nicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | 16 APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Forecast: Clear. Max/Min temp.

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**

Fajar: 5.35 am **Zohar:** 1.30 pm **Asar:** 5.15 pm Maghrib: 6.25 pm **Isha:** 8.15 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.51 AM SUNSET TODAY 6.23 PM MOONRISE TODAY 8.36 PM MOONSET TOMORROW 10.49 AM





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

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 recomcollegium 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 Tokyo 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 can-

India, France ink

celling torch events.

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 4





SPORTS 6

Angry Kohli rapped for kicking chair

TABLOID

Ranveer's proposed film lands in trouble

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Centre gets HC notice on sale of Vizag Steel Plant

DC CORRESPONDENT

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Thursday served notices to the Central government to file its response within four weeks on its decision to

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 infrastructure 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 S. 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 Reddy, 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,

The ruling party's candidate Dr Maddila Gurumurthy is set against four-time 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 by a margin of 2,28,376

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

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 Swamy, minister 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 meetings.

■ 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 NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

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, Maharashtra alone accounts for nearly 40 per cent of the total active caseload.

According to Union health ministry officials, Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh are among the states where double Bengal, Gujarat, 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 repo rting a shortage of medical oxygen in view of rising Covid cases, an inter-min-isterial empowered group of central government officers on Thursday initiated actions to address short age and panic.

The government has decided to import 50,000 MT of medical oxygen to address the immediate shortage as the empowered group initiated mapping of 12 high burden states to oxygen sources. Reliance Industries Ltd

and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd have diverted oxygen from their refinerpitals, free of cost.

Maharashtra topped the list of states that consumed vast amounts of oxygen followed by Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, 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

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

For this, the current oxy gen 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



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 arrangements 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 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 the 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.

6.21 lakh doses Coronavirus vaccine in one day and said he would write a letter to the Central government for Covid vaccine stocks.

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

queries on Covid-19. He also directed the officials to fix prices for treatment 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 maintain a record on the availability of beds in Arogyasri-empanelled hospitals and private hospitals. He also said that a spe-

cial 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.

NEET PG EXAMS POSTPONED DUE TO COVID SPIKE

New Delhi, April 15: In view of a spike in the num-ber 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 said on Thursday.

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

"In light of the surge in 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

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 rated 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 conducted 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 registered 5,086 new 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

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 — have registered two-digit numbers. Chittoor reported the highest at 835 followed by 626 in Kurnool, 611 in Guntur, 568 in Srikakulam, 450 in East Godavari, 432 in Visakhapatnam, 396 in Krishna, 334 in Anantapur, 248 in Vizianagaram, 236 in Prakasam, 223 in Nellore.

Chittoor district record-

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, 2,355 in Kurnool, 2,086 in Nellore, 1,857 in Prakasam, 1,513 in 1,288 Anantapur,

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 authorities discharged 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

New port work disrupts old habitat, forces birds to relocate NATURE | AT RISK

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, changed their routes towards Uppada shore and

mudflats near were a rich habitat for the migratory birds. The mud-

Central Asian FlyWay for 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 Wildlife Coringa Sanctuary in the winter Kumbhabhishekam habi-

expansion of the seventh

berth and other develop-

ment activities in the 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 Rao.

He said the season for Skimmer Indian almost over and a few birds were visible at pre-sent 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, threat-ening these species," he

He said that the governments should protect the important creek, which is an important habitat for migratory birds and suggested 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 reports, horticulture reports. 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 petitions 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 implementation 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

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 personnel 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 Vajra 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 corruption in the volunteers system.

Avinash objected to the comments made by Naidu while terming volunteers as gunnybag 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 Devineni leader 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)

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 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 imminent in the forthcoming Tirupati (SC) Lok Sabha byelection, panchayat raj minister Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy alleged that the stonethrowing incident was stage-managed by TD chief Chandrababu Naidu to gain sympathy among

Addressing the media here on Thursday, Peddireddy reiterated his Thursday, 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 mur-der 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.

yelection. Claiming that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has implemented 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.

