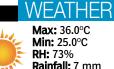
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THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | FRIDAY | 16 APRIL 2021



Forecast: Humid and Partly Cloudy. Max/Min temp. 36/25 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Chaviti till 6.04 pm **Star:** Rohini 11.38 pm Varjyam: 2.36 pm to 4.24 pm; 5.54 am to 7.42 am (Saturday) Durmuhurtam: 8.32 am to 9.22 am; 12.40 pm to 1.30 pm Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon **HIJRI CALENDAR**

Ramzan 3,1442 AH **PRAYERS** (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.25 am **Zohar:** 1.30 pm Asar: 5.00 pm Maghrib: 6.26 pm **Isha:** 8.30 pm **SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.46 AM** SUNSET TODAY 6.18 PM **MOONRISE** TODAY 8.30 AM **MOONSET** TOMORROW 10.46 PM





No need. I am going to a safe place... my leader's election rally!

SHORT JAKES

SC: Give deadlne

to appoint judges

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre to apprise it of a reasonable time frame within which it can respond to the recommendations made by its collegium for appointment of judges as the government said that it will adhere to the timeline fixed in the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP).

UP poll: Ballot boxes snatched

Agra (UP): Four people were injured and two ballot boxes were snatched in a clash between two groups during polling for the Uttar Pradesh panchayat election on Thursday. SP (East) Ashok Venkat said the incident was reported in Rihawali village of Agra Rural constituency. He said the clash broke out between supporters of candidates.

Olympics may be cancelled

Tokyo: Storm clouds were once again gathering over the Tokvo Olympics. Top politician Toshiro Nikai, the ruling party's number two, said the games must be cancelled "without hesitation" if the virus situation is too severe. Although officials dismissed Nikai's remarks, public opinion is turning against the event with towns cancelling torch events.

India, France ink

Gaganyaan pact

New Delhi: Space agencies of India and France on Thursday signed an agreement for cooperation for the country's first human space mission Gaganyaan, the French space agency CNES said. The agreement was announced during French foreign affairs minister Jean-Yves Le Drian visit.

WORLD 5



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SPORTS 8

Angry Kohli rapped for kicking chair **TABLOID**

Ranveer's proposed film lands in trouble

Vol. 25 No. 346 Established 1940 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Centre gets HC notice on sale of

Vizag Steel Plant DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Thursday served notices to the Central government to file its response within four weeks on its decision to privatise Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP).
A division bench com-

prising Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice Ganga Rao heard a petition filed by a retired IPS officer, V.V. Lakshmi Narayana, challenging the Union Cabinet's decision on divesting its stake in VSP. Petitioner's counsel Adi

Narayana Rao argued that the decision to privatise VSP was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs without taking into consideration various alternatives available to turn around VSP as suggested by both the state government and the petitioner and that no discussion was taken up on the criteria for selecting public sector entities

for privatisation.

Counsel informed the court that the plant was having the latest infra-structure and the right to life of thousands of farmers, who parted with their lands for setting up the plant, was infringed upon as most of them were not given permanent employment as assured by the company at the time of land acquisition.

He referred to the case of Narmada Bachao Andolan, where the Supreme Court reiterated the importance of fulfilling the promise which was made at the time of acquiring the land.

Advocate-General Sriram submitted that the state government has written a letter to the Centre suggesting several alternatives for the revival of the RINL and requested for a review of the Union Cabinet's decision to sell VSP. After hearing the counsels, the court posted the hearing



Dr M. Gurumurthy, YSRC candidate for the Lok Sabha bypoll in Tirupati, along with MLA Bhumana Karunakar campaigns in Tirupati on Thursday.

Campaign comes to end in Tirupati

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, APRIL, 15

After campaigning for the prestigious Tirupati (SC) Lok Sabha bypoll came to end on Thursday, all political parties have begun analysing reports from the ground level. The election is scheduled to be conducted on Saturday, April 17.

The ruling party's candidate Dr Maddila Gurumurthy is set against fourtime MP and former Union minister Panabaka Lakshmi from the Telugu Desam, former Karnataka chief secretary K. Ratna Prabha from the BJP-Janashakti combine, sixtime MP Chinta Mohan from the Congress and N. Yadagiri from the CPI(M). In the 2019 elections. Durga Prasad secured 7,22,877 votes and won against the TD's Lakshmi

votes. She secured 4.94.501 votes, followed by Chinta Mohan (Congress) and B. Srihari Rao (BJP) got 24,039 and 16,125 votes espectively.

Buoyed by the massive victory that the YSRC secured in the panchayat and civic body elections in the state, the ruling YSRC appears to be confident about its victory.

However, senior leaders including Y.V. Subba Reddy, Dy. CM Narayana Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy and others have camped in the constituency and monitored party campaigns. Accompanied by the YSRC's local legislators, Dr Gurumurthy covered their respective Assembly segments and organised many public

■ Page 2: Oppn parties put all efforts to win LS poll

Centre to boost oxygen supply

To import 50,000 MT medical oxygen and increase domestic production

VINEETA PANDEY | DC

India on Thursday crossed the two-lakh mark for new Covid-19 cases with over 1,038 deaths. The country now has over 15 lakh active cases. Of this, Mah-arashtra alone accounts for nearly 40 per cent of the total active caseload.

According to Union health ministry officials, Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh are among the where double mutant coronavirus strain – coded as B.1.617 — was found. Experts believe this double mutant variant could be the main reason for the rapid spread of Covid under the new wave.

"It is reasonable to say that the variant (double mutation) is of concern because it has been found in a significant number of people. And it is not just because it has been found in a certain number of people but we know that these particular mutations have (also) got physiological effects on our context, Principal scientific adviser to Prime Minister K. Vijay Raghavan told a media house in an inter-

With several states reporting a shortage of medical oxygen in view of rising Covid cases, an inter-ministerial empowered group of central government offi cers on Thursday initiated actions to address shortage and panic.

The government has decided to import 50,000 MT of medical oxygen to address the immediate shortage as the empow-ered group initiated mapping of 12 high burden states to oxygen sources.

Reliance Industries Ltd and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd have diverted oxygen from their refineries to the government hospitals, free of cost.

Maharashtra topped the list of states that consumed vast amounts of oxygen followed by Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, and Rajasthan. These states are also reporting the most number of daily cases.

According to officials, India's daily production capacity of medical oxygen (7,127 MT) and stock (50,000 MT) is "comfortably more" than the daily consumption (3,842 MT) at

According to officials at the Union health ministry, with increasing cases, medical oxygen consumption will need to keep pace with the requirements of

the states. For this, the current oxvgen stocks in the country, including the industrial oxygen stocks with the manufacturing plants, is more than 50,000 MTs.

Along with the ramped up production of the oxygen manufacturing units and the surplus stocks available, the present availability of oxygen is



NEET PG EXAMS POSTPONED DUE TO COVID SPIKE

New Delhi, April 15: In view of a spike in the number of Covid-19 cases, the National Eligibility-Cum-Entrance Test (postgraduate), which was scheduled to be held on April 18, has been postponed, Union health minister Harsh Vardhan Thursday.

The decision was taken keeping the well-being of the young medical stu-dents in mind, the health minister added.

"In light of the surge in #Covid19 cases. #Covid19 cases, Government of India has decided to postpone #NeetPG2021 exam which was earlier scheduled to be held on April 18. Next date to be decided later. Decision has been taken keeping wellbeing of our young medical students in mind," Vardhan said in a

Keep a tab on pvt hospital charges, CM tells officials

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday directed officials to provide beds to Covid-19 patients within three hours and make arrange ments to make Remdesivir injections and oxygen cylinders available to hospitals for treatment.

During a review meeting on Covid-19 and Coronavirus vaccination organised in view of a sudden spurt in cases in the state, he directed the officials to ensure that treatment was provided through 104 services and asked them to give wide publicity to it.

"The patients should be admitted to hospitals or advised for home isolation based on suggestions of doctors. the Chief Minister said.

He also praised the officials for administering

 Jagan Mohan Reddy told the officials to allot the 1902 toll-free number for grievances and that people should call 104 for any queries on Covid-19.

lakh doses Coronavirus vaccine in one day and said he would a letter to the Central government for more Covid vaccine more stocks. He added that ambu-

lance services should be provided and the treatment should be expedited with the help of ASHA workers. He said the health of the people in home isolation should be followed up. Jagan Mohan Reddy told

the officials to allot the 1902 toll-free number for grievances and that people should call 104 for any

He also directed the officials to fix prices for treat-

ment in private hospitals and ensure they don't overcharge and that there should not be any scarcity of beds for Covid patients. He said the charges for treatment should be displayed at all hospitals and the details on whom to complain, if the hospitals charge more, should be displayed in hospitals prominently

The Chief Minister also directed the officials to maintain a record on the availability of beds in Arogyasri-empanelled hospitals and private hospitals.

He also said that a special focus should be laid on hospital care, sanitation and quality food in hospitals and added that quality of medication and providing medicine at the time are also important.

CONG CANDIDATE DIES DUE TO COVID IN WEST BENGAL

Kolkata, April 15: Congress candidate Rezaul Haque, who tested positive for Covid-19 two days ago, died at a hospital here early on Thursday, health department sources said.

Haque, 46, the party's nominee from Samsherganj Assembly constituency in Murshidabad district, was initially admitted to a private hospital in Jangipur on Wednesday following bouts of breathing trouble, they said.

He was later referred to a medical facility in Kolkata after his condition deteriorated at night. Haque died around 5 am, the sources

Meanwhile, the EC countermanded polling for the Samsherganj seat and said the future course of action over voting would be decided soon. "The entire electoral exercise for the constituency will be con-ducted from scratch for this seat," EC said. -PTI

New Covid cases cross 5K in AP

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

Andhra Pradesh Thursday said that it has Coronavirus cases and 14 deaths in the last 24 hours.

"Out of 35,741 samples tested, 5,086 persons were found to be infected with the Coronavirus. Out of 1,55,70,201 samples tested so far, 9,42,135 persons were found infected with the virus. Of them, 9,03,072 people have recovered while 31,710 are still active with the virus," said state health officials.

Eleven districts registered more than 200 each on Thursday indicating the intensity of the spread of the virus while only two districts — Kadapa and West Godavari – registered two-digit numbers. Chittoor reported the highest at 835 followed by 626 in Kurnool, 611 in Guntur, 568 in Srikaku-lam, 450 in East Godavari, 432 in Visakhapatnam, 396 in Krishna, 334 in Anantapur, 248 in Vizianagaram, 236 in Prakasam, 223 in Nellore.

Chittoor district recorded the highest number of Eleven districts registered more than 200 each indicating the intensity of the spread while Kadapa and West Godavari registered two-digit numbers.

cumulative Coronavirus active cases at 5,732, followed by 3,573 in Guntur, 3,434 in Visakhapatnam, 3,307 in Krishna, 2,721 in Srikakulam, 2,550 in East Godavari, Kurnool, 2,086 in Nellore, 1,857 in Prakasam, 1,513 in 1,288 927 Anantapur, Kadapa,

Vizianagaram and 367 in West Godavari.

Chittoor topped the state by recording Covid-related deaths followed by two each in Anantapur, Kurnool and Visakhapatnam and one each in Guntur, Kadapa and Krishna.

The state health authoridischarged 1,745 Coronavirus-infected patients after recovery from several hospitals in the state. The state conducted Covid-19 tests on 2,91,577 samples per one million population and registered the positive rate at 6.05.

NATURE | AT RISK

by a margin of 2,28,376

New port work disrupts old habitat, forces birds to relocate

Migratory birds' habitat destroyed

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, APRIL 15

With the development activity increasing in the vicinity of Kakinada Deep Water Port, the habitat of migratory birds has come under threat. The migratory birds, as a result, their routes towards Uppada shore and

Yanam. mudflats Kakinada Deep Water Port were a rich habitat for the migratory birds. The mud-

the birds as it had Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary and some of the other creeks nearby. After travelling for mon-

ths, more than 110 varieties of different species come to the Kakinada coast Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary in the winter But Kumbhabhishekam habitat was disturbed after the expansion of the seventh berth and other develop-

flats were known as the $\,$ ment activities in the Central Asian FlyWay for $\,$ vicinity of mudflats.

Previously, these birds, especially Indian Skimmer and Great Knot, used to roam near the port, but the number of these birds has been gradually dwindling," said environmentalist K. Mruthyunjaya

He said the season for Indian Skimmer was almost over and a few birds were visible at present on the coast. "These birds will come to the coast from Chambal and Mahanadi from July," he

"In the summer, the river gets almost dried up and the sand bars, merged with each other, will lead to an increase of human ingress, dogs and other carnivores, trampling by cattle, threatening these species," he

He said that the governments should protect the important creek, which is an important habitat for migratory birds and sug-

gested the government should carry out further studies in the Godavari Estuary. According to sources, 250

Indian Skimmer, which is mostly found in the Chambal River in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and are in the red list of the International Union for Conservations of Nature, were found last year, but this year the number dwindled to 230. They breed in rivers during the summer from March to May.

Unseasonal rains hit horticulture hard

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

Unseasonal rains, accompanied by gales, damaged several horticulture crops in nearly 1,696 hectares with an estimated loss of ₹64.13 crore in parts of Andhra Pradesh.

Based on preliminary horticulture crops like banana, cashew nut, cocoa, papaya, oil palm, coconut and several varieties of vegetables suffered great damage or loss in parts of five districts

including Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Godavari, Guntur and Kadapa.

Horticulture authorities assessed the number of farmers affected in the rains and gales to be 7,331 and input subsidy worth ₹4.08 crore to be given to the eligible affected farmers whose crops suffered damages in more than 33 per cent area of their land-

■ Page 3: Gale broke electric poles into half in state

IN BRIEF HC TO HEAR MPTC, **ZPTC POLL PROCESS**

ON APRIL 19

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

The Andhra Pradesh High Court to hear a batch of peti-tions on MPTC/ZPTC election process on April 19

The High Court held hearing on a batch of petitions filed by the Telugu Desam and others challenging the election notification issued for conduct of MPTC/ZPTC polls on the norm of four weeks gap from the date of issue of notification to conduct of polls for implemen-tation of poll code, on Thur-sday. The HC posted the next hearing in the case to April 19 to hear the arguments from all the parties on the issue.

EX-MLA GETS BAIL IN POLICE OFFICER ABUSING CASE

DC CORRESPONDENT SRIKAKULAM, APRIL 15

Former Amadalavalasa MLA and TD leader Kuna Ravi Kumar surrendered to the police and later obtained bail from Rajam court Srikakulam on Thursday.

The police filed a case against Ravi Kumar for allegedly abusing a DSP-rank police officer in Ponduru during Parishad elections. Two days ago, a posse of police per-sonnel raided his house in Srikakulam town and conducted searches. Since then he has been absconding.

VOLUNTEERS TOLD TO RENDER THEIR **SERVICES TO NEEDY**

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

The Village /Ward volunteers were told to render their services to the needy sections of

Minister for endowment Vellampalli Srinivas Rao along with YSRC East incharge Devineni Avinash, Vijayawada mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi and VMC Commissioner Prasanna Venkatesh presented Seva Mitra, Seva Ratna and Seva

Vaira awards. Srinivas Rao said that AP is the first state to introduce a volunteer system. Amazed at the services being rendered by volunteers, other states are toeing the line, he said. He stated that there is no corrup-

tion in the volunteers system. Avinash objected to the comments made by Naidu while terming volunteers as gunny-bag coolies.

He assured volunteers about resolving their issues by taking them to the notice of the

CID ISSUES NOTICE TO UMA FOR DISTORTING JAGAN'S WORDS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

The CID has issued notices to former minister and Telugu leader Devineni Umamaheshwara Rao, seeking his presence before it for a hearing at its Kurnool office following a complaint that he distorted chief minister Jagan

Mohan Reddy's words. The notice was attached to the wall of his residence in Gollapudi Thursday morning. In the complaint, Rao is accused of distorting the words of the CM and showing morphed videos through a Tablet/I-phone on April 7 during the Tirupati byelection campaign.

Rao alleged the summons were politically motivated and sought 10 days' time to appear before the CID.

