in the south too, which has so far managed its oxygen needs well enough to stave off the kind of deaths being reported from a lack of oxygen in northern and western states.

Three halls in Salem fined ₹5k for violations

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC

SALEM, APRIL 25

All roads in Salem were deserted due to the Sunday curfew, and corporation officials slapped a fine of Rs.5,00 each on three marriage halls. All main roads including the new bus stand, five-lane, four-lane and Astampatti, were deserted. Also petrol stations, hospitals, pharmacies and milk outlets functioned as usual. There are 11 'farmer shandies' in the

district, and farmers who took their vegetables to the market had to return disappointed, since none ventured out.

Police also stopped and warned motorists found violating the curfew. Police barricades were set up in key locations in Salem, and intensive vehicle searches were carried out. Over 500 policemen have been deployed for the curfew.

A few weddings took place on Sunday in the

wedding halls here, but a complaint was lodged with Corporation Commissioner, N.

Ravichandran, regarding non-wearing of face masks and social distancing in the wedding halls. Following this, corporation officials visited and monitored the private wedding halls in Salem Suramangalam and Thiruvakkavundalur areas, and found the complaint to be true, following which they imposed a fine

of Rs 5,000 each on the marriage halls.

Besides deserted roads, all hotels and tea shops were closed. 'Amma canteens' here catered to the needs of the hungry. But, most of the people went without face masks and did not maintain social distancing.

>>>>

Coimbatore Town Hall Bus Stand.

— DC



Foundation helps SMEs, start-ups to flourish

R. MOHAN | DC

CHENNAI, APRIL 25

This may have sounded too good to be true. What is the catch entrepreneurs may have been asking when the not-for-profits Wadhvani Foundation, which has been in India for over two decades and which has a presence in 20 countries in three continents now including South Africa and Latin America, offered to help businesses ignite growth.

Today, inside two years of the starting of the Wadhvani Advantage program (in 2019) within the larger foundation's operations, as many as 5,000 jobs have been created and at least 500 entrepreneurs helped to multiply their business from two to ten times with the help of the



automated 'Business Discovery and Transformation Tools'.

The offer to take on more enterprises and help and hand-hold them to flourish through the not-for-profits principle comes now in the medical and healthcare sector in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic having had a significant negative impact on health and the economy.

"The subjects have been

of interest for some time now and not only because of the pandemic. Healthcare, pharma, medical devices - these sectors will have sustained demand in the next two to three decades as India has a long way to go in public as well as private healthcare - both diagnostics and delivery side," says Samir Sathe, executive vice president, Wadhvani Advantage at Wadhvani

Foundation.

How did the foundation get over the initial hesitancy it may have encountered in a competitive environment like India where suspicions can run wild. "We started addressing genuinely the issues of SMEs, their pain points and their businesses and that helped many see our genuineness in supporting them to grow," Samir says.

"Our program is nearly unique as we empower businesses with capabilities so that they can be independent. 'Be Atmanirbhar on your own' is what we say and all we do is give them the tools to be able to stand up on their own. If we didn't do this, they would perhaps have dismissed us as just another type of consultants, although non-profit consultants," Samir points out.

Is there any threshold they look at while taking enterprises on their program? Samir said,

"Basically, we look at about Rs 20 crore of revenue is who we are looking at, sometimes we take those with just \$10 crore of revenue but only if we see a willingness to commit to grow and spend the time and be prepared to benefit from knowledge sharing."

How many jobs would the foundation have created through the program? "There are two sides to this coin - how many jobs have we created or how many jobs we have saved. Taking the median as 100 to 120 employees per enterprise on our program, we would have helped create or save 5,000 to 6,000 in the

two years we have run the Advantage program," Samir said.

The foundation has identified 20 locations pan India to focus on, mapping out sectors to make a difference. "The South is very interesting. Our first pilot was in Bangalore. Any southern entrepreneur is very particular about objectives and they are decisive about it if they want to commit to the program or not. They focus on efficiency improvement while others in the North may be more focused on topline and growth but in south we see a desire to improve efficiencies and margins," Samir explains. "They are good at digitisation, adapt well to tech, IoT, systems."

"Our focus sectors are automotive, medical

devices, textiles apparel, consumer goods like food, logistic services and manufacturing. We are sector agnostic and willing to look at any sector with potential for jobs and revenue growth," Samir says in conclusion.

Chipping in, Mr. Atul Raja, EVP, Wadhvani Foundation, said, "It's common human psyche to think where's the catch, what's in it for you. We are genuinely pro bono and there are no commercial transactions that we undertake with anybody. There are no strings attached and we don't even allow any outside donations to come inside the foundation. This foundation is Probash Wadhvani's mission and there are no hidden agenda. That is our credibility."

SHORT TAKES

THIRD PHASE OF U.P. PANCHAYAT POLLS TODAY

Lucknow, April 25: Voting for the third phase of the panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh will be held on Monday with more than 3.52 lakh candidates in the fray in over 2.14 lakh seats across 20 districts of the state.

According to the State Election Commission (SEC), voting will be held from 7 am to 6 pm in Shamli, Meerut, Moradabad, Pilibhit, Kasganj, Firozabad, Auraiya, Kanpur, Dehat, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Fatehpur, Unnao, Amethi, Barabanki, Balrampur, Siddharthanagar, Deoria, Chandauli, Mirzapur and Ballia.

For the posts of 746 members of zila panchayats, there are 10,627 candidates in the fray.

For the 18,530 posts of members of kshetra panchayats, there are 89,188 candidates.

As many as 1,17,89 candidates are in the poll arena for 14,397 village panchayats.

For 1,80,473 village panchayat wards, there are 1,34,510 candidates contesting the polls.

The candidates will contest on “free symbols” given by the State Election Commission (SEC).

In the first phase of the polls, which was held on April 15, an average polling percentage of 71 was recorded. The second phase of polls held on April 19 also saw over 71 per cent of polling.

The 2015 panchayat polls had registered a polling percentage of 72.11, according to the SEC.

In view of the Coronavirus situation, the SEC had said last month said that not more than five people would be allowed to accompany a candidate during the door-to-door campaigning for the panchayat elections.

UTTARAKHAND'S AVALANCHE TOLL RISES TO 11

Gopeshwar, April 25: The death toll in an avalanche near the Indo-China border in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district rose to 11 on Sunday, officials said here.

Ten bodies were recovered till Saturday. One more body was recovered on Sunday and a rescue operation is underway, the district disaster management office here said.

Chamoli district magistrate Swati S. Bhadauriya and superintendent of police Yashwant Singh have been at the spot since Saturday to monitor the rescue operations. Uttarakhand police chief Ashok Kumar said a total of 430 BRO workers were at the road construction site when the avalanche occurred on Friday.

Sumna, where the avalanche occurred, is approximately 25 km from Malari village and located near the confluence of the Girithigad and the Kiogad, two streams that originate from the Dhaulī Ganga river, which witnessed a calamitous avalanche in February, killing 80 people and leaving 126 missing.

A part of the Nanda Devi glacier broke off in Chamoli on February 7, leading to massive floods, recalling a 2019 study that warned about the dangers of climate change and said Himalayan glaciers have been melting twice as fast since the start of this century.

The glacier collapse at Joshimath led to a massive flood in the Alaknanda river system and caused large-scale devastation in the upper reaches of the ecologically fragile Himalayas.

In June 2019, a study spanning 40 years of satellite observations across India, China, Nepal and Bhutan, indicated that climate change is eating the Himalayas' glaciers.

Delhi extends lockdown till May 3 as cases rise rapidly

Services of courier outlets, electricians, shops selling books permitted

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA & SUNIL THAPLIYAL | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 25

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday announced the extension of the ongoing lockdown in the national capital for another week, saying that the severity of Covid-19 was unabated, and the positivity rate has been as high as 36 per cent in the past few days.

The lockdown imposed on April 19 night will now continue till 5 am on Monday, May 3. Before the extension, it was due to end at 5 am on April 26. “We will have to watch the situation for a few more days on whether the cases decrease or increase,” he said.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority, in an order for extension of the lockdown, has allowed the services of courier outlets, electricians and plumbers, repair of water purifiers, and shops selling books and electric fans.

The Chief Minister said the onslaught of the Coronavirus has not subsided even as the government imposed a six-day lockdown as the last weapon in its arsenal.

“Public opinion is in favour of an extension of lockdown. The positivity rate reached up to 36-37 per cent in past few days although it has slightly dipped now. It is around 29 per cent today,” he said.