Among the opposition parties, the Telugu Desam

had put in all efforts to

win the seat amid its wan-

ing reputation in the just

concluded local body elec-

tions. Former chief minis-

ter Chandrababu Naidu,

his son Nara Lokesh and

other senior TD leaders

have completed many

rounds of campaigns, cov-

ering all the assembly segments. The TD chief

organised at least one pub-



Oppn spreading false propaganda: Sajjala

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

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, Rama-krishna 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.

YSRC slammed TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh for not demanding an explana-tion 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-

lic meeting in each of the

seven Assembly segments.

also launched a scathing

attack on the YSRC, dig-

ging out the Viveka mur-

der case, pointing out the

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.

The father-and-son duo

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

ly.
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

SURESH HITS OUT AT TD SUPREMO **FOR CRITICISING WELFARE SCHEMES**

DC CORRESPONDENT **NELLORE, APRIL 15**

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 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 flagship programme of the ruling party, Amma Vodi, even though they failed to extend financial assistance 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 children without break.

Oppn parties put all efforts to win bypoll date and YSRC chief based on their religious affiliation. The YSRC's Gurumurthy filed his nomination as a person

However, the BJP leaders accused him of giving information incorrect about his religion in his nomination papers and accused him of converting

demanded his candidature.

17.11 LAKH VOTERS **TO CAST VOTE IN TIRUPATI BYPOLL ON APRIL 17**

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 prevalence of Covid-19 pandemic, a polling station was set up for every 1,000 voters and added that for the first time, voters aged above 80 years to get the facility of postal ballot.

Meanwhile, in Nellore, officials under the directions of district collector and Tirupati LS Constituency Returning Officer K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu are gearing up for the Tir-upati Lok Sabha bypoll. The parliament segment

consists of Sarvepalli, Gudur, Venkatagiri, and Sullurpeta assembly segments in Nellore and Satyavedu, Srikalahasti, and Tirupati constituencies in Chittoor district. 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, webcasting 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 Chakradhar Babu said there are going to use to Ballot units since there are 28 candidates in the fray and in addition to NOTA.

According to the RO, 10,850 polling personnel are being deputed for election duties and all of them have been vaccinated considering the risk of infection.
With regard to security

arrangements, 23 companies of central troops, 3 companies of special forces besides the civil police personnel are being deployed for monitoring the law-and-order situation at the polling stations. Special forces are being sent to 877 locations identified as critical

polling stations.

The Returning Officer advised the outsiders involved in the campaign 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.

The TD team, led by its MLC Paruchuri Ashok Babu, submitted the com-plaint to the chief electoral officer on Thursday

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

their booth agents."
Further, the police offi-

TD leaders that the YSRC 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 co-nnivance 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 after obtaining their signature," 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 by election 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 Observer 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

Andhra Pradesh BJP

Election Commission of India seeking its intervention to prevent misuse of the state government machinery for conduct of bypoll to Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency in a free and fair manner. BJP state president Somu Veerraju wrote a let-

ter to the Chief Election Commissioner on Thursday alleging that the ruling YSRC government was abusing the government machinery to obtain illegitimate political 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

said that the volunteers were taking part in doorto-door campaign by distributing a letter written

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

and 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 display ing the image of Lord Venkateswara prominently on it, in violation of certain provisions in the Representation People's Act, 1951

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

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, APRIL 15

Telugu Desam general-secretary 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-

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 com-

ers, "I will not remain

mitted suicide. Lokesh said that when TD workers were arrested, Jagan expressed his joy. "I asked Jagan to pay attention to development instead of harassment of TD leaders," Lokesh said

has focused on the Hindutva agenda by targeting the YSRC candidate. Lacked with the secondary cadre, the BJP was said to be lagged behind in rising prices of essential commodities. TD nominee 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-

On the other hand, BJP

belonging to a Scheduled Caste Hindu.