Advocate N. Narayana Reddy, president of the YSRC legal cell's core committee for Kurnool district lodged the complaint with the CID. Following this, a case was registered under sections 464, 465, 468, 469,470, 471, 505 and 120 (b) of IPC.

The CID notice asked Rao to attend the inquiry along with the electronic gadget and videos in the CID office at 10.30am on April 15.

Rao said he was not worried over fake cases being foisted on him and claimed that he showed the words of CM Jagan from the original videos. He said that he had criticised the "hypothecation" of Krishna river waters by the YSRC government under which AP would lose its rights

on the river water. "At present, I am busy in the election campaign and by-election work in Nellore district. Hence I am unable to attend the inquiry. I would require 10 days' time to attend the hearing," he wrote back to the CID.

TD's defeat is imminent in **Tirupati bypoll: Peddireddy**

Stone-throwing incident was stage-managed by Naidu, says minister

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, APRIL 15

Claiming that the Telugu Desam's defeat is immi-nent in the forthcoming Tirupati (SC) Lok Sabhaster Peddireddi Ramachandra Redd--alleged the byelection, panchayat raj alleged that the stone-throwing incident was stage-managed by TD chief Chandrababu Naidu to gain sympathy among

Addressing the media here on Thursday, Peddireddy reiterated his challenge to Naidu that YSRC MPs would resign in case the party loses in Tirupati bypoll and that the TD MPs should quit otherwise.

"The Opposition leader and his son Nara Lokesh don't have guts to take up my challenge. But Lokesh posed a drama, challenging the CM to swear at Alipiri on the allegations regarding

Vivekananda Reddy murder case. As both the father and son duo have no courage to seek votes in the byelection, they are trying to divert people's attention with these cheap tactics", the minister said.
Accusing the TD chief of

trying to gain sympathy among the public by staging a stone-throwing drama, Peddireddy said there was no evidence of stone throwing found in the footage, retrieved from the CC cameras in the vicinity where Naidu addressed the public meet-ing. He added that a TD activist Akula Venkatesh said it was not a stone, but the shirt he threw on

"Naidu should give an explanation on the video that went viral on social media, in which TD state president K. Atchannaidu spoke against the party and Nara Lokesh, while saying that there is no confidence in the leadership of Naidu and Lokesh among the TD leaders," he

asked.
Peddireddi said the BJP-Jana Sena combine has been trying to secure more votes than NOTA in the byelection.

Claiming that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has imple-Jagan mented more welfare schemes and development works in the last 22 months and gave good governance when compared to 14 years governance of Naidu, the minister said that the YSRC chief is working with welfare and development as his agenda in the state. He urged the people of Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency to vote for Dr M. Gurumurthy and make him win with a huge majority.



Panchayat Raj minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy addresses the media during a press conference in Tirupati on Thursday.

Oppn spreading false SURESH HITS OUT propaganda: Sajjala

DC CORRESPONDENT

Asserting that the 22month governance of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will ensure YSRC win in the Tirupati byelection, government adviser (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said that opposition parties are confined to false propaganda rather than publicising achievements during their regime.

Speaking to the media here on Thursday, Ramakrishna Reddy said that running out of issues for campaign, opposition parties have been targetting the Chief Minister personally and spreading communal hatred.

He slammed TD, BJP and Pawan Kalyan for not fulfilling promises made during the 2014 elections, ers.

including special category status. He said BJP and TD should tell what they have done for the state or explain the reasons why they did not fulfill the promises made.

The YSRC leader

slammed TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh for not demanding an explanation from Atchannaidu or issuing him a show-cause notice and letting him accompany them despite his anti-party comments.

He said Jagan Mohan Reddy has written a letter to the electorate of Tirupati parliamentary constituency explaining the welfare schemes and development works and sought votes for YSRC but did not criticise opposition parties. He said YSRC has never influenced vot-

Chinta calls Naidu, Jagan corrupt leaders

DC CORRESPONDENT

Calling former chief minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and present Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as corrupt leaders, Congress Working Committee (CWC) special invitee and party candidate for Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection Chinta Mohan questioned how they both could earn thousands of crores within a short span of time after they came into power.

Speaking to the media here on Thursday, he claimed that his party had spent only ₹3 lakh for cam-

paigning in the Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection while Telugu Desam and YSRC are spending ₹20 and ₹30 crores respective-

He took a jibe at both Naidu and Jagan, stating that they both have backstabbed the Congress

"When the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made Naidu the minister, he backstabbed her as well as his father-in-law and TD founder-president N.T. Rama Rao. Now, Jagan has already committed 99 mistakes and he is on the edge of his 100th mistake by distributing money to the

AT TD SUPREMO **FOR CRITICISING WELFARE SCHEMES**

DC CORRESPONDENT

Education minister Adimulapu Suresh took potshots at TD, BJP and Congress while highlighting their shortcomings during the election campaign for Tirupati Lok Sabha seat which came to an end on Thursday evening.

Speaking to the media here on Thursday, the minister said the TD has done nothing for Tirupati parliament segment to claim credit and the situation is no different with respect to the Congress and the BJP.

Stressing that the former chief minister targeted other parties to cover his lapses, he took a dig at him for maintaining silence on leaked video footage of TD state president K. Atchannaidu.

Taking serious view of Chandrababu Naidu's suggestion to the voters to enjoy liquor and vote for the TD, he warned the Telugu Desam bigwigs not to forget that people are watching dramas of Naidu and Lokesh.

The education minister slammed them for criticising the Hagship gramme of the ruling party, Amma Vodi, even though they failed to financial assisextend tance to the mothers.

Suresh alleged that the TD chief's remarks such as Amma Vodi and Nanna Buddi are in bad taste while reminding that the programme supports the poor mothers to continue the education of their

Oppn parties put all efforts to win bypoll date and YSRC chief

FROM PAGE 1

Among the opposition parties, the Telugu Desam had put in all efforts to win the seat amid its waning reputation in the just concluded local body elections. Former chief minister Chandrababu Naidu. his son Nara Lokesh and other senior TD leaders have completed many rounds of campaigns, covering all the assembly segments. The TD chief organised at least one pub-

lic meeting in each of the seven Assembly segments. The father-and-son duo also launched a scathing attack on the YSRC, digging out the Viveka murder case, pointing out the rising prices of essential commodities. TD nominee Lakshmi took various local issues to target the state government during her campaign, while the Congress candidate Chinta Mohan was also at par in the campaign with other contestants.

On the other hand, BJP focused on the Hindutva agenda by targeting the YSRC candidate. Lacked with the secondary cadre, the BJP was said to be lagged behind in terms of electioneering when compared to other parties — except a few impressive public meetings took part by JS chief Pawan Kalyan and some senior central leaders of However, they managed

to target their rival candi-

based on their religious affiliation. The YSRC's Gurumurthy filed his nomination as a person belonging to a Scheduled Caste Hindu. However, the BJP leaders

accused him of giving incorrect information about his religion in his nomination papers and accused him of converting Christianity and anded election demanded authorities to disqualify

his candidature.

in any constituency to leave the place immediately while pointing to screening by police from 7 pm on Thursday as the campaign came to an end.

TD complains to EC, alleges police bias DC CORRESPONDENT

The Telugu Desam has lodged a complaint with the Election Commission against some police officials, alleging that they wer showing bias towards the ruling YSR Congress in the Tirupati byelection and sought action against them.

17.11 LAKH VOTERS

TO CAST VOTE IN

TIRUPATI BYPOLL

DC CORRESPONDENT

VIJAYAWADA/NELLORE,

Nearly 17.11 lakh voters are expected to cast their vote in the Tirupati bypoll scheduled to be held on

AP Chief Electoral Officer K. Vijayanand told

mediapersons here on Thursday that 17,11,195 voters, including 8,38,540

women, were expected to

exercise their franchise at

2,470 polling stations set

up for the bypoll.
Explaining about the arrangements for conduct

of bypoll, the CEO stated

that in the wake of preva-

lence of Covid-19 pandem-

ic, a polling station was set up for every 1,000 vot-ers and added that for the

first time, voters aged

above 80 years to get the

Meanwhile, in Nellore, officials under the directions of district collector

and Tirupati LS Constitu-

ency Returning Officer K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu

are gearing up for the Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll.

The parliament segment

consists of Sarvepalli,

Gudur, Venkatagiri, and

Sullurpeta assembly seg-ments in Nellore and

Satyavedu, Srikalahasti.

and Tirupati constituen-

In view of summer and

Corona protocol, Election

Commission extended the

polling hours up to 7 pm from 7 am for the benefit

of voters. The presiding

officers would conduct mock polling at 6 am to

check the EVMs before going ahead with actual

Medical teams are also

being deputed for all the

polling stations for medical assistance to voters. For the first time, web-

casting is being arranged

in 50 per cent of the total

2,470 polling stations to

keep a close watch on the

polling booths. Similarly, videographers have been

hired to cover the polling

in all the polling loca

Returning Officer Chak-

radhar Babu said there

are going to use to Ballot

units since there are 28

candidates in the fray and

According to the RO,

10,850 polling personnel are being deputed for elec-

tion duties and all of them

have been vaccinated con-

sidering the risk of infec-

With regard to security

arrangements, 23 compa

nies of central troops, 3

companies of special forces besides the civil

police personnel are being

deployed for monitoring

the law-and-order situa-

tion at the polling sta-

tions. Special forces are

being sent to 877 locations

identified as critical

polling stations.
The Returning Officer

advised the outsiders involved in the campaign

TIRUPATI | BYPOLL Sanctity of temple town has been destroyed, alleges TD chief

in addition to NOTA.

polling.

cies in Chittoor district.

facility of postal ballot.

ON APRIL 17

The TD team, led by its MLC Paruchuri Ashok Babu, submitted the complaint to the chief electoral officer on Thursday evening.

The complaint said, "As the polling day for Tirupati parliamentary constituency byelection approaches, the ruling YSRC has intensified the implementation of its sin-

ister designs."

It said that as part of threatening the Opposition Telugu Desam, the YSRC has clandestinely entered into an agreement with a section of the police force. As per this, the police are threatening polling agents of TD. "For instance, sub-inspector Sekhar Babu of Ojili mandal and circle inspector Narasimha Yadav of Vakadu have been summoning TD village-level leaders outside the village and demanding of them to avoid appointing

will be in power for another three years and anything could happen to

them. "Similarly, Siva Kumar Reddy, Inspector of Police, Yerpedu, has been working in favour of the YSRC and is threatening the TD leaders with dire consequences if they con-

tinued with the party. They claimed that in the recently concluded local body elections, the same Inspector had filed numerous false cases against TD leaders and activists.

In this context, the TD urged the chief electoral officer to deploy additional security forces in all booths in Yerpedu mandal as "a section of the police force is working in connivance with the YSRC.

The TD leaders alleged that the YSRC government has been misusing village/ward volunteers by deploying them for the ruling party's election campaign. "Village/ward volunteers are actively campaigning in favour of YSRC and are threatening voters that the people would lose their state government benefits if they do not vote for the YSRC.

The YSRC leaders have grabbed postal ballots from government staff aftheir booth agents." ter obtaining their signat-Further, the police offi-ure," the TD leaders said.

PUBLIC TOLD TO CONTACT ELECTION OBSERVERS TO LODGE COMPLAINTS

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, APRIL 15

Nodal Officer to Election Observers for the bypoll to Tirupati Parliament Constituency has appealed to the public to bring any complaints regarding the byelection to their notice. According to the Nodal Officer, Dinesh Kumar, IAS, General Observer, has been staying in Room No. 417 at Haritha Hotel in Nellore. His phone number

is 9701487685 and mail

dineshpatel.election@gma

Expenditure Observer Anand Kumar, IRAS, has been staying at Room No. 523 in Minerva Grand Hotel at Nellore. He can be contacted on mobile number 7780697430 and email: anand16may@yahoo.com. Similarly, Police Obser-

ver Rajeev Kumar, IPS, has been staying in Room No. 401 at Haritha Hotel in Nellore. His mobile number is 9908468319 and his email is: adgphome-guard@gmail.com.

BJP asks ECI to ensure fair polls

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

complained to India seeking its intervention to prevent misuse machinery for conduct of free and fair manner.

mu Veerraju wrote a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner on Thursday alleging that the ruling YSRC government was abusing the government machinery to obtain political illegitimate gains in the bypoll scheduled to be held on April 17. He alleged that the ruling party was misusing the village/ward volunteers though appointed by the state government in every gram panchayat and urban ward, in the guise of delivering government services to the local residents at their doorstep. The BJP senior leader

by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to the voters seeking their votes for the YSRU's nom

Pradesh BJF Andnra

Election Commission of of the state government bypoll to Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency in a BJP state president So-

said that the volunteers were taking part in doorto-door campaign by distributing a letter written People's Act, 1951.

inee in the bypoll.

He requested the ECI to order removal of volunteers from their villages/wards till the completion of election process, to deploy central paramilitary forces, to video record the polling at the polling stations and to disqualify YSRC nominee Dr M. Gurumoorthy on the grounds that he professes a religion other than Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist in violation of the Constitution (SC) Order, 1950.

another letter addressed to the CEC, the AP BJP president sought disqualification of the YSRC nominee Dr M. Gurumoorthy, alleging that he was canvassing in the bypoll by appealing to the voters on religious sentiments and said that an election pamphlet was brought by him displaying the image of Lord Venkateswara prominently on it, in violation of certain provisions in the Representation

I WILL NOT BE SILENT IF YSRC HARASSES TD WORKERS, WARNS NARA LOKESH

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, APRIL 15

Telugu Desam generalsecretary Nara Lokesh said on Thursday that he would not keep silent if the YSRC men harassed Telugu Desam leaders and activists. "I would take vengeance on the YSRC after the TD comes

to power," he said. Lokesh was in Anaparti to meet former MLA N. Ramakrishna Reddy who was released from jail on bail a few days ago.

Later, Lokesh told the media at Ramavaram village that he was not bothered whether or not the government "arrested or harassed me". But if the government wants to harass TD workers and lead-

ers, "I will not remain silent and would hound such persons out when we return to power," he said. Lokesh lashed out at Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and Anaparti MLA Sathi Suryanarayana Reddy. He said after YSRC came to power, 25 TD leaders and workers were murdered and 97 cases booked against TD men so far. He said that it was due to the harassment from the police that TD worker Papana Ananda Rao committed suicide. Lokesh said that when

TD workers were arrest-

ed, Jagan expressed his joy. "I asked Jagan to pay

attention to development

instead of harassment of

TD leaders," Lokesh said.

TIRUPATI, APRIL 15 Launching a scathing attack on the ruling YSRC over various issues, including the spate of attacks on the Hindu temples across the state, rising prices of essentials and alleged illegal mining of sand, Telugu Desam chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu called upon the people of Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency to take advantage of the byelection and vote for his party to safe-

guard the future of AP.

Addressing the media at

a press conference here on

Thursday, the former chief

minister said that the

Parliament

Naidu calls upon voters to safeguard AP future DC CORRESPONDENT bvelection is not just limited to temple city, but peo-ple should use it as a . 'Vajrayudham' — a diamond weapon — to teach a befitting lesson to the rul-

ing party.
"We all should recall what the YSRC leaders have done to the state during their two-year rule. Now, the onus is on the Tirupati electorate to protect the state, as the victory of TD in this byelection will not only change the political face of the state but also solve many issues", he added.

Claiming that he had seen hundreds of JCBs and tippers plundering sand in the river-belt between Uthukkotai,



N. Chandrababu Naidu

Surukupalli and Nandam. while he was coming from Satyavedu, Naidu alleged that the YSRC mafia has been digging sand up to 60, 70 feet, despite the Green Tribunal put a stay on sand digging.
"During the two years

rule of YSRC, the prices of essentials have been increased to many folds,

we have witnessed attacks on people, exploitation of natural resources, corruption and human rights violations in the state. AP is being robbed in all possible ways and now we are the number one state in debt and price rise", he noted.

He asked, "What is Jagan Reddy doing when all these unfortunate developments were taking place in the state? Is he sleeping or installed any DND board (Don't disturb me) at his office or imposed Section

144 at his home? He alleged that there was no fee reimbursement scheme in the state as the arrears have crossed ₹1,000 crore. "Jagan had

closed down the scheme and now he was also not able to feed residential schoolchildren. Salaries are not being paid to the government employees. Since he destroyed the economy by taking debts, the financial system of the state has reached the point of collapse", he said.