To keep a close watch on oxygen availability, the Delhi government has decided that manufacturers, suppliers and hospitals will update the supply and consumption data every two hours on a portal set up by it.

“This is to ensure the Delhi government knows where a shortage might be felt and is able to divert resources in that direction in time,” he said.

He said the Centre had further increased Delhi's oxygen quota by 10 MT per day and hoped the chaotic situation due to the oxygen crisis in Delhi will end in a few days.

“The Centre has increased Delhi's quota from 480 MT to 490 MT per day. But we are yet to receive the full quota. Currently only 330-335 tonnes per day supply is being received by us,” he said.

The Chief Minister said his government is getting a lot of support from the Centre and both are properly coordinating to solve the oxygen supply problem.

Kejriwal, who had written letters to the Chief



Polling officials with their Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and other election materials on the eve of 7th phase of the West Bengal Assembly polls in Kolkata on Sunday.

— PTI

Nadda slams Didi for skipping every meeting of PM with CMs

DC CORRESPONDENTS KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE, APRIL 25

BJP president J.P. Nadda on Sunday came down heavily on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for her frequent cry of foul play by the Centre in its initiatives to tackle Covid-19 pandemic after skipping meetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with other CMs to discuss measures.

“We are seeing how Mamataji has been trying to trigger a confusion and spreading wrong information amid the pandemic. Despite being the CM, she claims of lack of vaccines. If there is a dearth of vaccines, how are the total number

of vaccine doses getting increased daily here? How can it be that you do not have any information about it though you have been in power for the last 10 years?” Nadda asked the Trinamul Congress supremo while addressing the BJP workers at Cossipore-Belgachhia in North Kolkata in a virtual mode of his Assembly Election campaign.

The BJP chief alleged, “While the PM has been tirelessly working to serve the country by holding meetings with the CMs of other states, Mamataji does not attend the meetings. On March 17 when the meeting with the CMs was held to discuss the quantity and distribution of vaccines by the Centre, she showed

no care for the people of the state by skipping it. Why didn't she attend it? The reason is that she feels her ego more important to her than the people of the state. Thus she deprives them of their rights.”

Nadda's attack on the two-time CM about her lack of coordination with the Centre was evident also in his two previous virtual addresses at Burwan in Murshidabad and Manikchak in Malda during the day as Banerjee has been up in arms against the latest Covid-19 policy of the Narendra Modi government and raising it before the public almost in her every poll rally to corner the BJP.

At Burwan the BJP

president claimed, “Skipping the centre-state meetings Mamataji always bypassed her responsibility as a CM but remains busy in blame game only.”

On the pathetic law and order situation in the state, he pointed out that the TMC government did not even send the last year's data on crimes to the National Crime Records Bureau for compilation to cover up its misrule.

Nadda claimed that the state has witnessed most incidents of acid attacks on women, child and women trafficking and rape going unreported but sand is sold by the syndicate networks at a high rate for cut-money to the ruling party.

PM orders swift setting up of 551 oxygen plants

FROM PG 1

Urging people not to get “swayed by any rumour about the vaccine”, Mr Modi pointed out that from May 1 onwards, the vaccine would be made available for every person above 18 in the country.

This comes amid a severe oxygen crunch for hospitals in several parts of the country due

to the sharp and deadly spike in Covid cases that has already claimed thousands of lives in the past few days.

Assuring that the Centre is “applying its entire might to give a fillip to the endeavours of state governments,” Mr Modi also “appealed to the states to extend the benefit of this free vaccine campaign of the

Government of India to the maximum number of the people of their state”.

In a statement, the PMO said: “In line with Prime Minister's direction of boosting availability of oxygen to hospitals, the PM Cares Fund has given in principle approval for allocation of funds for installation of the plants.

Rio seeks ‘last push’ for Naga political solution

Kohima, April 25: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has sought the collective effort of the Naga people to give the “last push” to achieve an honourable and acceptable solution to the vexed Naga political issue between the Government of India and the Naga negotiators.

“The Naga political issue belongs to the people and therefore we need to do what can be done as per the prevailing situa-

tion to arrive at an agreement,” Rio said while addressing the inaugural session of the 29th biennial general conference of the Angami Students Union at Naga Heritage Village Kisama on Saturday.

In this regard, he said that the leaders of the present generation must seriously deliberate on the issue.

With the Naga history being recognised as “unique” and the Naga issue recognised as a

“political issue”, he urged the Nagas to think and live accordingly.

He assured that the state government is working along with the opposition party to expedite the Naga peace process.

On the contentious issue of the Naga flag and constitution, Rio recalled his meeting with the Union home minister Amit Shah during his recent visit to Delhi and informed that Shah has said that there cannot be

a separate flag and constitution for the Nagas.

However, he said that a flag that symbolises the uniqueness of the Nagas can be used under the Indian Union during community functions, but not at government establishments or meetings.

Also dwelling on the government's initiative to create a Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN), Rio recalled that the implementation of Inner Line

Permit (ILP) in Dimapur was done following the report of a committee led by Abhishek Singh.

He said that the question of who will come under the purview of ILP was then raised, which also led to the need to identify who is an indigenous inhabitant of the state. He said that the government is conducting several consultative meetings with the tribal leaders on the issue of RIIN.

— PTI

Graft case: CBI mulls lie-detection test on Deshmukh

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 25

Noose seems to be tightening around former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh as the CBI is contemplating conducting lie-detection test on him in connection with its investigation into the alleged corruption case against the former.

“During the course of the investigation into the preliminary enquiry (PE) pertaining to the corruption charges levelled against Deshmukh, the former home minister gave conflicting statements. Now, after registering a corruption case against him, investigators may conduct lie-detection test on him”, sources said.

“The investigation agency will first seek his consent as legal provisions entail that such a test cannot be conducted without the permission of the person concerned. After that the agency will have to seek permission from the competent court for conducting this scientific test”, sources said.

The central probe agency on Saturday registered a case against Deshmukh over allegations of corruption

levelled by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh. The agency invoked the Prevention of Corruption Act and 120 B (criminal conspiracy) in filing the FIR and also raided his residence along with three other places in Mumbai in connection with the case. The former minister was summoned by the probe agency for questioning into the matter on April 14 after Param Bir Singh, in a letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, accused him of directing his subordinates to collect money from bars, restaurants and hotels in Mumbai.

According to Singh, Deshmukh told police officer Sachin Vaze, now suspended and arrested in connection with Mukesh Ambani security threat case, to collect ₹100 crore a month from these sources. As part of its investigation into the PE, the CBI also questioned Anil Deshmukh's personal assistants Sanjeev Palande and Kundan Shinde, former cop Sachin Vaze's two drivers, bar owners, Mumbai Police officers, and people close to the former minister in connection with the alleged corruption case.

India hails ASEAN's move on Myanmar

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 25

Stating that its “support to the democratic process in Myanmar remains steadfast”, India on Sunday welcomed the “ASEAN initiative on Myanmar” and said that “as a friend of the people of Myanmar, (it) will continue to play a constructive and meaningful role aimed at resolving the current situation in Myanmar”.

Myanmar is a member of the 10-nation south-east Asian grouping ASEAN which met at Jakarta, Indonesia, on Saturday and according to international news reports reached a consensus with participation of Myanmar's military junta on five points including “ending violence, a constructive dialogue among all

parties, a special ASEAN envoy to facilitate the dialogue, acceptance of aid and a visit by the envoy to Myanmar”.

Hundreds of people have been reported killed in Myanmar in firing by the ruling military junta there that seized power in February this year after overthrowing the elected civilian government.

In a statement on Sunday, the MEA said, “We welcome the ASEAN initiative on Myanmar agreed to at the ASEAN Summit held on April 24. Our diplomatic engagement with Myanmar will be aimed at strengthening these efforts. India, as a friend of the people of Myanmar, will continue to play a constructive and meaningful role aimed at resolving the current situation in Myanmar.”

US signals easing of import curbs

FROM PG 1

The vaccine manufacturer in India, “enabling BioE to ramp up to produce at least one billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines by the end of 2022”.

The hugely supportive tone of Washington on Sunday came after severe criticism from several quarters over its earlier “America First” statement in response to India's request for the supply of vaccine raw materials.

US secretary of state Antony J. Blinken tweeted Sunday: “Our hearts go out

to the Indian people in the midst of the horrific Covid-19 outbreak. We are working closely with our partners in the Indian government, and we will rapidly deploy additional support to the people of India and India's healthcare heroes.”