Christianity and anded election authorities to disqualify

TIRUPATI | BYPOLL Sanctity of temple town has been destroyed, alleges TD chief Naidu calls upon voters to safeguard AP future

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, APRIL 15

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 safeguard the future of AP.

Addressing the media at a press conference here on Thursday, the former chief minister said that the Tirupati Parliament

by election is not just limited to temple city, but people should use it as a 'Vajrayudham' — a diamond weapon — to teach a befitting lesson to the ruling 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 Uthukkotai. between



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 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.

SHORT TAKES

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 represented 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 Control Board, Pollution 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, ONGC's Tatipaka Group Gathering Station to pay ₹7.28 crore, Kesanapalli GGS to pay ₹4.11 crore and Odalarevu GGS

CPCB SCIENTIST VISTS TYCHE INDUSTRIES

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, 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.

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.



India, the undersigned invites e Tender for the following works up to 15.00 hours and the date mentioned

S.No.: 1 Tender Notice No. B.E.29/I/EGS/01/2021-22. Name o work: Vijavawada - Construction o rd Pit line at Coaching Departmer COA-Power Supply arrangements Tender value (₹): 6948913/- EMD (₹): NIL Cost Tender document (₹): NI Period of completion: 180 days Date of closing: 04.05.2021

S.No.: 2 Tender Notice No. B.E.29/I/EGS/02/2021-22. Name of work: Vijayawada – Annua Maintenance contract for lifts on PF No.1, 4 & 5, 6 & 7, 10 and near Clock Tower-5 Nos. for a period of 3 years a Vijavawada Railway Station, Tender value (₹): 3600258/- EMD (₹): NIL Cost Tender document (₹): 3000/ Period of completion: 36 Months Date of closing: 04.05.2021

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Divisional Railway Manage

(Electrical).Viiavawada

T.N.No.GTL-TRSO-4-eTN-01-02 03-04-2020-21 Dt.23.03.2021 Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer Traction / Guntakal acting for and or

pehalf of The President of India invite E-Tenders for the following works S.No.: 1 Tender No.: GTL-TRSO-4

eTN-02-2020-21 Name of work Outsourcing of Running Roon activities at Gooty for a period of Two years (24 months). Period Two Years (24 months) Estimated value of work (₹): 70,04,064.62/-

Closing date and time: 11.05.2021 a 11.00 hrs.

For Bidding the tender and othe details login to http://www.ireps.gov.in If any Corrigendum to the tender is to be issued, the same will be issued online only

Sr.Divisional Electrical A0367 Engineer (TR), Guntakal

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at https://www.ireps.gov.in or www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

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 short-

The

age 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 as 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 Control 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

Covid management and vaccination, M. Ravi Chandra to take care of primary contact tracing and testing and testing Commercial tax com-

missioner Kumar to monitor the help desk and CCTV.

COVID PATIENT DIES BY SUICIDE

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM.

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 building in

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 from the building

on demand facility.

The collector said he was not aware of the position in corporate hospitals. Peeyush

sources.

District Medical and Health Officer Dr P. Suryanarayana 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 spike in the cases.

PEOPLE FACE

DIFFICULTY TO

GET COVID TEST

DC CORRESPONDENT

People are finding it dif-

ficult to get Covid test in

Visakhapatnam city 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 maximum 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.

on Thursday.

VISAKHAPATNAM,

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 average but now the number has been reduced to 3,000 and odd," the DMHO told

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

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.

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

(57), Kiran's wife Bamidi 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. Manivala Vinav. 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 Vijav Kiran and the case soft drinks to her. He is pending in the court.

Inspector of Pendurthi police station. Ashok Kumar said that Vijay 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 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.