Stating that the sanctity of Tirupati has been completely destroyed, Naidu alleged that the ruling party leaders have turned the temple city into a red sander smuggling den. He also alleged that the lands of common people and government are being occupied illegally by the private persons backed by the ruling party.







Tirupati



NGT EXPERT PANEL IMPOSES ₹17.08 CR FINE ON ONGC

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

National Green Tribunal constituted expert committee recommended for imposition of fine on ONGC to the tune of Rs 17.08 crore for a series of violations in exploration of oil and gas in Krishna-Godavari basin located in both the East and West Godavari districts in

In the matter of Venkatapathi Raja versus Union of India rep-resented by the secretary, Union ministry of environment and forests, New Delhi, the NGT constituted an expert committee to take up a joint inspection on violations. The expert committee comprising Amalapuram Sub Collector Himanshu Kaushik; Narasapuram Sub Collector K.S. Viswanathan; Scientist-C Dr C. Pal Pandu from Union ministry of environment and forests prof. M. Deepa, department of chemical engineering, Andhra University; P. Ravindranath, senior environmental, engineer, APPCB, Visakhapatnam and Scientist-D Mahima T, Central Pollution Control Board, Chennai.

The petitioner filed an application at NGT, Southern Bench, Chennai alleging that air, sound, soil and water pollution were being caused on account of activities being carried out by M/s GAIL India Limited and M/z ONGC in KG Basin in Godavari districts in AP.

The committee observed noncompliance to the several norms on various issues recommended to the NGT to impose fine to pay towards environmental compensation to the Central Pollution Control Board. Accordingly, Tatipaka Group Gathering Station to pay Rs 7.28 crore, Kesanapalli GGS to pay Rs 4.11 crore and Odalarevu GGS to pay ₹5.68 crore.

CPCB SCIENTIST VISTS TYCHE INDUSTRIES

DC CORRESPONDENT (AKINADA, APRIL 15

The team headed by Central Pollution Control Board Scientist T. Mahima visited Tyche Industries on Thursday at Sarpavaram, in the aftermath of two persons died and four were injured when a reactor blasted in the company last month.

The National Green Tribunal has appointed a team, headed by Integrated Regional Officer of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Dr P. Suresh

Central Pollution Control Board Scientist Mahima, Chief Factories of Inspector R.Trinadha Rao, Kakinada RDO A.G.Chinni Krishna, AP Pollution Control Board East Godavari Environmental Engineer A.Ramarao Naidu and others inspected the factory and inquiry on environ-mental issues. They visited the blasting place and observed the surroundings. They interacted with the victims and inquired about the incident. Mahima said that a report would be submitted to the NGT on April 30.

ADIKAVI NANNAYYA VARSITY TO START ONLINE CLASSES

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, APRIL 15

In view of the increasing Covid-19 cases, the Adikavi Nannayya University will start online classes to the students. The Vice Chancellor of the University Registrar Professor T. Ashok said that the online classes will start from April 16. He said that University students are asked to vacate the hostels and go back home and attend online classes. He said that after decreasing Covid-19, the students will be allowed to colleges and university for their education and until then they should attend online classes.

CID INSPECTS GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, APRIL 15:

The CID team led by its DSP A.B.G. Tilak conducted inspections in government hospitals at Rajamahendravaram and Kakinada on Thursday in the aftermath of irregularities in drug stores in the state. The officials enquired about the details of previous drug transactions and stocks and verified the records.

Staff shortage hits KGGH as Covid caseload surges

Kurnool district reported 626 positive cases and two deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT **KURNOOL APRIL 15**

Kurnool General Hospital is under stress as corona positive cases are on the rise. On Thursday, the district reported 626 positive cases and two deaths. The KGGH has 363 Covid-19 patients under treatment as 60 of them are in serious condition. The hospital requires at least 100 male and female ward boys immediately, the incharge superintendent. Dr Bhagawan raises a red flag. He said there is no Covid-19 control room to monitor the surge in cases, he said.

KGGH Superintendent Narendranath Reddy who tested positive a few days back has not delegated duties to his deputies. The hospital administration is struggling to handle the surge of cases as already 303 positive cases and 60 critical cases under oxygen supply are being treated here. Kurnool general hospital superintendent in-charge Dr Bhagavan said already 500 beds are kept ready and 150 more beds would be added as it is feared that the explosion of cases would choke the

patient's services. There is a severe shortage of male and female words boys. Dr Bhagawan however said permission to recruit ward boys has been sent to the district collector and awaiting the instructions. Lack of Covid-19 control rooms in the district is having an impact in handling the rising number of Covid admissions in the hospital. The hospital staff is under constant threat of being turned positive for Gynecology head and an assistant proffer and a few house surgeons were also quarantined, he said. On the other hand, 626 cases in a day is the highest number reported in the district during the second wave.



People come out of the Government ENT Hospital while the Covid-19 tests are not done due to the unavailability of Reagent kits for RT-PCR Covid test in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

AP REVIVES COVID COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTRE

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

In the wake of rise in Coronavirus cases, the state government revived the State Covid Command and Control Centre with immediate

The state government issued an order on Thursday reviving the Covid Command and Centre appointment of special officers for Covid-19 management and also for vaccination in the state.

Principal secretary, transport, roads and buildings M.T. Krishna Babu to look after quality monitoring of food and sanitation in Covid hospitals and Covid Care Centres.

Principal secretary, Covid management and vaccination, M. Ravi Chandra to take care of primary contact tracing and testing and testing on demand facility.

Commercial tax commissioner Peeyush Kumar to monitor the help desk and CCTV.

COVID PATIENT DIES BY SUICIDE

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM,

A 55 year old Covid patient, currently undergoing treatment at the CSR Block (Covid ward) at King George Hospital died by suicide by jumping from the fourth floor

Visakhapatnam Thursday. KGH superintendent Dr P Mythili said the woman was admitted along with three others recently. The other three were discharged on Thursday and making arrangements to leave for home. She was alone in the ICU ward and jumped the building in from the building.

Avenging daughter's rape, man hacks six of a family in Vizag

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM,

Avenging daughter's rape and subsequent blackmail, a middle-aged man hacked to death six members of a family including two infants in Juttada village under Pendurthy mandal

Visakhapatnam in the early hours of Thursday. The accused was identified as Battina Appala Raju, the victims' neighbour. Appalaraju wanted to kill B. Vijay Kiran, who raped his daughter, and his family members but ended up killing all

his family members. The deceased were identified as Vijay Kiran's father Bamidi Ramana

DC CORRESPONDENT

Four members of a fami-

ly were found dead under

suspicious circumstances

in a flat in Aditya Fortune

Towers at Mithilapuri Colony, Madhurawada

Colony, Madhurawaua under PM Palem police limits in

Visakhapatnam city.

limits

The deceased were iden-

tified as Sunkari Bangaru Naidu (49), Dr Sunkari Nirmala (44), Sunkari Deepak (21) and

The police said neigh-

bours heard shouting at 2

am and two hours later

they found smoke ema-

nating from the flat. Fire

tenders rushed to the spot

and broke open the front

Sunkari Kashyap (19).

VISAKHAPATNAM,

station

(57), Kiran's wife Bamidi Usha Rani (30), Kiran's son B. Uday (2), Kiran's daughter B. Urvasi (six months), Allu Ramadevi (53), mother of Usha Rani and Nakettlu Aruna, relative of Usha Rani. The victims were found in a pool of blood.

pool of blood.

The police said Vijay
Kiran allegedly raped
Appala Raju's daughter
(20-year-old victim) in
2018. A case has been registered against Vijay Kiran and the case is under trial. The rape victim reported that the accused Vijay Kiran, a married person, moved very closely with Appalaraju family and called the victim to his house and offered sedative laced soft drinks to her. He

DC CORRESPONDENT

Deepak, who was suspect-

ed to have killed his parents and younger brother

in the apartment on Wednesday night, was a

brilliant student and

determined to get into civil services. He also

participated in meelo evaru kotiswarudu host-

ed by actor Chirajeevi

and came close to win-

ning the first prize, his

After passing out from

NIT, Warangal, he moved

to New Delhi to get coach-

found in the bathroom

and he was wearing a suit

A senior officer said as

and tie.

uncle Ramu Naidu said.

VISAKHAPATNAM,

later allegedly raped her several times. Kiran's wife Bamidi

Usha Rani blackmailed the rape victim by showing her semi-nude photos and demanded money from her. Maniyala Vinay, Bammidi Sai, Pilleni Durga Prasad and Challa Nagaraju also co-operated the rape accused and blackmailed her for money.

Later the complainant's brother Bathina Vijay Prasad noticed Whats-App messages in his sister's phone, immediately challenged the Vijay Kiran family. But they threatened to kill him. The police filed a charge sheet against the accused Vijay Kiran and the case is pending in the court.

Four of a family found dead in Vizag

Top student suspected as accused

ing to appear for UPSC

examinations. He along

with his parents and

brother visited his vil-

Vizianagaram district on

March 21 to participate in

the Yellamma Goddess

festival. The entire fami-

ly also celebrated Sankranti festival in the

village. Ramu said his brother

worked hard to get into

the present position.

After completing his polytechnic from

polytechnic from Kakinada, he graduated

in engineering and later

did his MBA in which he

obtained a PhD. After

which went out of hands.

The elder son might have

stabbed his parents and

younger brother as stab

Gantvada in

police station, Ashok Kumar said that Vijay Kiran and his family have been staying in Vijayawada and came to attend a marriage.

Knowing that Vijay Kiran's family had come to Juttada, Appala Raju (49) who has been waiting to take revenge on Vijay Kiran and his family, hacked six persons to death in the early hours of Thursday when they were asleep.

Vijay Kiran and his elder son were at Sivajipalem in Vizag city. The police shifted the bodies to a mortuary for post-mortem. The locals staged a dharna and demanded to hang the accused in public.

working as a chemical

engineer for some years

in Bahrain, Bangaru

opened his own business

and expanded during sub-

sequent years.
"He wanted to open his

business branch in

began constructing his

own house, close to the present Aditya Fortune Towers where the family

perished," Ramu told few

The villagers who were

shocked to learn the inci-

dent said Bangaru opened an ashram on the

outskirts of his village to

Later he might have

tried to escape by raising

house destitute persons.

reporters in Gantyada.

Visakhapatnam

LANDLORD ATTACKS BANK **STAFF IN SRIKALAHASTI**

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, APRIL 15

PEOPLE FACE

DIFFICULTY TO

GET COVID TEST

DC CORRESPONDENT

People are finding it difficult to get Covid test in

since the last three days.

The corporate hospitals hung said no test till

April 18" while limited

testing is being conduct-

ed in government hospi-tals. King George Hospital, where the only lab in the district is locat-

ed, refused testing on

Wednesday but resumed

The other major hospitals VIMS and Government Hospital for

Chest diseases are not

conducting tests. The

government ENT hospi-

tal, which takes maxi-mum load after KGH,

stopped testing since

noon on Thursday.

Shortage of testing kits

was said to be main rea-

according

District collector V.

Vinay Chand said there

was no shortage of kits

and testing was being

conducted at the desig-

nated places as usual. The collector said he was

not aware of the position

District Medical and

Health Officer Dr P.

Survanarayana said the

hospitals were testing

only those having seri-

ous symptoms of Covid-

19 and refusing those

coming to hospitals out of fear due to the sudden

He said the KGH lab

working round the clock

is overloaded and hence

the casual testing has been reduced. "Earlier

we were testing 7,000 to

8,000 people on an aver-

age but now the number

has been reduced to 3,000

and odd," the DMHO told this newspaper.

spike in the cases.

in corporate hospitals.

on Thursday.

son.

sources.

VISAKHAPATNAM,

Visakhapatnam

In a bizarre incident, a landlord who leased out his premises to Andhra Bank and Union bank of India - located adjacent to each other near Sri-kalahasti's I town police station, has allegedly attacked the bank manager and security staff, who were on duty, on Thursday.
According to the police,

following the amalgamation of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank into the Union bank of India last year, the management has decided to vacate one among the two branches (Andhra Bank and Union Bank) located side by side in the Srikalahasti town. The bank officials have decided to continue the existing Andhra Bank premises and surrender back the Union bank of India premises to the common landlord M. Prasad and communicated the same to the latter in March this year. However, he asked the bank officials to continue their operations from the Union bank of India premises and vacate the Andhra Bank

BODY STUFFED IN LUGGAGE BAG FOUND IN KUPPAM

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, APRIL 15

A chopped body of a man with its head cut off and stuffed into a luggage bag was found dumped on the side of Kuppam-Krishnagiri highway close to Nadu-muru Gurukul high school near Kuppam town in Chittoor district on Thursday morning.

According to the police, passers-by noticed a luggage bag covered with a plastic cover lying in a suspicious state near the bridge close to the Gurukul school. On an information about the suspicious bag, a police team reached the spot and retrieved the bag only to found the lower part of the body of a man. "Upon opening the bag,

lower part of a man in his late 20s or early 30s was found inside. We did a thorough search in the vicinity but not found the remaining body parts including the head. We found no clues at the spot and working out on it. We have informed our counterparts in nearby Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as Operation procedure", Kuppam CI Sridhar said.

The Police shifted the half-chopped dead body to government hospital for an autopsy. They also informed the same to their Tamil Nadu and Karnataka State counterparts at Krishnagiri, Tirupattur and KGF Police Stations. The Kuppam Police have registered a case on this and further investigation is being done.

the crime spot and made

minute observations.
The police said the

apartment was gated and

fully secure with CCTV

cameras placed at every

strategic point. There

were also security per-

sonnel round the clock. The CCTV footage

entered the apartment

during the entire night of

Wednesday. The last per-

son to enter the flat was Bangaru Naidu at 8.56

pm. A case under Section

302, 201 of IPC was regis

tered at PM Palem police

station on Thursday and

the bodies were sent to King George Hospital for

Family sources said the

family hailed from Gantyada in Vizianag-aram district and settled

in Bahrain for the past 10

year. Bangaru Naidu was

revealed

autopsy.

footage

that none

Gale broke electric poles into half in state

FROM PAGE 1

The authorities claim that the gale was so powerful that they broke electric poles in the middle, and uprooted the stems of banana crops in parts of Chagallu, Denduluru, T. Narasapuram and Dwaraka Tirumala mandals in West Godavari. The banana plantations in parts of Kadapa, Guntur and Vizianagaram also bore the brunt.

The horticulture authorities claim that the chilli farmers saved the harvested crop which was kept on platforms for drying by covering them with tarpaulin clothes in anticipation of the rainfall. Horticulture commissioner S.S. Sreedhar directed the officials in the affected districts to estimate the extent of crop damage due to the rains and gales and submit a final report

Horticulture additional director K. Balaji Naik said, "We have received preliminary crop damage reports from five districts in the state due to rains with gales and we are taking necessary measures to provide input subsidy to the eligible affected farmers to help them resume cultivation.

DOCTOR GETS DISTINGUISHED FARMER AWARD

doctor who also follows innovative methods in natural farming in his agricultural fields have been bestowed with the Visishtha Rythu (distinguished farmer) award from NG Ranga Agriculture University. Dr Yeraguti Sambasiva Reddy is a famous doctor in Guntur city. He raisescrops in his 15-acre farmland in his native village Kunkalagunta in Nekarikallu mandal of Guntur district. The NGRAU presented the award for his highly commendable efforts in natural farming. University officials said Dr Reddy was taking a lot of interest in agricultural activities and invented a new equipment, at a cost of just ₹500, by way of making a few changes to the Inapa Gorru (drill plough) that would ease the works of agriculture

The government selected Dr Sambasiva Reddy for the Ugadi. Due to Corona-related problems, it was presented only on Thursday. University faculty and staff felicitated Dr. Šambasiva Reddy and presented him with the Visishtha Rythu

award. Dr. Reddy said he was hav-ing a keen interest in agriculture young age and hence started cultivation of various crops through zerobased natural farming process. He tried various methods and found natural farming useful to get good quality and quantity yields with less expenditure.