US national security adviser Jake Sullivan tweeted: “The US is deeply concerned by the severe Covid outbreak in India. We are working around the clock to deploy more supplies and support to our friends and partners in India as they bravely battle this pandemic. More very soon.”

Twitter, FB remove posts on govt order

FROM PG1

However, it wasn't immediately known what the removed posts were.

Meanwhile, government sources said the IT ministry, on the recommendation of the ministry of home, asked the social media platforms to remove the posts and URLs (uniform resource locators) to “prevent obstructions in the fight against the pandemic” and disruption of public order due to the said posts. They added that the order was issued in view of the misuse of social media platforms by certain users to spread fake or misleading information and create panic about the pandemic in society “by using unrelated, old and out of the context images or visuals, communally sensitive

posts and misinformation about Covid-19 protocols”. Although reports suggested that the posts critical of government handling of the medical crisis were asked to be removed, sources said the government is open to criticism and suggestions in the collective fight against Covid-19. However, they said it is necessary to take action against those users who are “misusing” social media during this grave humanitarian crisis for unethical purposes.

Twitter removed or restricted access to more than 50 posts in the past one month at the behest of the government, including tweets that criticised its handling of the coronavirus pandemic. Other posts removed showed pictures and videos of a recent Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh.

LUNAR MISSION

₹800 crore data relay satellite project has been approved, work was going on

Isro to launch satellite to track Gaganyaan

New Delhi, April 25: The Indian Space Research Organisation will launch a data relay satellite that will help maintain contact with the Gaganyaan mission throughout after the launch, sources said.

The satellite will be launched before the final leg of the Gaganyaan mission, which will send astronauts to the Lower Earth Orbit (LEO). The first leg — the unmanned mission — is to be launched in December.

“We're planning to launch our own satellite,

which will act as a data relay satellite before going for the first human space flight,” the sources said.

The ₹800-crore project has been approved and work has been going on, they added.

Satellites in orbit cannot pass along their information to the ground stations on Earth if the satellite does not have a clear view of the ground station. A data relay satellite serves as a way to pass along the satellite's information.

The NASA, with a robust human space mission pro-

● **THE SATELLITE** will be launched before the final leg of the Gaganyaan mission, which will send astronauts to the Lower Earth Orbit (LEO). The first leg — the unmanned mission — is to be launched in December.

● **EARLIER THIS** month, the ISRO signed an agreement with French space agency CNES for cooperation for the Gaganyaan, a move that will enable training of Indian flight physicians in French space agency's facilities.

gramme, also has its own data relay satellite.

Its Tracking and Data Relay Satellite allows it to have global coverage of all the satellites round the clock without having to

build extra ground stations on Earth.

The ISRO uses several ground stations spread across the globe — Mauritius, Brunei and Biak, Indonesia.

Last month, ISRO Chairperson K. Sivan had said the space agency was also in talks with the

Australian counterpart to have a ground station at the Coco islands for the Gaganyaan mission.

However, there are blind spots, due to which there is a possibility of not receiving signals, sources added. The data relay satellite will help address the issues.

Earlier this month, the ISRO signed an agreement with French space agency CNES for cooperation for the Gaganyaan, a move that will enable training of Indian flight physicians in French space agency's facilities.

Under this agreement, CNES-developed French equipment, tested and still operating aboard the International Space Station, will be made available to Indian crews. The CNES will also be supplying fireproof carry bags made in France to shield equipment from shocks and radiation, it said.

Last month, four prospective astronauts also returned to India after spending nearly a year in Russia.

— PTI



DECCAN Chronicle

26 APRIL 2021

CJI should make judiciary kinder, faster, transparent

A new chapter in Indian judiciary starts with Justice N.V. Ramana having taken oath as the 48th Chief Justice of India (CJI) on April 24, which can and should be glorious. Till his tenure ends on August 26, 2022, CJI Ramana must focus on addressing three crucial issues — humaneness of judicial processes and systems, especially in the criminal side of law and justice, with great stress on speed and efficiency, and openness and transparency.

The absolutely first area to priority is administrative. The CJI must ensure all the pending vacancies in the judiciary, especially in the higher echelons of the Supreme Court and the various high courts, must be filled within the first 90 days of his term on a war footing. This numbers-led priority is to ensure the judiciary is operating at maximum mandated capacity and to a full strength to focus on the next area of priority — speedy delivery.

Justice delayed is justice denied. Time gap has been an underlying weakness and area of concern with our judicial system for a long while now. Systems need to be created to ensure timely dismissal of cases and the recent suggestive directive empowering high courts to hire retired justices to dispose pending cases is welcome and must be taken to a logical conclusion

The expectation from CJI Ramana is that he will strive hard to humanise criminal justice and focus on ensuring higher regard for law and human rights amongst the law enforcement agencies

under stern supervision. There can be suggestions made to the government, a mandated litigator, to withdraw a large number of cases through a matrix of stake involved versus the time since the case has stretched. Automatic disposal of petty and routine cases can also go a long way in unburdening the judicial load.

The CJI will hearten the citizenry by ensuring the implementation of faster and timely disposal of criminal cases against politicians and bureaucracy and give them punishment. A lesson that no one is too mighty to get away from the clutches of the law is an expectation that has waited long enough to be delivered with urgency, and who better than the author of this extraordinary hope-giving judgment to ensure its implementation? The highest expectation from CJI Ramana is that he will strive hard to humanise criminal justice systems and focus on ensuring higher regard for law and human rights amongst the law enforcement agencies, particularly the lathi-happy police.

Fake encounters too can and will likely become a thing of the past, if his record is anything to go by — with strongest action likely in custodial death cases. Ensuring police respond to sensitise their departments and officers regarding human rights would be a great achievement. A larger effort is needed to make it clear to the government and officials that they cannot ignore judicial pronouncements, which could be one of the most significant contributions of this tenure.

Finally, the judiciary must make itself even more open and transparent in coming out with unambiguous guidelines to dealing with grievances and complaints against itself. A judicial ombudsman is needed, comprising members of the bar, and of different states in composition at state-level and representatives of the government. Brothers and sisters of the judiciary must be able to handle all such instances in a way as to raise the respect for the blindfolded lady with a balance even higher.

At the start of CJI Ramana's tenure, history might well ask — if not here — where; if not now — when; if not you — who?

We're safe when all are safe

It is in the DNA of every pandemic that it is global, all the more so in a truly globalised world. It hardly makes sense for a nation to think that it can fight the pandemic all alone and be safe; it will not be long before it realises that the microorganism that causes the pandemic has reached its shores by means it can hardly block. Eliminating the virus from the face of the earth is an economic priority, too, as it would bring productive people back in action and the global economy back into black; not to forget the humanitarian angle as a pandemic devastates lives and often extinguishes them on a mass scale.

The US government's fight against pandemic Covid-19 has entered a decisive phase with close to 70 per cent of its population having been vaccinated. The country has the capacity to manufacture more as the vaccination programme advances and hence the demand in the country to help countries such as India where people have started dying in their thousands every day. The US has spare vaccines which are part of the Indian vaccination programme and hence can be put in the logistics chain on arrival. There are also redundant quantities of anti-viral drugs such as Remdisivir, as well as oxygen, which could save lives in India.

It's not just in the case of the ready-to-serve products that Indian wants the US to take a global view. The Serum Institute of India which makes the Covishield vaccine had recently appealed to US President Joe Biden to relax the ban on the export of the raw materials for the vaccine but to no avail. One cannot fault the US administration's policy that "it is not only in the US's interest to see Americans vaccinated; but it is in the interests of the rest of the world to see Americans vaccinated". The point of difference is that we will all be safe when we all are vaccinated; nationality hardly counts.

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Kishwar Desai

London Diary



A fitting farewell for Prince Philip; Cameron, Carrie graft entertains

The headlines here lately, about India, have been worrying. Many of them are about the Indian Covid crisis, and it is sad to see the terrifying predictions that are doing the rounds. While Boris Johnson thinks about sending respirators to India, many are wondering what happened to the great advantage India had last year. Now all we see are the burning pyres, and an ever-expanding body count. The question everyone asks is how could this have happened when India was doing so well? Yes, there had been a harsh lockdown earlier — but then that was the only way to deal with the enemy, who was unknown at the time. But now the bonds between the two countries are being sealed, ironically, by the "Indian" strain in the UK, and "British" mutant in India. The alarming difference is that while the UK is slowly opening up, India seems to be in the midst of a severe medical tsunami. Could it be also because the UK had vaccinated such a large proportion of its population?