LANDLORD ATTACKS BANK STAFF IN SRIKALAHASTI

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, APRIL 15

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 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

'Upon opening the bag, lower part of a man in 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 part of Standard 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. Kuppam Police have registered a case on this and further investigation is being done.

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 platclothes 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 affectforms for drying by covering them with tarpaulin resume cultivation."

Reputed Guntur doc gets distinguished farmer award

Vijayawada: A practicing 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 coolies.

The government selected Dr Sambasiva Reddy for the award on the occasion of Ugadi. Due to Corona-related problems, it was presented only on Thursday.

University faculty taff felicitated Sambasiva Reddy and presented him with the Visishtha Rythu award.

Dr. Reddy said he was having 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 difficulfarm ties 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 prof-

itable to farmers. The NGRAU officials said that Dr. Sambasiva Reddy was showing lot of interest in agriculture activities and invented a new equipment with ₹500 expenditure by making few changes to Inapa Gorru (drill plough) to ease the works of agricul-

ture coolies.

They said that the government selected Dr. Sambasiva Reddy for Visishtha Rythu award on the occasion of Ugadi but due to Corona it was presented today. The NGRAU officials felicitated Dr. Sambasiva Reddy and presented isishtha Rythu award.

Dr. Samabsiva Reddy said that he was fascinated towards agriculture hence started cultivation of various crops through zero natural farming process. He said that he tried various methods and found natural farming useful to get good quality and quantity yields with less expenditure. He said that during cultivation the agriculture workers faced a lot of difficulties in farmlands during ploughing hence he made changes to Inapa Gorru (drill plough) which eased agriculture works of coolies. Dr. Sambasiva Reddy said that he would continue cultivation activity and would work towards making natural farming into a profitable to farmers in the coming days.

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Four of a family found dead in Vizag Top student suspected as accused DC CORRESPONDENT

VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 15

Four members of a family were found dead under suspicious circumstances in a flat in Aditya Fortune Towers at Mithilapuri Colony, Madhurawada under PM Palem police limits station Visakhapatnam city.

The deceased were iden-Sunkari Bangaru Naidu (49), Dr Sunkari Nirmala (44), Sunkari Deepak (21) and Sunkari Kashyap (19).

The police said neighbours heard shouting at 2 am and two hours later they found smoke emanating from the flat. Fire tenders rushed to the spot and broke open the front door with a crowbar. They found bodies of Bangaru Naidu, Dr Nirmala and Kashyap scattered from the main door to hall and bedroom. The body of Deepak was

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM,

Deepak, who was suspected to have killed his parents and vounger 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 hosted by actor Chirajeevi and came close to winning the first prize, his uncle Ramu Naidu said. After passing out from NIT, Warangal, he moved

to New Delhi to get coachfound in the bathroom and he was wearing a suit

The elder son might have and tie. stabbed his parents and A senior officer said as vounger brother as stab per preliminary investiwounds and lacerated gation, there could have wounds were found on been a heated argument the bodies

ing to appear for UPSC examinations. He along working as a chemical engineer for some years in Bahrain, Bangaru with his parents and opened his own business brother visited his vil-Gantyada and expanded during sub-Vizianagaram district on sequent years.
"He wanted to open his March 21 to participate in the Yellamma Goddess business festival. The entire famicelebrated Sankranti festival in the village.

Ramu said his brother worked hard to get into the present position. completing his polytechnic Kakinada, he graduated in engineering and later did his MBA in which he obtained a PhD. After

which went out of hands.

Visakhapatnam began constructing his own house, close to the present Aditya Fortune Towers where the family perished," Ramu told few reporters in Gantyada.

branch in

The villagers who were shocked to learn the incident said Bangaru opened an ashram on the outskirts of his village to house destitute persons.