The doctor noted that labourers, during farm work, faced a lot of difficulties in ploughing the land. Hence, he made changes to Inapa Gorru (drill plough) which eased their work in farms. He said he would continue cultivation activities and work towards making natural farming profitable to farmers.

Passengers narrowly escaped from danger

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, APRIL 15:

A private bus, going from Vijayawada Visakhapatnam, narrowly escaped from danger the as the bus met with an accident at National Highway near Diwanchervu village under Bommuru police station limits in East Godavari District. According to the Bommuru police, a lorry

going in front of the bus hit a container lorry and the bus driver was trying to overtake the lorry. In that attempt, the driver hit a divider and the bus was overturned. Bommuru Sub-Inspector K. Jagan Mohan said that the passengers came out without any injuries but the lorry driver was injured. A case was registered against both the lorry and bus drivers.

OFFICIALS IN TIGHT SPOT FOLLOWING SUDDEN SPURT IN COVID CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT

NELLORE, APRIL 15:

Sudden spurt in the Covid positive cases during last two weeks have been causing jitters not only to the medical and health officials but also to the district officials monitoring the situa-

There is no hyperbole in stating that Nellore officials have to recall the medical and paramedical staff, they hired temporarily when Covid was at its peak in Nellore district last year.

Chittoor authorities already gave a call to all the medical personnel who worked on temporary basis last year to return to work after cases started increasing at alarming rate.
Sources in medical and

health department said there is an urgent need to increase the number of Covid tests to avoid delay in detecting the cases to prevent wild-spread of the dreaded virus.
"We hired more than 20

odd data entry operators, a team of technicians, and other staff to collect swab samples for RT-PCR tests to give results within 24 hours last year but we have skeletal staff now" a medical officer said lamenting over the situation.

Taking advantage of the situation, private hospitals, labs and scanning centers have been fleecing the Covid

Relative of an aged couple from Hyderabad who is infected by Covid, said a private hospital in Pogathota told them to take them away when their condition turned critical after charging more than ₹2.50 lakhs

for the treatment.

"We don't know that the hospital does not have permission to treat Corona patients. They forced us to shift the patients and we admitted in GGH" the relative said. Meanwhile, sensing the alarming situation, District Joint Collector N.Prabhakar instructed the health officials to set up more beds, equipment and medicines for providing COVID19 services in all government and private hospitals in the dis-

He gave the directions during a review with the officials of medical and health, Nodal officers, private COVID hospital managements at his camp office in Nellore city on Thursday.

Joint Collector asked the health officials and private hospital managements to provide better medical services for the infected patients without any delay duly fol-

lowing the protocol.

He maintained that the medical officials should be on standby to offer emergency medical services to the infected patients at any time of the day or night. He said COVID patients

have to be admitted only the notice of Arogyamitra and Nodal officers. COVID medical services would be provided free of cost to the patients with CMCO letter who are not having Arogyasri and EHS cards, the JC informed.

In a piece of advice to the patients and their relatives, he told them to inform Arogyamitra and Nodal officers if they found any fault in providing medical services to the infected

EASTERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF A.P. LTD OPERATION CIRCLE: RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

e-TENDER NOTICE NO. 04/2021-22 of SE/O/RJMV
e-tender is invited from the registered contractors in APEPDCL for "Carrying out continuous monthly spot billing work on contract basis in Agency Areas of three operation sub divisions of Rampachodavaram division from 01.05.2021 to 31.03.2023". For downloading detailed Tender Notice explore web site www.apeasternpower.com / www.eprocurement.gov.in or contact office of the Superinteding Engineer Conscript of Section 1 and Superintending Engineer, Operation, Rajamahendravaram. Last date for receipt of Tenders is 27-04-2021 at 13-00 Hrs.

Superintending Engineer,

door with a crowbar.
They found bodies of
Bangaru Naidu, Dr
Nirmala and Kashyap a fire through a cooking gas cylinder but got scattered from the main per preliminary investitrapped in the smoke and a qualified engineer and wounds and lacerated died. Dog squad, CLUES gation, there could have door to hall and bedroom. wounds were found on recently obtained his PhD Ph: 94906 10003, 94906 10089 Advt-11 the bodies. The body of Deepak was been a heated argument team and professor of in business management

SHORT TAKES

CONG. WANTS SPL PACKAGE FOR DABBAWALAS

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 15

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Thursday sought a relief package for taxi drivers, flower vendors, salon workers and Mumbai's dabbawala among others. Patole wrote a letter in this regard to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray stating that these sections of the society should be incorpo-rated in the relief package which has been announced by the state government.

Two days ago, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had announced several sops from monetary reliefs to free distribution of food grains for the vulnerable sections including registered auto drivers, construction workers and hawkers. In addi-tion to this, financial assis-tance will be provided to the economically weaker sections below the poverty line families, women, senior citizens, widows, disabled and tribal communities. Close to seven crore beneficiaries of Food Security schemes Maharashtra would be given free food grains including 3 kg wheat and 2 kg rice per person for a month.

In his letter to the Chief Minister, the Congress state president said that during Sanchar Bandi (curfew), vegetable vendors, flower vendors and flower cultivators are going to be hit badly.

STATES TOLD TO MAKE GOOD USE OF MEDICAL OXYGEN

New Delhi, April 15: The Centre on Thursday asked states to make rational use of medical oxygen and ensure there is no wastage while stressing that there is sufficient stock of oxygen in the

Medical oxygen is a critical component in the treatment of Covid-19 affected patients. An inter-ministerial Empowered Group (EG2) of officers was constituted during the Covid pandemic in March 2020 to ensure the availability of essential medical equipment including medical oxygen to the affected states, the Union

health ministry said.
Along with the ramped up production of the oxygen manufacturing units and the surplus stocks available, the present availability of oxygen is sufficient, the ministry said.

Besides, states have been asked to set up control rooms to ensure smooth supply of oxygen to the districts accordto need and review requirement of cylinders tankers etc. the ministry said in a statement.

A detailed daily mapping of sources for supply of medical oxygen to the affected states is under preparation to ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply,

The exercise will be carried out on the basis of detailed daily deliberations between officers of department for promotion of industry and internal trade, health ministry, various critically affected states.

INDIA, FRANCE SIGN PACT ON **GAGANYAAN**

New Delhi, April 15: Space agencies of India and France on Thursday signed an agreement for cooperation for the country's first human space mission Gaganyaan, the French space agency CNES

The agreement was announced during French Foreign Affairs minister Jean-The Yves Le Drian visit to the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) headquarters.

ISRO has asked CNES to help prepare for Gaganyaan missions and to serve as its single European contact in this

domain. "Under the terms of the agreement, CNES will train India's flight physicians and CAPCOM mission control teams in France at the CAD-MOS centre for the development of microgravity applications and space operations at CNES in Toulouse and at the European Astronaut Centre (EAC) in Cologne, Germany,'

the CNES said. The agreement provides for the CNES to support impleexperiment plan on validation missions, exchange information on food packaging and the nutrition programme, and above all the use by Indian astronauts of French equipment, consumables and medical instruments.



A health worker collects swab sample from a woman for



Devotees wait in a long queue to offer prayers on the occasion of Bengali New Year



People, not adhering to norms, walk at the Heritage

Weekend lockdown in Delhi till April 30

■ Gyms, malls, auditoriums to remain closed ■ Restaurants to operate home-delivery services

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced a curfew this coming week-end and the closure of malls, gymnasiums and auditoriums till April 30 as part of sweeping restrictions to break the chain of the Covid-19 infection in the city. According to an official order, the weekend curfew will be effective from 10 pm on April 16 (Friday) to 5 am on April 19 (Monday), even as gymnasiums, auditoriums, malls, spas, entertainment parks and assembly halls will remain closed in the national capital till April 30.

Cinema halls will function with only 30 per cent capacity. However, officials said a decision to extend the weekend curfew will be taken after reviewing the Covid-19 situation next week. There will be no inweek. There will be no inhouse dining in restaurants, the Chief Minister said at an online press conference a day after the city recorded the biggest single-day jump of 17,282 Cavid 10 press. Covid-19 cases.

However, the restaurants will be allowed to operate home-delivery and take-away services, he said, adding that bars will remain closed till April 30. The Chief Minister made these announcements after he met Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal. He said the essential services and weddings will not be affected by the weekend curfew and passes will be provided to those attending weddings.

In its order, the Delhi Management Authority (DDMA) said during the weekend curfew, the movement of people for wedding-related (up to 50 people) and funeralrelated (up to 20 people) gatherings will be allowed. People going to airports.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a roadshow campaign for state Assembly polls, amid the rise

EC rules out clubbing poll phases

There is no such plan of

clubbing" the three poll phases, the Election Commission said after new Chief Election

Commissioner Sushil Chandra took stock of the ground reality from vari-

ous poll observers deputed

in the state and chief elec-

toral officer West Bengal

Ariz Aftab in a video con-

At the meeting, opinions

were also sought from

them about the deploy

RAJIB CHOWDHURI & PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE,

Undeterred by the exponential rise in daily cases of the Coronavirus disease across the country and West Bengal, the Election Commission of India (EC) ruled out a possibility of clubbing the remaining phases of the ongoing Assembly elections in the state due to ıack availability of

another 1,500 companies ment and distribution of April 29, respectively.

railway stations and ISBTs will be allowed to proceed on the production of valid

tickets. However, those going for vaccination will be

vaccination

have been exempted from the weekend curfew. People dealing in food, groceries, fruits, vegetables

ference.

Polling for four phases have ended and the fifth phase will be held on Saturday. Polling for the sixth, seventh and the eighth phase will be held

the Central forces in case

poll phases after the state recorded daily new Covid-19 cases at 6,769 till Thursday with 22 fresh

deaths in the last 24 hours,

sources said.

This time, election to the West Bengal Assembly is being held in eight phases.

of clubbing the last three

required to apply for a cur-few pass. Mediapersons also have to seek a curfew pass for their movement. behind the weekend cur-

few was that on these days.

central poll panel's decision to go ahead with the existing poll schedule even after the deadly virus claimed a Congress candidate's life and infected two others, including one from the TMC in the state. She also stressing that her party had opposed the proeignt-phase poli

Bengal Chief

Minister Mamata Bane-

rjee on Thursday evening also appealed to the EC to

club the "remaining phas-

es" of the polls into one,

within few hours of the

people often indulged in recreation and other such activities that could be "curtailed" and "curbed" without much inconvenience to them.

Declare Covid a natural calamity, **Uddhav to PM**

BHAGWAN PARAB & SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 15

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has demanded that the Covid-19 pandemic be announced as a national calamity so that the state can utilise the State Disaster Respo-nse Fund (SDRF) to provide financial assistance to the affected people.

In a letter written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Thackeray has expressed the possibility that the caseload of active patients, which is presently 5.64 lakh in Mahara--shtra, is likely to double by the end of April by reaching up to 11.9 lakh. To ensure prompt treat-ment of these patients, the Centre should allow air transportation of medical

oxygen, he said. "The medical oxygen requirement in Maharashfra at present is 1,200 metric tonnes, but the demand is likely to rise by 2,000 MT by April end. The Centre has allowed to procure oxygen from steel plants in eastern and southern parts of the country. But to save time, it needs to be airlifted under the national disaster management act," said

Thackeray in his letter. According to state officials, the state needs the permission from Centre to use the SDRF, which was constituted under the Central Disaster Management Act, 2005. By notifying the pandemic as natural calamity would

NIGHT CURFEWS IN 20 DISTRICTS OF ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 15

The Odisha government on Thursday evening decided to clamp stricter restrictions in the form of night curfew across the state and weekend shutdowns in 10 districts bordering Chhattisgarh to contain the Covid-19 spread.

As per the latest announcement, the state government decided to clamp night curfew in urban areas of 20 districts including the Twin Cities including the Twin Cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar which will come into force from Friday. The restrictions will be

clamped from 9 pm to 5 am, informed state chief secretary Suresh Mohapatra in a specialised televised address. According to Mohapatra, government revised the timings of night curfew which is already in force in 10 districts of the state sharing borders with Chhattisgarh.

allow the state to pay a daily grant of ₹100 and ₹60 to adults and children respectively during the lockdown period to those registered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana and Priority Household ration card holders, said Thackeray.

'Tika ustav' another sham by govt: Rahul

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

Congress leader Rahul

Gandhi once again lashed out at the BJP-led central government over the Covid-19 'mismanage-ment'. He alleged that the "tika ustav" was just another sham by the government and further that there are no beds, ventilators or vaccines available.

Through his official Twitter handle, he tweet-ed, "There are no tests, no beds in hospitals. There are no ventilators, no oxygen. There are no vaccines also. The utsav is a

Gandhi's attack comes in the wake of India reporting an unprecedented increase in Covid-19 cases with over 2,00,000 cases being reported on Thursday, the biggest single-day hike since the beginning of the pandemic. Rahul Gandhi has been

actively using social platforms to highlight the 'deficiencies' of the central government in managing the outcome Coronavirus

J&K defers shifting of 'Darbar'

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, APRIL 15

The Jammu and Kashmir authorities have deferred 'Darbar move', the bian-nual shifting of the civil secretariat or the seat of the government and other offices from winter capital Jammu to summer capital Srinagar in view of the surge in Covid-19 cases.

The 'Darbar' was scheduled to close in Jammu later this month and reopen in Srinagar on May 10. But now the secretariat will function at both Jammu and Srinagar "in an equitable manner", Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, said on Thursday.

'In view of sharply rising cases of Covid in J&K, the Govt has taken few important decisions ensuring safety of employees. Darbar move deferred because Secretariat to function in both Srinagar & Jammu, office functioning not to be affected because of eoffice," he tweeted.

He added, "Secretaries will function from both locations in an equitable manner Office functioning will not be affected as files to move electronicalbetween Secretariats in e-Office."

A division bench of Justice S.C. Gupte and

MAHA OPPOSES OPENING OF JAIN TRUSTS TO DISTRIBUTE 'PIOUS FOOD'

SHAHAB ANSARI I DC MUMBAI, APRIL 15

High Court refused permission to a city mosque to open up for Ramzan prayers, the Maharashtra government opposed a petition by two Jain Trusts seeking permission for devotees to collect food from the trust's premises during the nine-daylong Ayambil fast.

Justice Abhay Ahuja have deferred the hearing till Friday on two petitions filed by two Jain Trusts seeking an urgent relief by allowing devotees to take away "pious boiled cooked food" from the premises of the trust for nine days between April 19 and April 27.

The main prayer of the petitioners was to quash the state diktat and allow them and other 48 Jain ples with SOPs in place.



An 'uncharitable' comment by a minister in Shivraj government on spiraling Covid-19 deat-hs in Madhya Pradesh has sparked a huge row here with Opposition Congress calling it 'shockingly insensitive'.

State animal husbandry minister Prem Singh Patel while seeking to downplay the sudden spurt in fatalities due to Coronavirus infections in MP, said "people get old, they have to die"

MP late on Thursday. "Deaths are occurring.

Nobody can stop death. People get old, they have to die", Patel said. The minister's com-

when the situation has worsened in the state with hospitals running out of beds for patients and mortuaries and crematories overflowing with bodies of the Covid-19 victims.

DIET I PLAN Pet food makers cite ambiguous biz environment, absence of uniform framework

India's 29 million pets facing shortage of food

New Delhi, April 15: (AHIDS) for setting up ani-India, which has an esti-mated pet animal popula-tion of the continual population of 29 million, is facing a shortage of pet foods, a government body said on Thursday and urged the industry to boost local production by taking advantage of the existing central

schemes. Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) chairman O.P. Chaudhary, addressing a webinar organised by industry body PHDCCI, said the industry players can avail credit facility given under the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Scheme

However, pet food makers such as Mars International India and Royal Canine India said higher taxes, ambiguous business environment, absence of uniform framework and quality standards are major hindrances for the sector's growth.