The big event of the past fortnight has, of course, been the Royal funeral. The Monarchy is perfect-

ly adept at staging the most spectacular coronation (not seen, happily, since 1952), weddings (the most recent, of Harry and Meghan, was beautiful but is proving unforgettable for other reasons) and, of course, funerals. There has not been a Royal funeral since Elizabeth the Queen Mother died at the ripe old age of 101 a while ago.

The funeral for the Duke was planned well in advance and indeed he had participated in its arrangements, choosing the carriage specially designed by himself for the occasion. But as luck would have it, the Duke's funeral became unique because of Covid. And this brought to the fore the discipline maintained by the Royalty as it abides by the laws it is formally responsible for promulgating through it is the civilian government which thinks them up. For example, even through the Second World War, the Royal Family ate only the rations permitted to their subjects.

The sparseness of numbers at the funeral, the lack of street crowds, the location at Windsor rather than London gave the occasion its own special magic. He was after all 99, just one week short of his centenary. The Queen is, more or

less, universally respected and much loved by all but a few diehard Republicans. The Duke had to earn the respect given to him. The Press delighted in his more acerbic and "politically incorrect" views. He himself had joked about his "foot in the mouth" problem. But the sheer length of his presence on the public platform, discreetly walking a few steps behind his wife, won people over.

Most watched the ceremony on TV where the BBC yet again turned up trumps as it does on such occasions. It was a sombre but a beautifully staged occasion. Even so, it was the Queen sitting by herself in the chapel, which was the most dramatic sight. She had already placed her own written farewell into the coffin and then she sat quietly, the picture of dignity in grief. While the media wanted to make a fuss about Harry and William, the Palace managed to make them all behave themselves. And the emotion of the moment almost made everyone forget THAT interview.

In a mundane world, politics provides the entertainment. Not a week goes by without another corruption scandal. David Cameron, the former Prime Minister, has been caught lobbying for a company Greensill where he is the director. His text messages to Rishi Sunak, the Chancellor, asking for financial help, have been revealed. (When will these "leaders" learn what every teenager knows — that if you use your smartphone, there is no secrecy?) The Prime Minister himself is under attack by his former chosen Special Adviser Dominic Cummings (who had to be let go after he had antagonised everyone including Carrie Symonds, the PM's fiancée). He has now leaked more ammunition against his old friend alleging that Boris stopped a public inquiry when government rules were broken. Par for the course. But the target, more and more, seems to be the Prime Minister's fiancée — about whom stories are churned out every week. And now, under media scrutiny, Boris has had to pay 58,000 pounds for the redecoration of his residence at Downing Street, already undertaken by the young Ms Symonds. Yes,

the Prime Minister in the UK cannot use taxpayers' money to re-do the official home in London. Can such a rule ever work in India, hmmm?

But Boris has retained his amazing luck. While he has presided over the shambles of Covid mismanagement, he is doing very well thanks to the widely successful vaccination programme. The UK has become the envy of EU, if not the world, for its vaccination performance. Even Brexit has been forgotten for the while.

Actually Boris was supposed to be in Delhi today, on April 26. His earlier trip to Delhi for the Republic Day on January 26 had to be postponed due to Covid. But the two Prime Ministers seem to be fated never to meet in India (especially not if the date is the 26th) and the British PM has once again cancelled his trip. Call the astrologer!

Kishwar Desai's latest book, The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times of Devika Rani, has just been published and she is the Chair of the Trust that set up the world's first Partition Museum in Amritsar

Subhani



Mishandling elections in the time of a pandemic

Shikha Mukerjee



For voters and contestants, every election is necessarily different, because the ways in which the thousands of acts of omission, commission, violation and bad faith by the incumbent government or the challenger are in a constant state of change. For the Election Commission, tasked with conducting the process through which the voter chooses a representative who is adequate to fulfil the aspirations and expectations he or she has, every election is both different and the same.

The context in which an election is held is certainly material to the way the Election Commission undertakes the exercise of holding free and fair polls so that the people's sovereign will is exercised without obstruction or violation. If the EC fails to comprehend the context, then what follows is a super-spreader event of terrifying proportions in the state that has been victim of the whims of the poll panel in its refusal to recognise that the Covid-19 crisis could turn into a catastrophe.

Dismissive of the pleas of West Bengal's ruling party and the state government, of all other Opposition parties barring the BJP that the eight-phase six-week poll schedule would be seriously risky at a time when new mutant strains of the coronavirus were detected and whose impact had pushed Britain and Europe to declare new lockdowns, new protocols and manage a new crisis, the EC maintained it had no power to alter the schedule after it was announced or notified. It insisted it was entirely capable of ensuring its strict guidelines on how campaigning and voting should be done in Covid times were followed by all candidates and of course

their parties. Having announced its guidelines, mobilised the largest force of security personnel drawn from every Central paramilitary force imaginable, adding up to over 1.5 lakh jawans and officers and innumerable support personnel, brought in over 200 general observers, added to the original 54 appointed as police observers, the EC flooded West Bengal with the paraphernalia necessary to do two things simultaneously — hold peaceful, free and fair polls over eight phases and ensure adherence to its Covid guidelines. It failed on both counts at an incredibly high cost to the public exchequer.

Citizens exposed to the virus through super-spreader events and shoddy observance of Covid protocols are paying twice over for the EC's failures and its outrageously unrealistic assessment of its own capacity to deliver a flawless election process. The death of two candidates from the virus, a large number of candidates ill or critically ill because of the infection and the final humiliating confirmation of its inadequacy as the order from the Calcutta high court lashed out that the role of the EC cannot be just "issuing circulars" and "holding meetings".

It took a searing indictment from the high court to get the commission to implement its own guidelines. It took a threat from the high court to ensure that big rallies were banned.

The Calcutta high court last week said the judiciary would step in and "act like T.N. Seshan", the legendary tough chief election commissioner, who had postponed and threatened to cancel elections in Bihar and West Bengal if political parties failed to follow the rules.

Through the weeks of disastrous mismanagement by the EC that has cost lives and skyrocketing state public health expenditure to cope with the outfall of the speed of the spread of the deadly virus, the then chief election commissioner Sunil Arora and current CEC Sushil Chandra said they were powerless to listen to reason and heed the context of this election in West Bengal, namely the danger of an even greater surge of the evolving virus.

The Election Commission dismissed the plea by Mamata Banerjee that the eight-phase election was very risky. It seemed to pay more attention to the BJP's jeers that the eight-phase election was necessary to ensure peaceful, free and fair elections. The Election Commission rejected the April 16 appeal by all political parties in the fray in West Bengal, besides the BJP, that the remaining three phases should be clubbed together. Defending the eight-phase polls, BJP candidate Swapan Dasgupta said anything else would affect the "democratic spirit" of the process. His assurance and that of his party that all Covid protocols would be maintained cut no ice with the Calcutta high court, as its indictment reveals.

In declaring that it couldn't change the schedule once it was notified, the Election Commission forgot that it has the power to do so and there is a precedent. In 1984, the Lok Sabha elections were held in all states, except Punjab and Assam. Elections there were held in 1985 because the circumstances called for it. In 1991, the EC decided that the Lok Sabha elections would be

rescheduled with new dates because after some states had voted, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated and there was turmoil. The Representation of the People Act is rigid, but the law isn't stupid. It does admit there can be an obstruction to the polling process after a natural calamity or any other sufficient cause.

As a result, West Bengal saw an unprecedented number of public rallies and meetings organised on a mega scale for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah, at least a dozen or more star campaigners from the BJP's very large and varied pool of leaders, including defence minister Rajnath Singh and UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath. A comparison of one day of campaigning by the BJP and Ms Banerjee is revealing; the BJP held at least nine major rallies, roadshows and meetings on one day while Mamata Banerjee managed only four.

As the challenger in West Bengal, the BJP's capacity to spread havoc without being restrained by the EC, outdid all other political parties on a daily basis. Can it be a mere coincidence that Prime Minister Modi cancelled his final four rallies, out of a total of 18, minutes before the commission announced the ban on rallies?