Later he might have tried to escape by raising a fire through a cooking gas cylinder but got trapped in the smoke and died. Dog squad, CLUES team and professor of

sonnel round the clock. CCTVfootage The revealed that none entered the apartment during the entire night of Wednesday. The last person to enter the flat was Bangaru Naidu at 8.56 pm. A case under Section

forensic medicine visited

The police said the apartment was gated and

fully secure with CCTV

cameras placed at every

strategic point. There

were also security per-

minute observations.

302, 201 of IPC was registered at PM Palem police station on Thursday and the bodies were sent to King George Hospital for autopsy. Family sources said the

hailed Gantyada in Vizianagaram district and settled in Bahrain for the past 10 vear. Bangaru Naidu was a qualified engineer and recently obtained his PhD in business management.

SHORT TAKES 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 former's first human space mission, Gaganyaan, a move that will enable Indian flight physicians to train at French

French space agency CNES said under the agreement, equipment developed by it, tested and still operating aboard the International Space Station (ISS) will be made available to Indian

The CNES will also be supplying fireproof carry bags made in France to shield equipment from shocks and radiation, it said.

The agreement was announced during French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian's visit to the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) head-quarters in Bengaluru.

Indian Space Research Organisation's has asked CNES to help prepare for the Gaganyaan mission and to serve as its single European contact in this domain, the

French space agency said.
"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 applica tions and space operations at CNES in Toulouse and at the European Astronaut Centre (EAC) in Cologne, Germany," the CNES said.

The training of astronauts is a critical aspect of the human space mission project. Flight physicians or surgeons are responsible for astronaut's health before, during and after the flight. Currently, all space physicians are from the Indian

France has a well-established mechanism for space medicine. It also has the MEDES space clinic, a subsidiary of CNES, where space surgeons undergo training.

Weekend lockdown in Delhi till April 30

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

DC CORRESPONDENT

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced a curfew this coming weekmalls, 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 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 Covid-19 cases.

However, the restaurants will be allowed to operate home-delivery and takeaway 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 Disaster 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)



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a roadshow campaign for state Assembly polls, amid the rise in Covid-19 cases across the country, in Kolkata on Thursday,

EC rules out clubbing poll phases

RAJIB CHOWDHURI & PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE,

Undeterred by the exponential rise in daily cases of the Coronavirus disease across the country 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 lack of availability of another 1,500 companies

gatherings will be allowed. People going to airports, will be allowed to proceed of the Central paramilitary forces. 'There is no such plan of

clubbing" the three poll Commission said after Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra took stock of the ground reality from various poll observers deputed in the state and chief electoral officer West Bengal Ariz Aftab in a video conference.

At the meeting, opinions were also sought from them about the deployment and distribution of

on the production of valid

tickets. However, those

going for vaccination will

the Central forces in case of clubbing the last three poll phases after the state recorded daily new Covid-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. 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 on April 22, April 26 and April 29, respectively.

curfew pass. Mediapersons have been exempted from the weekend curfew. People dealing in food, gro-

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Bane-rjee on Thursday evening also appealed to the EC to club the "remaining phases" of the polls into one, within few hours of the 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 prolonged eight-phase poll

ceries, fruits, vegetables and dairy products will pass for their movement.

schedule.

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

BHAGWAN PARAB & SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC NIGHT CURFEWS 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 Response 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 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 treatment of these patients, the Centre should allow air transportation of medical oxygen, he said.
"The medical oxygen

requirement in Maharashtra 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

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

IN 20 DISTRICTS OF ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO 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 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 of Cuttack and Bhuban-eswar 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.

as natural calamity would allow the state to pay a daily grant of ₹100 and ₹60 to adults and children respectively during the lock-down period, said

Russia threatens Ukraine: Kiev

eign 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 conference that Russian pundits and officials are "openly threatening Ukraine with war and the destruction of Ukrainian state-"We condemn Russia's aggravation of the security situation, Moscow's actions and statements aimed at escalating military tensions and undermining diplomatic efforts to resolve the Russian-Ukrainian conflict," Kuleba said.