"On an average, India requires 30,000 tonnes of pet foods. In India, there are pet food manufacturers but not sufficient enough to meet demand and quality," Chaudhary said while addressing the

webinar on the pet food

Some quantity of pet foods are imported but are costly to reach the people at affordable prices, he said, adding that the scarcity of pet foods was faced during the Covid-19 lockdown last year and the government had intervened.

anced nutritious diet is key to keep the pets healthy, Chaudhary said, however, pet foods are not reachable to every Indian pet owner because of the cost and availability. Overall, animal nutri-

feed and fodder, he added. Stating that the pet industry in India is grow-AWBI chairman said the government is taking measures to address the demand-supply gap and Asserting that a balassisting the private sector to invest in setting up

the ₹15,000 crore worth AHIDF scheme. tion is a concern for als, MSME (Micro, Small

there is about 35-40 per cent shortage of animal ment, he said. ing at a faster rate, the

Under the scheme, up to 90 per cent credit is given at a lower rate form scheduled banks to the individu-

of animal feed plant under

FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations) and Section 8 companies for infrastructure develop-

"The pet food industry can avail the opportunities to manufacture pet food in India and meet the demand," he added.

Further, the chairman said animal feed is not regulated in India at present. "There is no system in place for meeting licensing norms. Therefore, it is the high time to establish the pet food plants.

He also said that raw materials required for pet

country. India is producing 8.1 million tonnes of meat, out of which chicken meat is 50 per cent. 'The offals are wasted and same can be utilised

for pet food manufacturing. Not only chicken and meat. India is sufficiently producing foodgrains which can also utilised," he added. also

According to AWBI Secretary Sujit Kumar Dutta, there is a huge opportunity in research and development of pet foods foods as man, demanding vegetarian pet
- PTI foods.



THEY MUST DIE' RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHUY | DC BHOPAL, APRIL 15

He was speaking to reporters in Barwani in

ment comes at a time

IN BRIEF

Taiwan transport minister resigns

Taipei, April 15: Taiwan's government on Thursday said it had accepted the resignation of its transport minister following a train crash earlier this month that killed 49 people, the

island's deadliest in decades. The April 2 crash was caused by a railway maintenance truck that slid down an embankment and onto the track moments before a high-speed train passed by.

The accident, which left more than 200 injured, plunged Taiwan into mourning.

Lawmaker

caught naked

Ottawa, April 15: A Canadian Parliament member was caught stark naked in a virtual meeting of the House of Commons. William Amos, who has represented the Quebec district of Pontiac since 2015, appeared on the screens of his fellow lawmakers completely naked Wednesday.

A screenshot obtained by The Canadian Press shows Amos standing behind a desk between the Quebec and Canadian flags, his private parts hidden by what appears to be a mobile phone in one hand.

Xi to attend

climate summit

Beijing, April 15: Chinese President Xi Jinping will join an online French-German climate summit "at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron", Beijing's foreign ministry said Thursday.

The virtual discussions with the key European Union nations—to be held on Friday — come as US envoy John Kerry is in China for environ-

Kerry is not expected to meet with Xi, on a trip which has so far taken place behind closed

Russia threatens

Ukraine: Kiev

Kiev, April 15: Ukraine's foreign minister said Thursday that Russia was flagrantly threatening Ukraine with destruction, as Western countries raise the alarm over an escalation of the separatist conflict. Foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba said during a press confe-

rence that Russian pundits and officials are "openly threatening Ukraine with war and the destruction of Ukrainian statehood." "We condemn Russia's aggravation of the security situation, Moscow's actions and statements aimed at escalating military tensions.

I.S. to sell F-35s to the UAE

Washington, April 15: President Joe Biden's administration indicated Wednesday it was moving forward with a \$23 billion sale of F-35 fighter-jets to the UAE but was considering restrictions and would not deliver them soon. The State Department shortly after Biden's inauguration in January ordered a review of the massive arms package, which was approved by former president

Donald Trump.
Responding to a lawsuit seeking to block the sale, the State Department said it planned a "robust and sustained dialogue" with the UAE.

CHAUVIN WON'T TESTIFY AT FLOYD TRIAL

Minneapolis, April 15: The former Officer Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd wrapped up its case Thursday without putting Chauvin on the stand, presenting two days of testimony to the prosecu-

tion's two weeks.
Chauvin informed the court that he would not testify, saying he would invoke his Fifth Amendment right not to take the stand. "Is this your decision not to testify?" Judge Peter Cahill asked. "It is, your honour," Chauvin said.

Some prosecution rebuttal testimony was expected to follow Thursday. Closing arguments are set for Monday, after which the racially diverse jury will begin deliberating at the barbed-wire-ringed courthouse, with Minneapolis on edge against a repeat of the protests and violence that broke out

last spring over Floyd's death. The question of whether Chauvin would testify was the subject of weeks of speculation. The risks were high: Testifying could have opened him up to devastating cross-examination, with prosecutors replaying the video of the arrest and forcing Chauvin to explain why he kept pressing down

WHO: Europe surpasses 1 million Covid-19 deaths

pneumonia.

duction capacities avail-

able to a competitor dur-

ing the Coronavirus pan-demic, as several labora-

tories strike unprecedent-

ed partnerships to fight

Novartis is already collaborating with BioNTech

and CureVac in producing

The new tocilizumab

deal will see Roche's man-

ufacturing expertise tran-

sferred to the Novartis Drug Substance Singapo-

about it, the AstraZeneca

vaccine is effective in reducing Covid-19 hospi-

talisation and preventing

the global crisis.

Covid-19 vaccines.

Novartis, Roche

Geneva, April 15: A top official from the World Health Organisation says Europe has surpassed 1 million deaths from Covid-19 and the situation remains serious, with about 1.6 million new cases reported each week in the

region.
Addressing recent concerns about vaccines, Dr Hans Kluge also said the risk of people suffering blood clots is far higher for people with Covid-19 than people who receive AstraZeneca's Coronavirus vaccine.

Speaking to reporters during a visit to Greece, Kluge did point to early signs that transmission may be slowing across several countries and cited declining incidence among the oldest people.

He said the proportion of Covid-19 deaths among people over 80, who have been prioritised for vaccines, had dropped to nearly 30% the lowest level in the pandemic. For now, the risk of suf-

fering blood clots is much higher for someone with Covid-19 than for someone who has taken the Astra-Zeneca vaccine, he said. Let there be no doubt

LEATHER LINING

BRAND SORRY

IN GANESHA BAG:

London, April 15: A global fashion brand kn-

own for its bedazzled ha-

ndbags issued an apolo-

gy and ceased the prod-

uction of a Ganesha clu-

tch bag with leather lining after protests by In-

dian diaspora groups in

Judith Leiber said that

it would replace the lin-

ing with synthetic after

concerns were raised about the use of leather

alongside the image of a

Hindu deity. "We are deeply sorry to hear that our Ganesh bag has caused offence to the

Hindu community," said

Lela Katsune, President

COPS CHARGE

MAN WITH AXE

London, April 15: British police say they have charged a London man who was spotted carry-

ing an axe near Buckin-

The city's Metropolitan Police force said private

security guards working

on The Mall, a main

road outside the palace,

detained a suspect Tue-

sday evening after they were alerted to reports

of a man carrying what

appeared to be an axe.

Police said 46-year-old

Vladyslav Dryhval was

charged Thursday with

possessing an offensive

weapon and possessing a

Dryhval was remanded

into custody and was due to appear at Westmi-

nster Magistrates' Court

Thursday. Police said

there were no reports of

injuries and that it was

not being treated as terrorism-related. Bucking-

ham Palace is Queen El-

izabeth II's official Lon-

don residence, though

the monarch has stayed

at Windsor Castle dur-

ing the pandemic. -AP

bladed article.

NEAR QUEEN

RESIDENCE

gham Palace.

of Judith Couture.

the United Kingdom.

team up on drug **Zurich, April 15:** Novartis announced Thursday it will join forces with fel-2021.

low Swiss pharmaceutical "Novartis is fully comgiant Roche to produce tocilizumab, a drug being mitted to collaborating with Roche in offering our tested for its effectiveness against Covid-19-linked proven biologics production capabilities," said Steffen Lang, the firm's It is the third time technical Novartis has made its pro-

"As one of the world's largest producers of medicines, Novartis can mobilise its manufacturing capabilities on multiple fronts." Sold as Actemra or RoActemra depending on the market, tocilizum-ab is a treatment for rheumatoid arthritis which is also being tested in clinical trials investigating its safety and efficacy against Covid-19-associated pneumonia.

— AFP

deaths, he added, saying WHO recommends its use for all eligible adults.

French nationals in Pak told to leave

Islamabad, April 15: The French embassy here on Thursday advised all French nationals in Pakistan to temporarily leave the country after violent protests by a radical religious group that has now been banned by the gov-

ernment.
The Tehreek-i-Labaik
Pakistan (TLP) took to
streets on Monday to launch violent protests to force the government to expel the French ambassador over blasphemous caricatures published last year. Though no French citizen was reportedly targeted so far but the embassy has urged all the French citizens to leave Pakistan, apparently as a precautionary measure.

Due to the serious threats to French interests in Pakistan, French nationals and French companies are advised to temporarily leave the country, the embassy said in an email

THE TEHREEK-I-LABAIK Pakistan took to streets on Monday to launch violent protests to force the government to expel the French ambassador over blasphemous caricatures published last year.

Pakistan. It said that the departures will be carried out by existing commercial airlines.

Interior minister Sheikh Rashid announced on Wednesday to ban the TLP and officials said that Prime Minister Imran Khan and his cabinet endorsed the summary by the interior ministry to outlaw the group.

The trouble began after police arrested the TLP chief Saad Rizvi on Monday ahead of the April 20 deadline by the group to expel the French



The country has been in turmoil since the military seized power from civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, triggering a massive uprising that the junta has sought to quell using lethal force.

But protesters have continued taking to the streets, this week using the Myanmar New Year holiday of Thingyan as their latest rallying point as the normal festivities have been cancelled. In Myanmar's second-

largest city Mandalay, a demonstration by medical workers Thursday turned violent when soldiers opened fire, sending them running to the mosque. They were shooting eve-

rywhere... they were targeting the Sule mosque compound because people in there were hiding protesters," said an eyewitness.

A 30-year-old man who lived in the compound was shot dead, and at least two others were injured, said a

Ousted Myanmar envoy appeals for UK govt help London, April 15: The go today and intends to what kind of help he wantstay despite orders from his former staff that he has to move out. The former diplomat had

government to help him as called for the release of former elected leader he faced eviction from his Kyaw Zwar Minn had to Aung San Suu Kyi, who spend a night in his car was detained after the millast week after his countritary took power in a coup y's military attache barred him from the embassy in

This photo taken and received from an anonymous source via Facebook on Thursday shows protesters marching

Myanmar troops shoot

at health staff, 1 killed

Protesting medicos flee for safety to a nearby mosque

during a demonstration against the military coup in Mogok in Myanmar.

on Feb. 1.

Asked what he would do over the next few days, he replied: Who can tell? The last time they seized the embassy without warning, so I need to be careful. He did not elaborate on

ed from the British gov-

Britain Secretary Dominic Raab said last week he con-demned the bullying actions of the Myanmar military regime in London.

More than 700 people in Myanmar have been killed in a brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protesters and others opposed to February's

unded. "The man who died was shot from the back and it penetrated through

He told reporters from

behind the padlocked gat-

es of his residence in nor-

thwest London on Thurs-

day that he is not going to

ousted Myanmar ambas-

sador to Britain has

appealed to the British

London residence.

central London.

his chest," he said. A medic who participated in the protest said he saw the arrest of six nurses and doctors during the crackdown. "We lost contact with some medical team members as well," he the forefront of a nationwide civil disobedience movement, refusing to return to work under a military regime. Their absence has left many of the country's hospitals unstaffed during the pandemic. Civil servants from other

sectors have followed suit,

the country's banks, schocare workers have been at ols, railway operations, and businesses to a halt.
The junta has tried to

force people back to work, and on Thursday, state-run media reported that at least 20 doctors participating in the movement will be charged for attempting to "deteriorate peace and

US expels 10 Russian diplomats Kremlin: Sanctions won't 'help'

The United States announced sanctions and the expulsion of 10 Russian diplomats Thursday in retalia-tion for what Washington says is the Kremlin's US election interference, a massive cyber attack and

other hostile activity.
President Joe Biden's broadside against Russia came the same week as he offered to meet President Vladimir Putin for their first summit — a meeting US officials say remains "vital" so that the two

countries can deescalate. In an executive order, Biden widened restrictions on US banks trading in Russian government debt, expelled 10 diplomats who include alleged spies, and sanctioned 32 individuals accused of meddling in the 2020 presidential election.

Biden's order "sends a signal that the United States will impose costs in a strategic and economical-

Putin-Biden potential summit **Moscow, April 15:** The Kremlin said Thursday that planned US sanctions KREMLIN SPOKESM-**AN** Dmitry Peskov told reporters that it will be

against Russia in retaliation for alleged election interference and hacking will not "help" a potential summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his United States counterpart Joe Biden.

Biden in a phone call with Putin on Tuesday invited him to hold a summit on neutral ground, as tensions between the West and Russia have escalated in recent weeks over the

ly impactful manner on

Russia if it continues or

escalates its destabilising

international action," the

up to Putin and Biden to decide whether the summit will still go ahead.

conflict in Ukraine. United States media on Thursday reported that Washington announced sanctions affecting more than 30 Russian entities, expelling more than 10 Russian diplomats from the United States and expanding an existing ban

The Kremlin said Thurs-

day that sanctions would

not "help" momentum for

a summit and once the

White House unveiled its

on United States banks trading in Russian government debt.

"What is currently being discussed — likely sanctions — will in no way help such a meeting. That is unambiguous," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry while referring to the proposed summit.

He said, however, that it will be up to Putin and Biden to decide whether the summit will still go

measures, the Russian for-

"inevitable."

-AFP

eign ministry warned a

Blinken in Kabul to sell Biden troop withdrawal plan

Kabul, April 15: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan on Thursday to sell Afghan leaders and a wary public on President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw all American troops from the country and end America's long-

Blinken sought to assure senior Afghan politicians that the United States remains committed to the country despite Biden's announcement a day earlier that the 2,500 US soldiers remaining in the country would be coming home by the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks that led to the US invasion in 2001.

"I wanted to demonstrate with my visit the ongoing to commitment of the United States to the Islamic Republic and the people of Afghanistan," Blinken told Afghan President Ashraf Ghani as they met at the presidential palace in Kabul.

"The partnership is changing, but the partn-ership itself is enduring." 'We respect the decision and are adjusting our priorities," Ghani told Blinken, expressing gratitude for the sacrifices of US troops. Later, in a meeting with Abdullah Abdullah, who heads the National Reconciliation Council, Blinken repeated his message, saying that "we have a new chapter, but it is a new chapter that we're writing together."

"We are grateful to your people, your country, your administration," Abdull-

OZ TO WITHDRAW LAST 80 TROOPS IN SEPTEMBER Canberra, April 15: Australia would complete

its troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in Sep. in line with the United States and other allies, the PM said Thursday. Australia's contribution to the Nato-led mission had once exceeded 15,000

personnel, but only 80 remain. "In line with the United States and other allies and partners, the last remaining Australian troops will depart Afghanistan in Sep.," PM Scott Morrison said, without nominating a day.

"The decision represents a significant milestone in Australia's military history," he added. President Joe Biden plans to withdraw the last 2,500 US troops from Afghanistan before the 20th anniversary of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the US that triggered the campaign. -AP

ly followed Biden's lead on Wednesday, saying its roughly 7,000 non-American forces in Afghanistan would be departing within a few months, ending the foreign military presence that had been a fact of life for a generation of Afghans already reeling from more than 40 years

ah said. Nato immediate-

COVID | CURBS | Harry lost honorary titles when he gave up royal duties last year Philip funeral: Seniors to skip uniforms

London, April 15: Senior royals must wear civilian clothes to Prince Philip's Royal Air Force. But funeral, defusing potential tensions over who would

be allowed to don military uniforms. Queen Elizabeth II's decision means Prince Harry won't risk being the only member of the royal family not in uniform during Saturday's funeral for his grandfather, who died last

week at the age of 99. Members of the royal family often wear uniforms to public events by virtue of their honorary

Harry lost his honorary military titles when he decided to give up frontline royal duties last year.

As a result, protocol suggests that Harry, an army veteran who served two tours of duty in Afghanistan, may only wear a suit with medals at royal functions, Britain's Press Association reported.