A pandemic on the scale of Covid-19 is unprecedented. If the EC failed to grasp this simple fact, so did the Prime Minister. Not till the nationwide oxygen shortage began killing patients in hospitals across India, ICU beds ran short and private hospitals went to court did the magnitude of the calamity impress itself on Mr Modi, whose office had earlier reportedly turned away Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray's desperate SOS for help. Can the democratic spirit freely exercise its franchise if disease and death stalk the voter? The EC will eventually have to answer this question.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

LETTERS

CHEERS TO YOGI

The decision of the UP government that it will bear the treatment cost of Covid patients even if they get treated in private hospitals deserves plaudits and is worthy of emulation by other States. The decision amounts to taking over the 'control' of the private hospitals, most of which charge a fortune, which only the well-heeled can afford. In a country that is stricken with Covid-19 and where people are dying for want of oxygen, the bold decision will go a long way in instilling fresh hopes about the government's commitment towards its people.

V.S. Jayaraman,
Chennai

FISHY FIRE

There is something more to it than what meets the eye in the recent fire accidents in Maharashtra. That over a dozen Covid-19 patients died when a fire enveloped the intensive care unit of Vijay Vallabh Hospital in Virar, Mumbai on Friday smacks of the incompetence of the hospital administration. In challenging times these demand competent governance. Maharashtra has been found wanting in this, thanks to rising Covid-19 cases there and avoidable fire tragedies. There must be an impartial probe into these recent fire accidents to bring the real culprits to book.

S. Ramakrishnasayee,
Chennai

WHY BLAME ONLY MODI?

The Covid-19 fear that has gripped the country has exposed the mental crookedness of many half-informed and self-styled experts in medical science as the crookedness could be. Unsavoury charges and baseless allegations of incompetence and indifference are hurled against the Central government making Narendra Modi its target. At the same time apolitical persons and men with neutral and centrist views, do appreciate the Herculean task the PM is handling right from day one of Covid-19 besides attending to other subjects that are under his direct responsibility. I doubt very much whether any other previous PM of the country had to face and bear such multifarious problems - all at a time. Simpletons like Rahul and his coterie of yes men leave no stone unturned even during this crisis to enhance their chances to remain in the political centre stage without themselves actually rendering any help to the government by money or manpower.

S. Lakshminarasimhan,
Coimbatore

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	47,878.45	-0.42
Nifty 50	14,341.40	-0.45
S&P 500*	4,180.17	1.09
Dollar (₹)	75.02	-0.06
Pound Sterling (₹)	104.13	0.07
Euro (₹)	90.46	-0.24
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,273▼24	0.05
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.76	0.55
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.035	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.574	0.018

* As of Friday/Saturday

Steel companies produce 3,474 t medi-oxygen/day

The steel industry produced 3,474 tonne of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) on Saturday, higher than its daily production capacity to meet the shortage of the life-saving gas. A steel ministry statement said on Sunday, there are 33 oxygen plants in the steel sector, of which 29 are tapped regularly. The total daily oxygen production capacity of steel plants is 2,834 tonne. The production of LMO was 3,474tonne on April 24.



Indian ops boost US giant's profit Flipkart to get \$1 bn more from Walmart

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, APRIL 25

Walmart has decided to pump in around \$1 billion more to support the operations of Flipkart. Walmart said its international segment's cash and cash equivalents of \$2.8 billion may not be freely transferable to the US due to local laws or other restrictions. Of this, approximately \$1 billion can only be accessed through dividends or inter-company financing arrangements, subject to approval of the Flipkart minority shareholders. This cash is expected to be utilised to fund the operations of Flipkart, Walmart said in its annual report. Walmart's gross profit rate increased 50 basis points in financial year



2021 primarily due to Flipkart's improved margin mix and reduced fuel sales in the UK. This is against a 136-points reduction in gross profit in FY20 primarily due to Flipkart, as well as a change in merchandise mix. Walmart finalised the valuation of assets and liabilities of Flipkart in the second quarter of FY20. As per this, Flipkart

has assets of \$24.1 billion, which comprise primarily of \$2.2 billion in cash and cash equivalents, \$2.8 billion in other current assets, \$5 billion in intangible assets and \$13.5 billion in goodwill. Of the intangible assets, \$4.7 billion represents the fair value of trade names. The remaining \$0.3 billion of intangible assets primarily relate to acquired technology with a life of three years. Flipkart has liabilities of \$3.7 billion, which comprise primarily of \$1.8 billion of current liabilities and \$1.7 billion of deferred income taxes and non-controlling interest of \$4.3 billion. The company began consolidating the financial statements of Flipkart in the third quarter of FY19, using a one-month lag.

BHARAT BIOTECH SEEKS NOD TO EXTEND SHELF LIFE OF COVAXIN

New Delhi, April 25: Bharat Biotech has written to the drug regulator, seeking extension of the shelf life of its indigenously developed vaccine, Covaxin, from six to 24 months, sources said on Sunday.

Bharat Biotech was given permission for sale and distribution of Covaxin with a shelf life of six months when stored at two to eight degrees Celsius. "Now, we are herewith applying for the extension of shelf life from six months to 24 months when stored at 2-8 degrees Celsius," the firm said in its application to the Drugs Controller General of India. Bharat Biotech has submitted updated accelerated and real-time stability data of Coaxin, in support of its claim. — PTI

Mkt momentum to be tested in event-heavy week

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, APRIL 25

The equity market is lacking foreign and domestic institutional investors support, as the Covid-19 cases saw almost a vertical rise to above 3 lakh infections daily, leading to caution. The Indian currency has also weakened against the US dollar to the levels seen during the market crash last year. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) were net sellers of equities worth Rs 8,674 crore in April so far. The previous six months have been good for the market, as after September 2020 FPIs had turned net buyers in a big way. Mutual funds also reduced equity buying in April so far to just Rs 1,251.72 crore against Rs 2,476.45 crore net buying in March. But domestic institutional investors, including mutual funds, insurance, banks and pension funds, were net buyers by Rs 7,960.71 crore. With the rupee expected to weaken further this year, FPIs may not resume buying in a big way unless the currency stabilises. "The Indian rupee, Asia's best-performing currency in March, is going to slide right back to levels last seen in the depths of the pandemic meltdown; the currency will drop toward 76.5 to a dollar by the end of the year," according to Parul Mittal Sinha, head of macro trading, India and South Asia financial markets, Standard Chartered. "We do not see the



volatility easing out in the coming week too, thanks to scheduled data and events," said Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking. "The monthly expiry of April month derivatives contracts will keep the traders on their toes. On the data front, core sector data will be unveiled on April 30. The recent proposal by the US president to raise capital gains tax has started showing its impact in US markets which may cascade to others in the coming week. Needless to say, the Covid-related updates will remain on the participants' radar," Mishra said. "Details of US President Joe Biden's proposed wealth tax will start emerging next week. Biden wants to raise the federal capital gains tax to 43.4 per cent for the richest of individuals, bringing combined state and federal rates in places such as New York and California to well above 50 per cent—the highest ever in US history. Expect volatility whenever these details emerge," said an analyst tracking Indian market. The market will also react to earnings of many blue chips this week.

CHIP SHORTAGE: VW WARNS OF WORSENING SITUATION

April 25: Volkswagen AG has warned managers to prepare for a bigger production hit in the second quarter than the first due to a global chip shortage, the Financial Times reported.

"We are being told from the suppliers and within the Volkswagen Group that we need to face considerable challenges in the second quarter, probably more challenging than the first quarter," Wayne Griffiths, president of Volkswagen's Spanish brand Seat, said. Griffiths called the shortage the "biggest challenge" the company faces at the moment. He said production at Seat's Martorell plant outside Barcelona was currently "hand to mouth", with the brand deciding what cars to build only after it receives chips from suppliers, the report said.