The decision also sidesteps another potential controversy after reports that Prince Andrew considered wearing an admi- Royal Navy for 12 years ral's uniform to his father's funeral. Andrew retains his military titles even though he was forced to step away from royal duties after a disastrous interview with the BBC about his acquaintance with convicted sex offend-

er Jeffrey Epstein. The funeral is scheduled to take place Saturday at Windsor Castle, with attendance limited to 30 because of Coronavirus restrictions. Philip, also known as the Duke of Edinburgh, served in the

and maintained close ties to the armed forces throughout his Military personnel will have a large role in honouring him Saturday despite the attendance limit. Members of the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the Royal Air Force and the British Army plan to take part in the funeral procession. Philip's coffin will be carried to St. George's Chapel on a specially adapted Land Rover, which he

designed himself.

Military personnel rehearsed for the event Wednesday at Army Training Centre Pirbright, near London. One of the four Royal Marine buglers who will play "The Last Post" at the service said it was an "honour and privilege" to perform the role. "It's incredibly important. We feel nervous," Sgt Bugler Jamie Ritchie. "We feel the pressure, but we're channelling that and we're using that and we're going to deliver an outstanding











Chronicle

Biden's Afghan exit will hurt India, aid Pakistan

S president Joe Biden's decision to go beyond his predecessor Donald Trump's deadline of May 1 this year for all US forces to pull out of Afghanistan is not unexpected. The Americans people have been long fed up with their longest war which has cost trillions of dollars and 2000 soldiers. The US got Osama bin Laden (hiding in Pakistan with the support of the Army) and that's when the grudge match really ended.

The nation-building project in Afghanistan, beloved of many US Democrats and just a few Republicans too may be, was not going anywhere. So, there appeared no point hanging in there. There were no strategic dimensions to remaining engaged in Afghanistan either. In the current US assessment, if the Taliban were to once again be back in the saddle in Kabul as is more than likely, there is little chance they will seek to cross the oceans and attack the American mainland as the al-Qaeda under bin-Laden had done. America currently has more pressing strategic concerns than Afghanistan — namely China, Russia, Iran, climate change, the

India may be required to do much diplomatic footwork, especially in relation to the

When Mr Biden was vice-president to President Barack Obama, he was among those whose advice was to retain a small counter-terrorism force in Afghanistan. That advice is now evidently deemed obsolete. But why did the Biden administration not adhere to the Trump deadline? Nothing would have been lost by doing so.

The reasons appear mainly to do with optics. Taliban Pulling out a large body of soldiers and rolling up a vast military infrastructure, even when no rearguard fighting may be on the cards, takes time-consuming planning. Besides, sticking to the deadline set by a predecessor who has turned ignominious may not bring credit in domestic politics. Besides, extending the deadline entails no extra costs for America

From the Taliban perspective, with Pakistan's help if they have held on for so long after being ousted from power in 2001, what is a few months more? The Taliban know they have nothing to lose. In fact, the extra four months may work to the Taliban's advantage as it give them more time to launch more vicious attacks, one of whose (intended) outcomes may be to push domestic Afghan factions into submission before the much-touted "interim" government is brought into some kind of shape through talks. That shape is overwhelmingly likely to be

the one that the Taliban want.

The US was desperately after a "responsible" withdrawal. Historically, the Americans wanted to look good in comparison to the Soviet Union, the withdraw-al of whose troops from Afghanistan in the late 1980s was widely deemed ignominious. But the Afghans aren't likely to be fooled by appearances. The interna-

The US pullout, which hardly offers America any political gains in the region, may be expected to make the position of Pakistan, China and, to some extent, even Russia, firmer than hitherto. India, in contrast, may be required to do much diplomatic footwork, especially in relation to the Taliban. Historically, after the Taliban interregnum India had aligned its position with that of the government in Kabul. It may be obliged to stick to that broad line even after the return of the Taliban, no matter in what form. New Delhi has a difficult task on its hands.

Let all follow CBSE's example

With the daily caseload of Covid-19 infections crossing two lakhs, an unprecedented and alarming milestone as yet, on Thursday, the country needs to pull up its socks and fight the virus with all available tools. Precious time has already been lost in augmenting the healthcare system or streamlining the inoculation programme by ensuring adequate availability of vaccine. Any fresh move could take time. In the meanwhile, the government must take whatever steps it can, expeditiously. One major step has been taken when the Central Board of Secondary Education put off the Class 12 examinations and scrapped the ones in Class 10. The government must now see to it that the other national and well as state boards follow suit and eliminate the chances of the pandemic spreading through examination halls.

The government must also target the other potential superspreader events such as religious, political and social gatherings. West Bengal has four more phases of the polling, and electioneering is in full swing with mammoth rallies. The government must check with the Election Commission how it may be possible to curtail electioneering. India has some religious festivals every season; the Kumbh Mela in which millions of devotes attend is under way. Healthcare experts have been demanding restrictions on it but none has been imposed yet. The government must, in consultation with the state government in Uttarakhand and the organisers of the festival, explore the possibility of cutting the duration of the festivities short and impose stricter controls on the attendees entered into the annual fasting period, which normally ends with a community feast every day and with grand gatherings at the end of the month. The government must consult the community leaders and see how the events do not end up spreading the virus. The absence of a concerted, coordinated and result-oriented approach could land the nation in a larger mess than what it had found itself in when the virus came with the first wave.

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Covid: Who'll pay price for irresponsible netas?



Karan Thapar

As I See It

politicians all make mistakes. Though they may atone for them later, usually in defeat, they're almost always disinclined to apologise. But I'm not put off by that. If you want them to take decisions, some are bound to be wrong. That's a fact of life. But what irks me is irresponsibility. In particular, refusing to take tough decisions because it does not politically suit them to do so. For this there can be no excuse and little forgive-

Faced with the raging second surge of Covid-19, which is relentlessly soaring at nearly 200,000 cases a day, our politicians have behaved irresponsibly. Worse, they continue to do so. Undeterred by criticism from the media and grave warnings from doctors and public health experts, they are now

What am I referring to? The electoral rallies with several lakh people that were held till very recently in Kerala, Assam and Tamil Nadu and which will continue to dominate the political horizon in West Bengal for the rest of this month. But I am also talking of the Shahi Snans, which have started in Haridwar and will continue for another two weeks. Like the political rallies, these religious baths will attract hundreds of thousands of people, if not millions, and there will be no social distancing and precious little mask wearing.

The rallies and snans could easily become super-spreader events. Some perhaps already have. Others are likely to follow. But even if by some miracle that doesn't happen, is it worth the risk? That may sound like

quite frankly, it is not. So why are they permitted? Let's take the politi-cal rallies first. They are an easy, simple and timetested way of attracting large crowds and addressing them at one go. They also attract television attention and newspaper coverage. Therefore, they get talked about and that, it's hoped, will create political momentum. This is why politicians are so reluctant to abjure them.

a rhetorical question but,

In comparison, virtual campaigning is more difficult, the response isn't easy to assess, and it doesn't create any buzz. Therefore, citing the excuse of democracy, our politicians have continued to physically campaign as if the Covid-19 pandemic belongs to another and far-off world.

In fact, when questioned they've either been defiant, or they have blamed the Election Commission. This is what Hemanta rma said earlier this month: "There is no Covid in Assam ... there is no need to wear a mask in Assam. Why wear masks unnecessarily and create a panic?". Incidentally, he is the state's health minis-

Days later, at a press conference in West Bengal, Union home min-ister Amit Shah was asked how he justified massive political rallies when the virus was surging past 100,000 cases a day. (Since then, it's crossed a yet higher peak of nearly 200,000 a day.) Without a blush or a moment's hesitation, he said the question should be asked of the Election Commission. It has set the rules and guidelines and his rallies are fully in accord with them. Sadly, I don't recall any journalist asking Mr Shah if this is an adequate answer from the nation's home minister or simply an irresponsible attempt to pass the

A day later the commission spoke out but almost sotto voce and certainly ineffectively. As a national newspaper put it, the commission "will not hes-itate in banning rallies and meetings if precautions are not adhered to". Not surprisingly, they weren't, and equally unsurprisingly the com-mission retreated to its silence. And so the irre-

Now, let's come to the shahi snans. When Tirath Singh Rawat took over as minister Uttarakhand, he dispensed with his predecessor's insistence on a prior Covid test before participating in a snan. "Nobody will be stopped in the name of Covid-19 as we are sure that faith in God will overcome the fear of the virus", he glibly though very confidently

newspaper. Days later he tested positive. Meanwhile, one newspaper, quoting govern-ment officials, said one crore people were expected to visit Haridwar on April 14, which was Baisakhi, whilst two crore more were anticipated between April 11

told another national

Photographs WhatsApp clips showed that in fact happened. I fear they could soon realise the truth of the old cliche "God helps those who help themselves".

and 14.

The government will tell you that banning or even restraining the longawaited and deeply loved

The government will tell you that banning or even restraining the long-awaited and deeply loved religious events is hard to do. Of course it is. It could make governments unpopular. But then who said being PM during the worst crisis of the century is easy?

religious events is hard to do. Of course it is. It could unpopular. In a democracy, no one wants that. But

then who said that being Prime Minister or chief minister during the worst health crisis in a century is easy? Yet, if British PM Boris Johnson could enforce stringent curbs over Christmas and Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel during Easter, do Prime Minister Modi and CM Rawat lack convenient the strength to behave similarly? If Mr Johnson and Ms Merkel can take unpopularity on the chin, are our *netas* made of sponsibility continues. weaker stuff? Or could it be that our lot have deliberately chosen not to act because not only is it easi-

> Finally, just one question remains: how heavy a price will we pay for this irresponsibility? We know the damage the rallies and snans could do can only be estimated two weeks later. That's not too far away. But chances are... it won't be the politicians who will suffer. It will be the poor people of India. The former will bask in their electoral triumphs or boast of administrative their expertise. The latter could end up infected, with sickness and possibly worse to follow

er not to do so but that

will also ensure that they

remain the darling of the

And then? Before you answer, remember, this is India. Í doubt if anyone will hold the errant politicians to account. They come from all our politi cal parties and thev'll all get away with it. But it's likely to be very different for the majority, who are poor. If they get infected, fall ill and even die, who will care for and mourn them? They've paid the price of political incompetence for generations, possibly centuries. And as they've always done, they'll pick themselves up, place their faith in od and carry on. I doubt if this time will be any dif-

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

TESTING TIMES

Due to the alarming surge in Covid-19 cases, the cancellation and postponement of Class X and Class XII exams respectively is welcome and a respite from a tense situation to worrisome parents and anxious students (CBSE Class XII exams put off, no Class X test, DC, April 15). However, in the education sector, the government at the Centre needs to devise with earnest intent and come up with a long-term strategy using technology in order to save careers

Dr C. Ghanshyam Visakhapatnam

COVID CARE

With Covid second wave reaching epic proportions, I request the GHMC to close or seize all roadside eateries, chai stalls, pan shops, and drinking rooms. Request public to eat and drink only homemade food before it turns fatal.

Joseph Cherian

CO-WIN APP

With the apparent shortage of vaccines, Covid vaccination centres are not able to vaccinate registered people on schedule dates. Further, the Co-Win app allows registration despite this situation ignoring the ground reality that there are no vaccines. This is creating anxiety.

Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN Chronicle

Bill to revise ST structure likely

HYDERABAD, April. 15 The Chief Minister, Mr. K. Brahmananda Reddi, said here today that a legislation revising the Sales Tax structure would most probably be introduced in the June session of the State Assembly. Speaking at the 54th annual

meeting of the Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, he said that the Government was awaiting the report of the Bhootalingam Committee. The committee had been appointed to study the existing Sales Tax structure and suggest revision to take it broad based.

Kamal Davar

Ramping security or building trust: How best to tame **India's Maoists?**

he audacious ambush by Naxals in the Bijapur badlands of the Chhattisgarh state, killing 22 Special Forces policemen and injuring 30 others on April 3, 2021, brought forth the discomforting reality of India's inadequate preparedness in dealing with its most serious internal security affliction, namely, the Naxal-Maoist challenge. That these avoidable casualties are attributed to an operation which was mounted by our own forces to nab the charismatic voung Naxal leader, Madvi Hidma, in the Tekulguda region of Bastar — a hotbed of Naxal activities since decades — makes this tragic incident all the more embarrassing for those

who conceived and mounted it.
The video released by the Naxals, of the release ceremony of police commando, Rakeshwar Singh Minhas, captured by them in this botched-up police operation with a large turnout of cheering local villagers should warn the Indian state to streamline its strategy to combat Left Wing Extremism (LWE) the generic and official name for the Naxal-Maoist insurgency.

Though some in the security establishment have felt that over the years the Maoist-Naxal threat has reduced considerably with the "Red Corridor"

shrinking gradually, the official statistics of India's ministry of home affairs do not convey the same improvement in the internal security operations to counter LWE. MHA figures reveal that only 46 districts are now seriously affected by LWE while 90 districts over 11 states are covered under the special security-related expenditure scheme of the government. The official MHA website also conveys that between 2004 and 2019, 8,197 civilians have been killed by the Naxals, mostly tribals, after brutal tortures as they were branded as "police informers". In addition, between 2018 and November 2020, 460 Naxals were eliminated whilst 161 security forces personnel lost their

lives in the same period.

During the past 15 years or so, the deadly dimensions of Naxal-related violence have manifested many times, surprising our security forces dealing with the Naxal insurgency, primarily in states like Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkand and Bihar. It cannot be ever forgotten how in one of the largest Naxal attacks on security forces personnel, Maoists had killed 75 CRPF personnel in Dantewada district on April 6, 2010. Similarly, on May 25, 2013, 25 senior Congress leaders including former Union Minister Vidya Charan Shukla were massacred in Darbha Valley in Chhattisgarh. The Naxals have successfully snatched weapons from security personnel after killing them, continue employing high-intensity IEDs at will in various innovative ambushes and even managed to hijack a train! The list of Naxal successes is, unfortunately, rather exhaustive.

It will be prudent for India's security establishment to factor in the reality that the burgeoning Maoist-Naxal threat has a distinct external dimension with the wily Chinese supplying arms and ammunition to the Naxals through the "Red Corridor" via our North-East and the Nepal border. These insurgents derive their inspiration from the late Chinese Communist supremo, Mao Zedong, who had once declared that "revolutionary warfare is never confined within the bounds of military action because the purpose is to destroy an existing society and its institutions and replace them with a completely new structure". It is not surprising thus that the Naxal movement, which emerged from the cauldron of agrarian unrest in an unknown West Bengal village of Naxalbari has, over the years, acquired a separatist

and a grave violent orientation. Though, unquestionably, govern-

ments at the Centre and states have brought in some improvements in the fight to counter LWE, yet the recurrence of deadly incidents, occurring off and on, should propel the Centre to conceive and implement a National Strategy. Basic factors, including shameful economic and social disparities that exist in our nation, may give rise to rural and urban unrest but remain largely unaddressed in most of the states. Some well-meaning people have argued that a major root cause of growing Naxalism has been the willful reluctance of the states and the Centre to not promulgate the Ninth and Fifth Schedules of the Constitution which enforces relevant land laws and which will benefit the tribals and poor inhabiting the forests. However, to merely attribute the spread of LWE to poverty and lack of development will be a rather simplistic formulation.

As the Centre and state governments reach out to the poor and hapless to alleviate their sufferings, Naxal leadership must be contacted to give up their armed struggles, embrace the amnesty announced by the governments and join the national mainstream. In the past, unfortunately, it has been experi-

enced that the LWE leadership has not only refused the administration's peace and rehabilitation efforts, but also deliberately targeted developmental activities of the government in the remote areas. Schools, hospitals, post offices and even the labour force engaged in some construction works have been violently attacked.