Volkswagen has said it expects chip supply to remain tight in the coming months, adding it could not provide visibility for the full year. The company has been unable to build 100,000 cars due to the shortage, CEO Herbert Diess said last month, adding the group would not be able to make up for the shortfall in 2021. "The situation has been exacerbated i.e. by the blizzards that have occurred in Texas, as the large chip manufacturers based there had to stop or reduce their production. For that reason further adjustments to production cannot be ruled out", Volkswagen said in an emailed statement. — Reuters

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Amit settles for bronze in Russia

New Delhi: Olympic-bound Indian boxer Amit Panghal (52kg) settled for a bronze medal at the Governor's Cup in St Petersburg, Russia after going down to world champion and familiar foe Shakhobidin Zoirov in the semifinals. Amit, a world championships silver-medallist, lost 5-0 to the Uzbek, who is also the reigning Olympic champion. This was the Indian's second loss to Zoirov after the 2019 world championships. In that event, he had lost to Zoirov in the finals. Both the boxers are bound for the Tokyo Games, to be held in July-August. Amit was the lone Indian to make the medal round. — PTI

Barty survives early scare to win title

Stuttgart, Germany: World number one Ashleigh Barty earned her third WTA title this year by beating Aryna Sabalenka in the final of Stuttgart's clay-court tournament on Sunday. After winning in Miami and a pre-Australian Open event in Melbourne on hard court, Barty added the Stuttgart title, her first tournament on clay this season. A day after her 25th birthday, the Australian rallied from losing the first set to claim a 3-6, 6-0, 6-3 win over Sabalenka, who needed a medical time-out after the second set for an adductor injury. — AFP

Nadal sets up final date with Tsitsipas

Barcelona: Rafael Nadal will face a red-hot Stefanos Tsitsipas in the Barcelona Open final after the 11-time champion eased past fellow Spaniard Pablo Carreño 6-3, 6-2 on Saturday. Nadal roared out to a 5-1 lead before Carreno pulled back a break. Carreno then had three break chances on Nadal's next service game, but the latter saved them all and closed out the set. The top-seeded Nadal improved to an 8-0 career record against Carreño. The second-seeded Tsitsipas advanced after beating Janik Sinner 6-3, 6-3 for his eighth consecutive straight-set victory including last week's title run at Monte Carlo. — AP

Appoorva living American dream

NEHA SURANA CHENNAI, APRIL 25

Plying their trade in the United States is the dream of every basketball player. However, only a few can make it happen. For Chennai girl Appoorva Muralinath, it took years of hard work, dedication and some bold decisions before she could live the American dream. A former India basketball player, Appoorva surprised many, including her family members, when she decided to quit Southern Railway to make the transition from player to coach. She landed in Boston in 2017, and the next four years turned out to be eventful as Appoorva reached heights not many Indians have managed to go to, in the field of basketball. She is currently an assistant coach at Dean College, Franklin — Massachusetts, an NCAA third division team. "When I reached the US, I was absolutely ready to start from the bottom, so I began enrolling myself in certification courses. I also reached out to people in and around the area for volunteer opportunities as a coach. I guided a fourth grade girls team in the AAU league in



Former India basketball player Appoorva Muralinath is currently an assistant coach at Dean College, Franklin

Massachusetts, coached them for two seasons and also started running camps. It took me a while to understand how things work in the US," said Appoorva. An American Council of Exercise-certified trainer, Appoorva has also completed USA Basketball Gold coaching certificate and FIBA's (International Federation of Basketball

Association) academy manager's programme. "Coaching at Dean College helped me understand how the famous NCAA system, which is a feeder to NBA, works. Coaching college athletes is definitely something I love doing. At Dean, I prepare workout plans for athletes in the weight room and prepare them for the season. It's important to

keep myself updated in the field. Currently, I'm pursuing a certification course in strength training," Appoorva added. 'Want to set up an academy in Chennai' With thousands of followers on social media, Appoorva also shares her expertise with aspiring players in India. Appoorva said her long term goal is to set up a world-class academy in Chennai.

"The knowledge that I have gained in the US over the years will be of no use if I don't help the game grow in India. The sport is a rage at the school and college level, especially in Tamil Nadu. What they need is professional guidance to make it big. I come from a family of hoopsters. The game is in my blood," she said.

REAL PREZ SAYS SUPER LEAGUE CLUBS 'CANNOT LEAVE' PLAN

Madrid, April 25: Real Madrid's president insists all 12 clubs that signed up for the ill-fated Super League are still bound by contract to launching the controversial breakaway of Europe's elite soccer teams. In an interview with Spanish sports daily AS on Saturday, Madrid president Florentino Perez said the clubs can't back out like some have announced. "The fact is, the clubs can't leave," Perez said. "Some, because of the pressure, have had to say they'll leave. But this project, or something very similar, will happen, and I hope it's in the near future."

Zidane's men slip in title race after draw at home

Madrid, April 25: Real Madrid handed the initiative back to Atletico Madrid in La Liga on Saturday by drawing at home to Real Betis, a result that raises doubts about the team's condition ahead of Tuesday's Champions League semifinal against Chelsea. Eden Hazard was thrown on for the last 15 minutes of the 0-0 draw at Vallebebas in what was only the Belgian's second appearance in three months but Madrid could not find a way through. Atletico are now two points clear at the top of La Liga and can extend

that advantage to five by winning away at Athletic Bilbao on Sunday. Barcelona could pull level on points with Real Madrid if they overcome Villarreal. Real Madrid struggled for chances and the concern will be that numerous injuries and fatigue are catching up with Zinedine Zidane's side at a crucial moment in the season. "It's two points dropped, that's obvious, we lacked a lot going forward, especially at the start of the game," said Zidane. "We weren't sharp but that can happen. We have

to go again on Tuesday." They play Chelsea at home on Tuesday in the first leg of the Champions League semi-finals and it is possible none of Toni Kroos, Sergio Ramos, Ferland Mendy, Fede Valverde or Lucas Vazquez, all absent due to injury, will return. Hazard could feature against his former club after coming on for the final quarter of an hour but the fact Zidane waited so long to introduce him suggests he is still not considered match fit, having now played 30 minutes since the end of January. — AFP

Bess hated game after bubble pain

London, April 25: England off-spinner Dom Bess has revealed that he had started "hating cricket" after his prolonged stay inside a bio-bubble during the Test tour of India earlier this year. Bess got just five wickets from two Tests in the fourth-match series which India won 3-1. He was dropped after helping England to victory in the first Test in Chennai, only to return for the final match in Ahmedabad, where he went wicket-less during an innings defeat. After spending around seven weeks inside the bio-bubble in India, the 23-year-old Bess is currently involved in the county season, looking to rediscover his form with Yorkshire. "After India I had a good break away from it, because I really did start hating cricket," Bess was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. "It got too much at times, certainly in that bubble in India, there's a lot of pressure going on and it was really important for me to come back and get away from it," he said. On returning from India, Bess had "two or three





Dom Bess

weeks off", getting to know his new home in Leeds and spending time with his girlfriend and the puppy they have adopted. "It was nice to see them and get away from it, because in India, in the bubble, everything was about cricket. And it's fine when you're going well, but when things aren't going well it is very tough," he said. "But I only see what I had in India as a great positive. It's been a tough time really, but one hell of a learning curve for me. And it terms of where I see my game, I know what I've got to do. That's so exciting, knowing that I've still got so much work to do, when I'm so close as well, at times." — PTI

Vinoth sizzles in Classic CC win

R. Vinoth Kumar's half-century helped Classic CC beat Pattabiram CA in the play-offs semifinal of the TNCA Thiruvallur DCA league championship. Brief scores: I-Division: Mugappair CC 212/7 in 45 overs (D. Vignesh Yadav 98, R. Rajaguru 41; S.G. Karneeswaran 4/49) bt Ambattur CC 208 in 44 overs (Abhijith 72, R. Sathish Kumar 26; D. Vignesh Yadav 4/41, R. Sai Kiran 3/42); Korattur CC 186 in 42.1 overs (R.I. Sanjay Soorya 87, R. Ram Kumar 59; K. Namasisvayam 4/27, S. Akshay Kumar 3/28) bt FSCA 157 in 42.1 overs (K. Namasisvayam 39, S. Akshay Kumar 32, Rishab Sudhir 33; S. Naresh Kumar 6/43). II-Division (Play-offs): Semi-final: Classic CC 142 in 28.5 overs (R. Vinoth Kumar 51; B. Hareesh 3/36, R.G. Bharath Raj 3/37) bt Pattabiram CA 138/9 in 30 overs (M. Sabari Prabh 26; S. Vignesh Kumar 3/37). III-Division: Stag CC 181/6 in 30 overs (S.S. Srinath 41, V.V. Manjunath 38, B. Anbumani 38) lost to SRIHER RC 186/1 in 20.5 overs (M. Bharath 85 (not out), Nihal Chinnaudral 46, J. Jones Daniel 35 (not out)); SRIHER RC 170 in 29.3 overs (Nihal Chinnaudral 50, Aditya Balaji 25, N. Senthil 6/50) bt WABCO Ind RC 136/9 in 30 overs (J. Daniel Raj 41, M. Deni Kishore 37; D. Praveen Kumar 6/31, J. Jones Daniel 3/25). IV-Division: SRF RC 103 in 26.1 overs (N. Kumar 29; L. Ananda Roopan 3/25, M. Kundan Kumar 3/6, S.K. Anritha 3/22) lost to Frankworrell CC 104/3 in 21.2 overs (S. Surya Narayanan 47 (not out)); IEC RC 183 in 30 overs (D.B. Aravindan 87, J. Dinesh Kumar 26; V. Thendral 4/28, A. Kumar 3/24) lost to CPCL RC 184/6 in 28.4 overs (R. Ramesh 59, C. Manikandan 40; C. Chandra Kumar three for 40).

ORANGE	
Shikhar Dhawan, DC	259
KL Rahul, PBKS	221
Faf du Plessis, CSK	214
PURPLE	
Harshal Patel, RCB	15
Avesh Khan, DC	11
Rahul Chahar, MI	9

Off the field



Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma arrives in New Delhi with his daughter. — MI

Tye pulls out due to personal reason

Rajasthan Royals' Australian pacer Andrew Tye on Sunday flew back home due to "personal reasons" making him the fourth overseas recruit of the franchise to pull out of the ongoing Indian Premier League. Earlier, Englishmen Jofra Archer (hand surgery), Ben Stokes (finger fracture) and Liam Livingstone (bubble fatigue) had opted out. "AJ Tye flew back to Australia earlier today due to personal reasons. We will continue to offer any support he may need," Royals tweeted on Sunday.

The 34-year-old Tye hasn't yet got a game in this edition of the tournament.

Kohli fined ₹12L for slow over-rate

Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Virat Kohli was fined ₹12 lakh for his team's slow over-rate against Chennai Super Kings in an IPL game on Sunday. "As it was his team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over rate offences, Mr Kohli was fined ₹12 lakh," a press release said.

Hussey backs Gill to fire again for KKR

Backing the out-of form RShubman Gill, Kolkata Knight Riders team mentor David Hussey said the opener is a "class act" who will be among the highest-scoring batsmen by the end of the IPL. The highly talented 21-year-old has not been at his best this season, managing 80 runs from five matches.

"He is a star player, he took the Test match arena by storm in Australia. He is very specific and he has a great work ethic," said Hussey.

"All I can say is that form will come and go, class is always permanent. He is one class individual, both on and off the field. Mark my words, he will be one of the highest-scoring batsmen by the end of the tournament. He is an absolute class act," Hussey added.

Asked why Kiwi speedster Lockie Ferguson has not got a game yet, Hussey said the team management will be going back to the drawing board in terms of strategies.

SUPER DELHIVERY

Capitals edge Sunrisers Hyderabad out in Super Over

Chennai, April 25: Delhi Capitals beat Sunrisers Hyderabad in a thrilling Super Over contest in the Indian Premier League here on Sunday.

Batting first, Delhi Capitals managed to score 159 for 4 with opener Prithvi Shaw back in form with a 53 off 39 balls. Skipper Rishabh Pant scored 37 off 27 balls. Steve Smith remained not out on 34 off 25 balls. For SRH, pacer Siddarth Kaul took 2 for 31 in 4 overs.

In reply, SRH scored 159 for 7 with Kane Williamson contributing 66 nt out off 51 balls as the match went into Super Over.

In the Super Over, SRH managed only 7 off Axar Patel while DC scored the runs of the last delivery.

SRH skipper David Warner said: "I thought the way the bowlers came back after the powerplay was fantastic. Vijay is not one of our strike bowlers, but he was fantastic. Johnny at the top and Kane batted deep but we couldn't make it. They bowled fantastically in the middle and brought it back. If you hit the ball to a world-class fielder, you get run-out nine times out of ten."

Earlier, Prithvi Shaw hit a sparkling fifty but Delhi Capitals frittered away a bright start to settle for 159 for four.

The 81-run stand between openers Shaw (53) and Shikhar Dhawan (28) had set a perfect platform for DC for a huge total but Hyderabad spinners Rashid Khan (1/31 in 4 overs) and Jagadeesha Suchith changed the course of the innings with their tight spells.

Skipper Rishabh Pant (37) and Steve Smith (34 not out) raised a 58-run stand for the fourth wicket to ensure a fighting total after electing to bat.

Shaw began with a hat-trick of fours off pacer Khaleel Ahmed. Those were breathtaking strokes, straight out of text book.

There was sheer elegance in his cover drives, both along the ground and the ones played over the



Delhi Capitals opener Prithvi Shaw en route to his fifty against Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL game on Sunday. — IPL

field as Shaw backed his timing with precision and power.

His six off pacer Siddarth Kaul over long on and the ramp shot over short third-man off the same bowler bore testimony to his supreme touch.

Dhawan was happy playing the second fiddle as the Capitals put on board 51 without loss in

Powerplay overs.

Left-arm spinner Suchith, playing his first game for SRH, did a decent job, giving away only 21 runs in his four-over quota. He consistently troubled Dhawan.

Suchith bowled in tandem with Khan, SRH's best spinner over the years, as the two bowlers put brakes on the run flow.

Rashid also provided his side with first breakthrough when he found stumps of Dhawan, ending DC's 81-run opening stand.

Shaw's splendid knock ended in a run out after a mix-up with skipper Pant.

Pant and former Australia captain Steve Smith were now two new batsmen at the crease.

SCORECARD

Delhi Capitals: Prithvi Shaw run out (Ahmed/Suchith) 53, Shikhar Dhawan b Rashid Khan 28, Rishabh Pant c Suchith b Kaul 37, Steven Smith (not out) 34, Shimron Hetmyer c Williamson b Kaul 1, Marcus Stoinis (not out) 2. **Extras (b 1, nb 1, w 2) 4. Total (for four wickets in 20 overs) 159.**
FoW: 1-81, 2-84, 3-142, 4-145.

Bowling: Khaleel Ahmed 4-0-42-0, Abhishek Sharma 1-0-14-0, Siddarth Kaul 4-0-31-2, Jagadeesha Suchith 4-0-21-0, Vijay Shankar 3-0-19-0, Rashid Khan 4-0-31-1.

Sunrisers Hyderabad: David Warner run out (Rabada/Pant) 6, Jonny Bairstow c Dhawan b Avesh Khan 38, Kane Williamson (not out) 66, Virat Singh c Stoinis b Avesh Khan 4, Kedar Jadhav st Pant b Mishra 9, Abhishek Sharma lbw b Patel 5, Rashid Khan lbw b Patel 0, Vijay Shankar b Avesh Khan 8, Jagadeesha Suchith (not out) 15. **Extras (b 2, lb 1, w 5) 8. Total (for seven wickets in 20 overs) 159.**
FoW: 1-28, 2-56, 3-84, 4-104, 5-117, 6-117, 7-136.

Bowling: Kagiso Rabada 3-0-26-0, R. Ashwin 4-0-27-0, Marcus Stoinis 1-0-12-0, Axar Patel 4-0-26-2, Avesh Khan 4-0-34-3, Amit Mishra 4-0-31-1.

Delhi Capitals won the Super Over.

They kept the scoreboard moving.

Smith was dropped on 14 by Kaul off Vijay Shankar. Khaleel had also missed out on a chance offered by Pant a few balls ago off Rashid.

The duo managed to get a few boundaries but SRH bowlers largely controlled the proceedings.

— Agencies

POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
CSK	5	4	1	0	8	+1.612
DC	5	4	1	0	8	+0.334
RCB	5	4	1	0	8	+0.096
MI	5	2	3	0	4	-0.032
PBKS	5	2	3	0	4	-0.428
RR	5	2	3	0	4	-0.681
SRH	5	1	4	0	2	-0.180
KKR	5	1	4	0	2	-0.675

Can Knights end miserable slump?

Ahmedabad, April 25: Their three-match losing streak finally over, Punjab Kings would seek to build a winning momentum when they face the struggling Kolkata Knight Riders in an IPL match here on Monday. Punjab made a winning start but then slumped to three straight losses before producing a clinical show to beat defending champions Mumbai by nine wickets on Friday, and they would look to notch up another triumph against KKR which have suffered four defeats on the trot.

Captain KL Rahul has been one of the few consistent performers in the formidable-looking Punjab batting unit and he once again led by example against MI with an unbeaten 60, his third fifty in five games.

Mayank Agarwal has been the other main performer and the return to form of 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle against MI with a 43 not out should be good news for Punjab.