With alacrity, the Centre will have to re-energise its security strategies to combat the Naxals. Better training, modern light equipment and weaponry for the police and the central forces earmarked for these operations have to ensured. Above all, ground-level intelligence structure using locals needs to be re-invigorated. High-tech gadgetry including sophisticated communication and monitoring equipment, helicopters and drones need to be extensively fielded. The Indian Army must train police and paramilitary commandos in special operations and leader-ship skills at the combat levels. Finally, synergy between the Centre and states machinery to effectively combat the highly motivated Naxals is paramount.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, was founder of the Defence Intelligence Agency and deputy chief of the Integrated Defence Staff

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,803.68	0.53
Nifty 50	14,581.50	0.53
S&P 500*	4,160.59	0.87
Dollar (₹)	74.91	0.21
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.34	0.12
Euro (₹)	89.76	0.09
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,301▲159	0.003
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.62	0.06
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.126	-0.03
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.588	-0.048
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

WPI inflation spikes to 7.39% in March

The wholesale price-based inflation shot up to over 8-year high of 7.39 per cent in March on rising crude oil and metal prices. The low base of March last year, when the data was computed with a low response rate due to the lockdown, contributed to the spike in inflation in March 2021. The WPI inflation was 4.17 per cent in February 2021 and 0.42 per cent in March 2020. This is the third month of uptick seen in Wholesale Price Index-based inflation



■ UAE Exchange, Repco among applicants

8 apply for SFBs, universal banks

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday said that four applicants each have applied for 'on-tap' licences to start universal banks and small finance banks under the private sector. The four that have applied for universal bank licences are Abu Dhabibased remittance house UAE Exchange, govern-ment-owned multi state cooperative named Repco Bank, Flipkart co-founder Sachin Bansal-led NBFC MFI called Chaitanya India Fin Credit Pvt Ltd and ex-Citi Banker Pankaj Vaish & others.

This is not the first time that UAE Exchange is attempting a banking foray. It had applied for a universal banking licence in June 2017 as well.

Applicants for small finance banks are VSoft Technologies Private Limited—a provider of banking and payment solutions to financial institutions— Calicut City Service Cooperative Bank Limited, Akhil Kumar Gupta and Dvara Kshetriya Gramin UAEXCHANGE"

Financial Services Private

Set up in 2002, Calicut City Service Co-operative Bank caters to customers in the city of Kozhikode in Kerala. In March 31, 2019, the cooperative bank had 1.48 lakh members. It has 24 branches across the city. Dvara Kshetriya Gramin Financial Services, incorporated in 2008, by Dvara Trust provides financial services in rural areas. Details about Akhil Kumar Gupta were not available.

The applications will now be evaluated by the standing external advisory committee, set up by the RBI last month, under former deputy governor Shyamala Gopinath.

In the last round, the RBI gave two universal banking licences in April 2014 to

IDFC First Bank and Bandhan Bank. It gave 10 SFB licences in 2018, incluing to Janalakshmi, Ujjivan, RGVN (North East), among others.

The RBI had issued guidelines for on-tap licensing of universal banks in the private sector on August 1, 2016 and of SFBs on December 5, 2019. By the 2016 guidelines,

entities seeking universal bank licences must be indi-viduals/entities with at least 10 years senior-level experience in banking and finance, private companies or groups with at least 10 years of good track record. Groups or companies seeking licences must have assets of Rs 5,000 crore and their non-financial businesses don't account for 40 per cent of these assets.

CITIBANK TO EXIT CONSUMER BANKING BUSINESS IN INDIA

Mumbai, April 15: US banking major Citibank on Thursday announced it will exit the consumer banking business in India as part of global strategy. The business comprises credit cards, retail banking, home loans and wealth management.

The bank has 35 branches in the country and employs about 4,000 people in the consumer banking business.

On Thursday, the bank announced exiting from the consumer banking businesses in 13 coun-tries, with its global CEO

Jane Fraser attributing the decision to an absence of scale to compete in these geographies.

Contours of the exit were not immediately known. Citi had entered India in 1902 and started the consumer banking business in 1985. —*PTI*

Farm jobs increase by 9 mn in FY21

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, APRIL 15

Employment in agriculture went up by 9 million in March 2021, a year after the pandemic struck the nation. Rural India has seen a churn as people who lost non-farm jobs have gone for farm jobs, finds private think-tank CMIE.

As people lost jobs, they moved from one kind of job to another in hunt for a new occupation. Large numbers eventually migrated to agriculture. As a result, employment in agricul ture at the last count, in March 2021, was higher by 8 per cent compared to year-ago numbers.

Over 6 million salaried jobs were lost in rural India in 2020-21 and most of these would have migra-ted to farming. Rural India also saw nearly 3 million business persons being ren dered unemployed.

However, productivity of this additional employment is low. Agricultural output is estimated to have increased by 2-3 per cent in almost each of the four quarters of 2020-21. The 8 per cent increase in labour implies a sharp fall in labour productivity.
"We believe that this

huge influx of labour into agriculture during 2020-21 is largely disguised unemployment. It hides the greater employment challenge in March 2021 than the 5.4 million net jobs lost at the end of March 2021," said Mahesh Vyas, CEO, CMIE.

Travel M&A begins: Flipkart to buy Cleartrip in distress sale

CHENNAI, APRIL 15

Marking the beginning of mergers & acquisitions in the pandemic-hit travel sector, Flipkart is acquiring online travel aggregator Cleartrip in a distress

The e-commernce major on Thursday announced its decision to buy 100 per cent of Cleartrip's shareholding. The deal could be a mix of cash and equity and will see Cleartrip valued at \$40 million.

Cleartrip had raised \$75 million so far and was reportedly valued at \$300 million in 2016. Concur Technologies, DAG Ventures and Gund Investment are the key investors of



and loss of Rs 14 crore in FY20, according to Tofler. Cleartrip will continue

to operate as a separate brand, retaining all employees while working closely with Flipkart to further develop technolo-

gy solutions to make travel simple for customers. Cleartrip, founded in 2006, has been competing with MakeMyTrip, Yatra,

Most of the online travel aggregators have been suffering losses even before pandemic due to heavy competition and thin margins. The pandemic fur-ther hit the travel as well as hospitality industry badly. According to HVS Anarock, these industries will increasingly witness mergers and acquisition in 2021 owing to the financial stress.

"The Flipkart Group is committed to transforming customer experiences through digital commerce. This investment will help strengthen our wide range of offerings for customers," said Kalyan Krishnamurthy, CEO, Flipkart Group.

BUSINESS



WIPRO Q4 NET PROFIT UP 27.7%

New Delhi, April 15: Wipro on Thursday posted a 27.7 per cent jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,972 crore for the March 2021 quarter, and exuded confidence of sustaining strong growth momentum in the coming quarters. Wipro had posted a net profit (attributable to equity holders) of Rs 2,326.1 crore a year ago, as per Ind-AS.

range of \$2,195 to \$2,238 million in the June 2021 quarter. This translates into a sequential growth of 2-4 per cent.—*PTI* AMBANI SENDS OXYGEN TO MAHA

Its revenue from operations rose by 3.4

per cent to Rs 16,245.4 crore from Rs 15,711 crore in the same period last fis-

cal. Wipro-which gets a bulk of its

topline from IT services—said it expects

revenues from that unit to be in the



Mukesh Ambani paralysed the commercial capital. Reliance Industries Ltd, has started supplying oxygen from Jamnagar to Maharashtra at no cost, a company official said. Maharashtra will get 100 tonnes of the gas from Reliance, Eknath Shinde, urban development minister, said in a tweet. RIL is diverting some oxygen streams meant for its petcoke gasification units after making it suitable for medical use, the official said.

oxygen produced at his

refineries to help India

—Debjit Chakraborty/Bloomberg

in BCCI contracts

SHORT TAKES

Chess wizard Anand bereaved

Chennai: Five-time world chess champion Viswanathan Anand's father. K Viswanathan, died here on Thursday following brief illness. He was 92 and breathed his last at a city hospital, family

sources said. A former General Manager of the Southern Railway, Viswanathan is survived by two sons and a

Anand's wife Aruna described him as a great support to the celebrated chess player. "He was a great support to Anand. He witnessed all of Anand's world championship victories," Aruna said.

"A simple man, he made sure his son had the right values. He took great pride in his achievements,' she added. - PTI

Djokovic bows out of Monte Carlo

Monte Carlo: World number one Novak Djokovic crashed out of the Monte Carlo Masters in the last 16 on Thursday following a shock 6-4, 7-5 defeat by Britain's Dan Evans. Djokovic, the Monte Carlo champion in 2013 and 2015, was broken five times by the 33rd-ranked Evans and suffered his first loss of the year. having won the Australian Open for the ninth time in February. "To be honest this has been one of the worst matches from my side I can recall in the last few vears," said Diokovic, "I felt awful on the court overall Nothing worked. Just one of those days." - AFP

Aditi gets off to

season's best start Kapolei, US: Indian golfer Aditi

Ashok carded three birdies in

her first five holes to get off to her best start of the 2021 LPGA season with a 3-under 69 in the first round of the Lotte Championship. Aditi, playing her fifth event of the year, was under 70 for the first time this year and that should augur well for the 23-year-old from Bengaluru, who has made the cut in all four previous starts this year. Teeing off from the tenth, she birdied the 10th, 13th and 14th and turned in 3-under. Aditi was four shots behind co-leader Britanny Altomare and Filipina

Yuka Saso (64). — *PTI*

Olympics could be cancelled Hardik promoted Tokyo, April 15: A senior agency: "The Games will

avirus remains a possibility on Thursday, as a surge in cases renews concerns sion network. about the Games with less than 100 days to go. Toshiro Nikai, the ruling without hesitation

Democratic Party's number two, said the Olympics must be cancelled "without hesita-tion" if the virus situation is too severe. A year after their his-

toric postponement, the 2020 Olympics remain beset by pandemic prob-lems, with parts of the torch relay forced behind closed doors and public support consistently low. Organisers and Olympic

officials insist the Games

will go ahead safely, but Nikai said Thursday that Japanese politician said all options were on the Olympics over the corontable. "We need to make a decision depending on the situation at the time," he told the private TBS televi-

We need to cancel it they're no longer possible," added Nikai, who is the LDP's secretary gener-

Asked if he considered cancellation an option, Nikai said: "Yes of course. infection spreads because of the Olympics, I don't know what the

Olympics is for." He added however that he sees the Games as an "opportunity", and it was "important for Japan to foster excitement with

Toshiro Nikai, the ruling Liberal **Democratic Party's** number two. said the Olympics must be cancelled "without hesitation" if the virus situation

is too severe.

support from the public".
"We definitely want to make a success. In order to do so, there are various issues to solve. It's important to solve them one by

'MIGHT BE NO

The comments were quickly dismissed by an unnamed LDP official, who told the Jiji news

not be cancelled." Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike said she had "been told that the comment meant it is an option". "I take it as a message of

encouragement that we contain the coron avirus by all means," she Japan's vaccine minister

meanwhile mooted the possibility of a total bar on spectators at the Games. We'll hold the Olympics in a form that is feasible,"

the Asahi newspaper quoted Taro Kono as saying. "There might be no spectators.

Nikai's remarks come with fresh worries in Japan about what experts have called a fourth wave

Record numbers of cases have been reported in the government has been forced to authorise new restrictions just weeks after lifting a virus state of

emergency. Compounding the prob lem is the comparatively slow roll-out of the vaccine in Japan, which has so far only approved the Pfizer/BioNTech version.

Around 1.1 million people in the country of 126 million have received a first dose of vaccine so far with the roll-out only expanding to the elderly this week. Despite the problems, Olympic organisers insist the Games can be held safely and have released virus rulebooks to allay public

Virat Kohli, his white-ball deputy Rohit Sharma and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah retained their top bracket BCCI contracts, worth ₹7 crore each, while all-rounder Pandya earned a promotion despite an injury-

New Delhi, April 15: The

star trio of India captain

A total of 28 cricketers were awarded central contracts in four categories on Thursday. At this moment in

plagued season.

Indian cricket, there are only three certainties across formats and the scenario hasn't changed with Kohli, Rohit and Bumrah being the elite of elites.

All-rounder Pandya is one of the notable promotions to Grade A, which is worth ₹5 crore, despite the fact that he endured a back injury which has prevented him from bowling for much of the last year. He was in Grade B last

"Hardik is very much in line to play Test matches in England and will be one of the most important players after our A+ cricketers when we play the T20 World Cup. So Hardik's promotion is about what he brings to the team. That's what the selectors have factored in," a senior BCCI official said on conditions of anonymity.

LIST OF BCCI'S **ANNUAL CONTRACTS**

GRADE A+ (₹7 crore): Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Jasprit

GRADE A (₹5 crore): R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Shikhar Dhawan, K.L. Rahul, Mohammed Shami Ishant Sharma, Rishabh Pant Hardik Pandya.

GRADE B (₹3 crore): Wriddhiman Saha, Umesh Yadav, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Shardul Thakur, Mayank

GRADE C (₹1 crore): Kuldeep Yaday, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Shubman Gill, Hanuma Vihari, Axar Patel, Shreyas Iyer, Washington Sundar. Yuzvendra Chahal, Mohammed Siraj.

Rookies Shubman Gill and Mohammed Siraj have got their maiden central contracts worth ₹1 crore in Grade C while Shardul Thakur has been elevated to group B. The trio has been rewarded for lionhearted performances during India's historic Test triumph in Australia this year.

Among the demotions, Bhuvneshwar pacer Kumar has dropped to Grade B, which is worth ₹3 crore, while Kedar Jadhav has been dropped for good.

Foden fires Man City into semis

Dortmund (Germany), April 15: Manchester City set up a blockbuster Champions League semifinal against Paris Saint-Germain as Phil Foden's second-half winner sealed a 2-1 victory at Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday to send the Premier League leaders through 4-2 on aggregate.

England midfielder Jude Dortmund an early lead, but a second 1 12 but a second-half Riyad Mahrez penalty and Foden's powerful strike moved City into the last four of Europe's top club competition for the second

Having also scored the 90th-minute winner to give City a 2-1 victory in last week's first leg in England Manchester, international Foden again broke Dortmund hearts. "We are finally in the

semi-finals and we're really happy," Guardiola told Sky with his team bidding to win four titles this sea-"The guys deserve it

because what they have

achieved this season is

incredible. Guardiola was full of praise for Mauricio Pochettino's PSG after Mauricio they reached the last four by squeezing past holders Bayern Munich on away

THE RESULTS **Borussia Dortmund** (Bellingham 15)

Manchester City

(Mahrez 55-pen, Foden (Manchester City win 4-2 on aggregate)

Liverpool Real Madrid (Real Madrid win 3-1 on

"We saw yesterday how strong they (PSG) are, Neymar is an excellent player and they have eliminated the world's best team," said Guardiola. team,

"It's time to celebrate

and drink a lot of wine,

prepare to face Chelsea (in the FA Cup semi-finals on Saturday) City had bowed out at the quarter-final stage in each of the last three seasons, and had to come from behind at Signal Iduna as Dortmund shrugged off their indifferent Bundesliga form to take the lead on 15 min-

Four days after scoring his first Bundesliga goal, Bellingham also hit the back of the net for the first time in the Champions League. — AFP



Manchester City's Phil Foden (right) celebrates after scoring against Borussia Dortmund in their Champions League quarterfinal second leg match in Dortmund, western Germany, on Wednesday.

SARITA FIGHTS BACK TO KEEP ASIAN TITLE

Almatv. April Scripting a sensational comeback, an aggressive Sarita Mor reeled off nine straight points in the summit clash to retain her Asian Championship title in 59kg while Seema Bisla (50kg) and Pooja (76kg) settled for bronze

medals here on Thursday. Sarita, who won gold at the 2020 championship, lagged 1-7 after a botched up challenge but turned it around with a tremendous fight back against Shoovdor Mongolia's Baatariay.

Attempting a move at 1-3 on the edge of the mat, Sarita lost her balance, allowing her rival to get one point. However, the Mongolian's coach challenged the call to get her ward four points.

From there on, there was no stopping Sarita. She effected a take-down, following it up with an expose and then one more take down on the edge of the circle to make it 7-7.

At that juncture, time running out fast, the Mongolian camp challenged the call and lost that to give an extra point to Sarita, who won 10-7.

ALL-WIN DAY FOR INDIAN Boxers at Youth Worlds

New Delhi, April 15: It was a second successive all win day for Indian boxers at the youth world championships in Kielce, Poland with two from the women's contingent advancing to the quarterfinals after

clinching dominating triumphs. Poonam (57kg) and Vinka (60kg) won their bouts comprehensively to make the last-eight stage on Wednesday While Poonam defeated Hungary's Beata Varga, Vinka sailed past Bosnia and Herzegovina's Tara Bohatjuk.