But Deepak Hooda, who has not done much after one impressive innings, will have to step up if Punjab want to perform consistently.

The place of Nicholas Pooran, who has scored 0, 0, 0, in the playing XI is expected to be under review though his turn did not come in the last match.

The Punjab bowlers, who have been pedestrian in earlier matches, came good in their last match with the talented Ravi Bishnoi (2/21) and senior India pacer Mohammad Shami (2/21) leading the charge.

Young Arshdeep Singh has been a consistent bowler with six wickets from five matches.

On the other hand, KKR, led by England's World Cup

Live on TV

Punjab Kings vs Kolkata Knight Riders from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

HEAD to HEAD

Matches 27

KKR 18 PBKS 9

FOR THE RECORD

● Eoin Morgan with 6,957 runs at an average of 27.07 in 300 innings needs 43 runs to become the fourth Englishman and 23rd batsman overall to complete 7,000 runs in T20.

● Chris Gayle has scored 700 runs at an average of 46.66 in 18 innings against Kolkata Knight Riders in IPL.

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

● KKR beat Punjab by two runs at Abu Dhabi.

● Punjab beat KKR by 8 wickets at Sharjah.

STATS: S. PERVEZ KAISER

winning skipper Eoin Morgan, continued to slide after losing to Rajasthan Royals by six wickets in their last match.

Their batting unit need a complete turnaround in form if KKR has to snap their losing streak.

The top-five batsmen continued to struggle with only Nitish Rana — two half centuries — and Dinesh Karthik doing anything of worth.

Pacer Pat Cummins played an incredible innings — 66 not out — for a losing cause against Chennai Super Kings but KKR would like their specialist batsmen to deliver consistently instead of relying on the lower order.

Gill and Morgan have been in woeful form and they desperately need big scores to make themselves count. — PTI

High sir! Jadeja puts CSK on top

Mumbai, April 25: The irrepressible Ravindra Jadeja blasted an IPL record-equalling 37 runs in one over and then grabbed three big wickets in an outstanding all-round display as Chennai Super Kings crushed Royal Challengers Bangalore by 69 runs here on Sunday.

Jadeja pummelled 62 off 28 balls and lifted CSK to 191 for four after skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni opted to bat in a top-of-the-table clash.

Then, with his slow-left arm spin bowling, the star all-rounder picked up the important wickets of AB de Villiers and Glenn Maxwell to derail RCB's run chase on a sluggish Wankhede pitch.

After a cracking start that saw them cross 50 in five overs, RCB were stopped at 122 for nine in 20 overs. The immensely-talented Devdutt Padikkal top-scored with a blazing 34 off just 15 balls.

Veteran South African leg-spinner Imran Tahir (2/16) picked up two wickets for CSK while giving away very few runs.

Jadeja began the final over of CSK innings by clobbering four consecutive sixes off Harshal Patel before adding another off the fifth ball.

He smashed the last ball over square leg for four as Harshal, who had figures of 3 for 14 going into the final over, finished with 4-0-51-3.

Jadeja, batting at No.5, was yet to open his account when he was dropped by Dan Christian off Washington Sundar.

Playing for RCB, Chris Gayle had also scored 37



Ravindra Jadeja celebrates an RCB wicket. — IPL

SCORECARD

Chennai Super Kings: Ruturaj Gaikwad c Jamieson b Chahal 33, Faf du Plessis c Christian b Patel 50, Suresh Raina c Padikkal b Patel 24, Ambati Rayudu c Jamieson b Patel 14, Ravindra Jadeja (not out) 62, MS Dhoni (not out) 2. **Extras (lb 1, nb 2, w 3) 6. Total (for four wickets in 20 overs) 191.**
FoW: 1-74, 2-111, 3-111, 4-142.

Bowling: Mohammed Siraj 4-0-32-0, Kyle Jamieson 3-0-31-0, Yuzvendra Chahal 3-0-24-1, Navdeep Saini 2-0-27-0, Harshal Patel 4-0-51-3, Dan Christian 2-0-12-0, Washington Sundar 2-0-13-0.

Royal Challengers Bangalore: Virat Kohli c Dhoni b Curran 8, Devdutt Padikkal c Raina b Thakur 34, Washington Sundar c Gaikwad b Jadeja 7, Glenn Maxwell b Jadeja 22, AB de Villiers b Jadeja 4, Dan Christian run out (Jadeja) 1, Kyle Jamieson run out (Imran Tahir) 16, Harshal Patel b Imran Tahir 0, Navdeep Saini c Raina b Imran Tahir 2, Yuzvendra Chahal (not out) 8, Mohammed Siraj (not out) 12. **Extras (lb 3, w 5) 8. Total (for nine wickets in 20 overs) 122.**
FoW: 1-44, 2-54, 3-65, 4-79, 5-81, 6-83, 7-89, 8-94, 9-103.

Bowling: Deepak Chahar 2-0-25-0, Sam Curran 4-0-35-1, Shardul Thakur 4-0-11-1, Ravindra Jadeja 4-1-13-3, Imran Tahir 4-0-16-2, Dwayne Bravo 2-0-19-0.

runs, against Kochi Tuskers Kerala in the 2011 edition, the bowler being Prasanth Parameswaran on that occasion.

The left-handed Jadeja made full use of the reprieve to ruin what was turning out to be an excellent outing for purple cap holder Harshal, Patel, with his brutal last over onslaught.

With CSK placed at 154/4 when Harshal was handed the ball, Jadeja hit the first four balls for towering sixes and followed them with another maximum and a boundary in the seven-ball final over.

Skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni remained not out on 2.

Jadeja's assault came after the RCB bowlers — Patel and Mohd Siraj (0/32) — had kept CSK in check.

Earlier, a second straight half-century for Faf du Plessis (50 off 41 balls) propelled CSK before Harshal delivered a double blow for RCB in the 14th over, getting rid of Suresh Raina (24) and the former South African captain off successive deliveries.

Raina belted three sixes during his 18-ball knock which gave CSK the move-on after the openers had set up a good platform with a 74-run partnership.

Ambati Rayudu, who came in at No.4, hit a huge six in his 14 and looked good for more before he holed out off Harshal's bowling a few deliveries after appearing to have hurt himself while stretching to get back to the crease. — PTI

RAVINDRA CAN TURN MATCH ON HIS OWN: DHONI

Mumbai, April 25: All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja's significant improvement in batting has convinced his Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni to give him "those extra deliveries" that can change the complexion of a game.

"Jaddu is somebody who can change the game on his own. In the last few years, we've seen significant change in batting and it's worth it to give him that extra bit of time, extra deliveries," Dhoni said.

"The bowlers have found it difficult to contain left-handers, and that helps as well," Dhoni said. — PTI

KOHLI HAPPY TO SEE JADDU FIRE AHEAD OF T20 CUP

Mumbai, April 25: Premier all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja's brilliance may have ruined the Virat Kohli-led Royal Challengers Bangalore's plans in the IPL here on Sunday but with one eye on this year's T20 World Cup, the India captain was not complaining. In fact, Kohli seemed delighted to see his India teammate make an excellent return after a long injury layoff.

"His (Jadeja) ability has been there for everyone to see. I am very happy to see him perform with the bat, ball and on the field," Kohli said at the post-match presentation ceremony. — PTI



KKR players leave for Ahmedabad where the next leg of IPL begins from Monday. — KKR

OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP PEOPLE HAPPY, SAYS MORRIS

Mumbai, April 25: Rajasthan Royals all-rounder Chris Morris says the COVID-19 catastrophe in India has been discussed in his team multiple times and the players can feel the pain that the pandemic is causing in its deadly second wave here.

India is reeling under the second wave of the pandemic with cases rising by over 3 lakh everyday, a crisis compounded by shortage of some crucial medicines and oxygen supplies. Morris said it is "difficult to comprehend" what is happening.

"As a team, we have been talking about it quite a lot over the last couple of days. We have seen how badly this pandemic has taken over the specific parts, if not all of India," Morris said at the post-match press conference after his side defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by six wickets here on Saturday.

"It is quite difficult to comprehend what is happening. It is a responsibility for us to play with smiles on our faces because we have a reason to smile and that we are healthy and get to play cricket."

"We hopefully get to keep people happy on the other side of the screen. Whether we winning or losing, it is an opportunity to keep people smiling, if that gives people a reason to smile, then we are doing well as a sport," he added. — PTI