In the men's draw, Asian youth silver-medallist Ankit Narwal (64kg) advanced to the second round after a comprehensive 5-0 win over Slovakia's Miroslav Herceg.

In the 91kg category, Vishal Gupta notched up a comfortable unanimous victory over Bulgaria's Georgi Stoev to enter the round of 16. Also entering the pre-quarters was Vikas (52kg) after getting the better of Bulgaria's Yasen Radev 5-0.

-PTI











• RAJASTHAN ROYALS • ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE • SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

DECCAN CHRONICLE, RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM, FRIDAY, 16 APRIL 2021

ORANGE Nitish Rana, KKR Sanju Samson, RR

Russell, KKR

Avesh

Off the field

Chris Lynn of Mumbai Indians

winds down by surfing in Chenna

Kohli rebuked for

Royal Challengers Banga-lore captain Virat Kohli

has been reprimanded for breaching the IPL's Code of Conduct after he was seen

kicking a chair in frustration

following his dismissal in the

game against Sunrisers Hyderabad here. Kohli was

not at his fluent best in the

game on Wednesday which

1 offence 2.2 of the IPL's Code

of Conduct. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of

Conduct, the Match Referee's

decision is final and binding,'

Vengalil Narayan Kutty was

the match referee in the game

while Nitin Menon and Ulhas Gandhe were the on-field

Shams, back-up for

Covid-stricken Axar

Delhi Capitals on Thursday roped in young Mumbai

left-arm spinner Shams Mulani as IPL's first short

term Covid-19 replacement as

he was brought in for Axar

patel, who is yet to recover

from the dreaded virus and is still in a medical care facility.

DC also has substituted injured captain Shreyas Iyer

with Karnataka off-spinner

Aniruddha Joshi. However,

the media release issued by

the IPL doesn't have any details about paceman Anrich Nortje's RT-PCR result, which

Mulani as a short-term Covid-

19 replacement for Axar Patel," the release stated.

Umps got no-ball

right: SRH coach

Sunrisers Hyderabad coach Trevor Bayliss has said the

umpires got it right by calling

Harshal Patel's waist-high full

toss a no-ball in the final over before RCB clinched the game

'He (Warner) was a little animated because we weren't playing very good cricket and we lost," Bayliss said refer-ring to Warner.

I think the umpires got it

right. There was a bit of con-

jecture over obviously the sec-

ond high no-ball, but the first

one was not directed at the

batter's body, so that wasn't a

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warning," Bayliss said.

by six runs in the IPL here. SRH skipper David Warner was not happy with that call.

DC have brought in Shams

is believed to be positive.

said the IPL in a statement.

Kohli admitted to the Level

RCB won the by six runs.

breaching code

Khan, DC

Manish Pandey, SRH **PURPLE** Thursday. Harshal Patel, RCB **Andre**

147 for 8. Miller then anchored the Royals' chase but it was Morris whose blitzkrieg

season.

the final over.

Morris ended the run chase with a six off Tom

Royals' run chase was,

In the next over, Kagiso Rabada dismissed the dangerous Royals captain Sanju Samson — the only centurion so far this season — with Shikhar Dhawan taking the catch

The same pair worked in tandem two overs later with Dhawan taking his third catch of the day after Riyan Parag (2) had miscued an Avesh Khan delivery.

has gone up to nearly 10 an over.

But, Miller and Rahul Tewatia (19) kept the Royals in the hunt with a 48-run stand for the sixth wicket before Rabada came back to give the much-needed breakthrough for the Capitals.

Earlier, a brilliant three-

RAJASTUN DELHI

Miller, Morris shine as Royals turn tables on Capitals

Mumbai, April 15: David Miller's combative 43-ball 62 and Chris Morris' time-ly onslaught (36 not out) powered Rajasthan Royals to a dramatic three-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in their IPL match here on

Opting to bowl, RR pacer Jaydev Unadkat took three wickets for 15 runs to restrict the Capitals to

took Royals home with two balls to spare. It is Royals' first win of the

The Royals were 17 for 3 in the fourth over and 42 for 5 at the halfway mark. They needed 58 from the last five overs and 12 from

however, in tatters as soon as it started. Chris Woakes removed openers Manan Vohra (9) and Jos Buttler (1) in a space of three balls in the third

at the slip.
Shivam Dube (2) per-

ished while playing an unnecessary uppish shot at a length ball off Avesh Khan with Dhawan taking his 78th catch of the IPL.

The Royals were 52 for 5 at the halfway mark and by then the asking rate

wicket burst from pacer Jaydev Unadkat helped RR restrict DC to 147 for 8. Unadkat (3/15 off 4



David Miller of Rajasthan Royals plays a shot during the IPL match against Delhi Capitals at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday.

Shaw, Shikhar Dhawan and Ajinkya Rahane to trigger DC's top-order collapse from which they never recovered fully.

ded with nine fours, was not enough as DC could post a modest total after being put in to bat.

DC made a disastrous

overs) dismissed Prithvi Unadkat dismissing the opening duo of Shaw (2) and Dhawan (9) cheaply.

Shaw was the first to go in the second over, caught at backward point before Captain Rishabh Pant's Dhawan perished while blistering 32-ball 51, studwith RR captain and wicketkeeper Sanju Samson taking a stunning diving catch to his right.

Ajinkya Rahane's (8) start as they were two underwhelming IPL form wickets down for 16 runs continued as he offered an in the fourth over with easy caught and bowled chance to Unadkat with a slow ball that clocked just 110km per hour.

DC were 36 for 3 at the end of power-play but the slump continued as Marcus Stonis (0), foxed by a Mustafizur Rahman (2/29) delivery, checked his shot at the last minute to offer a running catch to Jos Buttler.

The run rate started increasing once captain Pant came to the crease but still DC were 57 for 4 at

SCORECARD

Delhi Capitals: Prithvi Shaw c Miller b Jaydev Unadkat 2, Shikhar Dhawan c Sanju Samson b Jaydev Unadkat 9, Ajinkya Rahane c & b Jaydev Unadkat 8, Rishabh Pant run out 51, Marcus Stoinis c Jos Buttler b Mustafizur Rahman O, Lalit Yadav c Rahul Tewatia b Chris Morris 20, Tom Curran b Mustafizur Rahman 21, Chris Woakes not out 15, Ravichandran Ashwin run out 7, Kagiso Rabada not out 9. Extras (W-5) 5. Total (for 8 wickets in 20

FoW: 5-1, 16-2, 36-3, 37-4, 88-5, 100-6, 128-7, 136-8. **Bowling:** Chetan Sakariya 4-0-33-0, Jaydev Unadkat 4-0-15-3, Chris Morris 3-0-27-1, Mustafizur Rahman 4-0-29-2, Riyan Parag 2-0-16-0, Rahul Tewatia 3-0-

Rajasthan Royals: Jos Buttler c Rishabh Pant b Chris Woakes 2, Manan Vohra c Kagiso Rabada b Chris Woakes 9, Sanju Samson c Shikhar Dhawan b Kagiso Rabada 4, Shivam Dube c Shikhar Dhawan b Avesh Khan 2, David Miller c Lalit Yadav b Avesh Khan 62, Riyan Parag c Shikhar Dhawan b Avesh Khan 2, Rahul Tewatia c Lalit Yadav b Kagiso Rabada 19, Chris Morris not out 36, Jaydev Unadkat not out 11. Extras (W-1, LB-2) 3. **Total (for 7** wickets in 19.4 overs) 150. FoW: 13-1, 13-2, 17-3, 36-4, 42-5, 90/6, 104/7. Bowling: Chris Woakes 4-0-22-2, Avesh Khan 4-0-32-3, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-Ravichandran Ashwin 3-0-14-0, Tom Curran 3.4-0-35-0, Marcus

the halfway mark. Once he had a full measure of the pitch, Pant opened up and hit four boundaries, three of which were consecutive, to take 20 runs from the 11th over bowled

Stoinis 1-0-15-0.

by Rahul Tewatia. Pant reached his fifty off 30 balls in the 12th over, with a iour oii wiustaiizui but he was run out the next over with bowler Riyan Parag's throw crashing onto the stumps.

Points +0.175 2 +0.2252 +0.200+0.195 2 + 0.052 0 0 2 +0.000 0 2 0 0 - 0.400 - 0.779

POINTS TABLE

Dhoni & Co. look for winning ways

Mumbai, April 15: Chennai Super Kings would look for inspiration from skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni and a muchimproved bowling effort when they take on a powerpacked Punjab Kings in the IPL here on Friday.

The two sides experienced contrasting fortunes in their respective tourna-

ment opener:
While CSK lost by seven wickets against Delhi Capitals, Punjab Kings eked out a four-run win over Rajasthan Royals in a

high-scoring thriller. With the dew playing a crucial role at Wankhede, the side winning the toss would want to bowl first.

In their first match here, CSK posted a competitive 188 for seven, riding on fine contributions from Suresh Raina (54), Moeen Ali (36), Sam Curran (34), Ravindra Jadeja (26) and Ambati

Rayudu (23).

Despite failures from the opening duo of Rituraj Gaikwad and Faf du Plessis besides skipper Dhoni, CSK managed to put up a decent total on the board. But the Chennai outfit's

bowling unit looked completely out of sorts and clueless against the DC opening duo of Shikhar Dhawan and Prithvi Shaw, who were ominous from the word go and stitched a 138-run stand to take the game away from CSK.

The likes of Deepak Chahar, Sam Curran, Shardul Thakur, Jadeja and Moeen Ali all went for big runs and looked rusty. And come Friday, the

onus would be on master tactician Dhoni to inspire his teammates to lift their eriormance and Punjab a run for their money. But for that to happen, the CSK skipper himself needs to lead from the front after failing to score against DC.

Punjab Kings, on the other hand, had a narrow escape against RR the other despite posting a mammoth 221 for 6 on the board. Opening the bat-ting, KL Rahul played a captain's knock of 91 off just 50 balls. He was ably

Live on TV

Chennai Super Kings vs Punjab Kings from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

HEAD to HEAD

Matches CSK 14 PK

TIE

 Punjab Kings beat Chennai Super Kings in Super over after match ended in a tie at Chennai in 2010. **FOR THE RECORD**

Lokesh Rahul who scored 4933

runs in 140 innings of 153 matches, needs 67 runs to become the 11th Indian and 70th batsman overall to score 5000 runs in Twenty-20 match-

Faf du Plessis who scored 5930 runs in 224 innings of 240 matches, needs 70 runs to become the sixth South African and 45th batsman overall to score 6000 runs in Twenty-

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

• Chennai Super Kings beat Punjab Kings by 10 wickets at Dubai. • Chennai Super Kings defeated Punjab Kings by 9 wickets at Abu

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

supported by big-hitting Chris Gayle (40 off 28) and Deepak Hooda (64 off 28). For Punjab Kings and Rahul, batting is not at all area of concern as they showed with their performance in the opener, but just like CSK, the bowling unit remains a major worry. RR skipper Sanju

Samson almost single-handedly took the game away from Punjab Kings ith his whirlwind 63-ball 119-run knock in their opener, but fell short just by four runs in the end. Young Arshdeep Singh

(3/35) eventually emerged às Púnjab's saviour. Besides Arshdeep, veter-

an Mohammad Shami (2/33) too had a decent outting with the ball but the performance of Jhye Richardson (1/55) and Riley Meredith (1/49) should be a concern for Punjab.



Chennai Super Kings captain M. S. Dhoni (left) and Suresh Raina chat during a training session.

Maxwell showing a lot of maturity, says Katich

Chennai, April 15: Glenn Maxwell is proving to be a multi-utility Challengers Bangalore besides showing omi-nous form with the bat early in the IPL, feels head coach Simon Katich.

The 32-year-old, who was snapped by RCB for ₹14.25 crore, already has justified the faith shown in him by playing two match-winning knocks in their back-to-back wins this season.

The Australian is also looking to shed the perennial under-performer tag in the IPL. "He's shown a lot of

maturity, particularly today (against SRH on



Glenn Maxwell

Wednesday), when wickets were falling around him... He summed up the conditions really well, and took the game deep, that's credit to him for his experience for summing it up and then executing right at the end when we needed some quick runs," said Katich.

UAE, Maxwell endured a dismal run with then Kings XI Punjab, scoring 108 runs from 13 matches at 15.42. He failed to hit a single six and also struggled to get the team over the line

on many a times as the Punjab franchise finally gave up on the Aussie ahead of this year's auc-

"He's been magnificent. He's had a big role for us, first in the field helping Virat out there with field positioning to have the right guys in the right places at the right time. He has really embraced it," Katich said in a video posted on their website.

SIRAJ HEAPS PRAISES

Chennai, April 15: Royal Challengers Bangalore pacer Mohammad Siraj feels that spin bowling all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed has justified his selection in the playing eleven, following a match-winning performance against Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL

Ahmed picked up three wickets in an over to stage a remarkable turnaround for RCB on Wednesday night as the team defended 149 for 8 for their second win in as many games.

Ahmed even came out to bat at number three ahead of Glenn Maxwell and AB de Villiers, a reflection Virat Kohli's faith in the ability of the left-hander.

Both Shahbaz Ahmed and Rajat Patidar (who played the last game as Devdutt Padikkal was unavailable) have been brilliant in the practice games," Siraj said in the post-match press conference. 'Shaĥbaz, as an all-rounder, gives us that extra

option with his left-arm spin. The wicket was slow and turning also. Shahbaz Ahmed fitted into it for this

game and did the job for us," he added.
"We had overs left of Washington Sundar too. But Virat bhai thought with two right-handers at the crease, a left-arm spinner could be brought.

"He created a chance with Manish Pandey in his first over, and that's why he bowled another, and that changed the game for us," said Siraj

IPL '21 is bang on track with a hugely local flavour



Hemant Kenkre

Silly Point

xpect the unexpected' is an epi-gram commonly used when it comes to describing the vagaries in the game of cricket. As the Indian Premier League (IPL) keeps its trickle on sluggish pitches like the ones seen in Chennai, the results are far from what a

fan would expect. Who, for that matter, would have imagined the kind of turnpretenders

around wins by holders Mumbai Indians (MI) and Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in their last match-Neither would Punjab Kings (PBKS) fans have

Arshdeep Singh to bowl the last, crucial over with other experienced bowlers around. The 22-year old Sikh kept the faith his skipper had in him and stopped a rampaging Sanju Samson from crossing the line for Rajasthan Royals (RR) in a close game which Punjab won by 4 runs. The contrasting stories that the IPL has had so far

wanted their skipper Lokesh Rahul to ask

has brought into the limeight a new lot of heroes the uncapped players. Some of whom are not

even on the fringe of national selection. When a Harshal Patel and Shahbaz Ahmed turned around two matches for RCB and were featured prominently in the news the next day, the search engines must have been on overdrive. Ditto with Rahul Tripathi, Avesh Khan, Chetan Sakariya who played pivotal roles for their teams in the past week of the

As predicted in my last column, the 2021 edition IPL was going to be one where newer, local talent would be wanting to make

their mark, which is exactly what has happened in the tournament so far. The uncapped players, that have shown tremendous resilience, particularly in challenging stances, have reposed the faith that IPL talent scouts had in them to play the most prized Twenty20 tournament in the world. Players, considered also rans and the bits-andpieces type (with due apologies to them) are now standing up and being

With six of the eight teams being led by Indians

(Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad being the exceptions) the IPL now has a more domestic flavour. Finally, after 13 years, team planners have realised that the value of going local is reaping more rewards than punting on international stars. And, it does not disturb the bank balance. To watch a Sanju Samson lead RR with two international captains, Jos Buttler and Ben Stokes (now injured) in the team is a delight. Likewise when Rishab Pant goes out for the toss for Delhi Capitals instead of the experienced

Ajinkya Rahane. IPL 2021 is bang on track with a hugely local flavour which warms the cockles of ones heart. With relatively unknown (and uncapped players) making headlines, local is now getting 'hyper-local' which is a great sign for Indian cricket. This, coupled with the uncertainties of the game, promises a much more exciting tournament than previous editions. are now eagerly watching and waiting for more 'local' twists in the

Australian Steve Smith or

Editor: Kaushik Mitter