"The red line of Ukraine is the state border. If Russia crosses the red line, then it will have to suffer," he added. Kiev has been fighting pro-Russian separatists in two breakaway regions in the east of the country since 2014 when Moscow annexed Crimean peninsula.

No Chauvin 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 prosecution'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 hon-our," 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.

WHO: Europe surpasses 1 million Covid-19 deaths

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

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 Coronavir-

us 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 suffering 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:

Novartis, Roche team up on drug

Zurich, April 15: Novartis announced Thursday it will join forces with fellow Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche to produce tocilizumab, a drug being tested for its effectiveness against Covid-19-linked pneumonia.

It is the third time Novartis has made its production capacities available to a competitor during the Coronavirus pandemic, as several laboratories strike unprecedented partnerships to fight the global crisis.

Novartis is already collaborating with BioNTech and Cure Vac in producing Covid-19 vaccines.

The new tocilizumab deal will see Roche's manufacturing expertise transferred to the Novartis Drug Substance Singapo-

about it, the AstraZeneca

vaccine is effective in

reducing Covid-19 hospi-

streets on Monday to lau-

nch violent protests to fo-

rce the government to ex-

pel the French ambassa-

dor over blasphemous ca-

ricatures published last

year. Though no French

citizen was reportedly ta-

rgeted so far but the em-

bassy has urged all the

French citizens to leave Pakistan, apparently as a

precautionary measure.

re production site during the second quarter of

"Novartis is fully committed to collaborating with Roche in offering our proven biologics production capabilities," said Steffen Lang, the firm's technical chief.

"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, tocilizumab is a treatment for rheumatoid which is also being tested in clinical trials investigating its safety and effi-cacy against Covid-19associated pneumonia.

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

talisation and preventing French nationals in Pak told to leave

London, April 15: A global fashion brand kn-The French embassy here own for its bedazzled haon Thursday advised all ndbags issued an apology and ceased the prod-French nationals in Pakistan to temporarily leave uction of a Ganesha cluthe country after violent tch bag with leather liniprotests by a radical reling after protests by Ingious group that has now dian diaspora groups in been banned by the government. The Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) took to the United Kingdom.

Judith Leiber said it would replace the lining with synthetic after concerns were raised about the use of leather alongside the image of a Hindu deity, given the sanc-tity of the cow for Hindus. "We are deeply sorry to hear that our Ganesh bag has caused offence to the Hindu community," said Lela Katsune, President of Judith Leiber Couture.

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.

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 message to its citizens in Pakistan. It said that the departures will be carried out by existing commercial airlines.

Myanmar troops shoot at health staff, 1 killed

Protesting medicos flee for safety to a nearby mosque

Yangon, April 15: Myanon protesting healthcare workers Thursday, killing at least one bystander as the demonstrators fled for safety to a nearby mosque.

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 secondlargest city Mandalay, a demonstration by medical workers Thursday turned violent when soldiers opened fire, sending them running to the mosque.

"They were shooting everywhere... 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



This photo taken and received from an anonymous source via Facebook on Thursday shows protesters marching during a demonstration against the military coup in Mogok in Myanmar.

unded. "The man who died was shot from the back and it penetrated through 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 said. Myanmar's healthcare workers have been at 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 unstaf-

Civil servants from other sectors have followed suit, bringing the operation of

fed during the pandemic.

the country's banks, schools, 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

Retaliation: US expels 10 Russian diplomats

Washington, April 15: countries can deescalate. nced sanctions and the expulsion of 10 Russian diplomats Thursday in retaliation for what Washington says is the Kremlin's US election interference, a massive individuals accused of 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 international action," the

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

meddling in the 2020 presidential election. Biden's order "sends a signal that the United States will impose costs in a strategic and economically impactful manner on Russia if it continues or escalates its destabilising The Kremlin said Thurs-

day that sanctions would not "help" momentum for a summit and once the White House unveiled its measures, the Russian foreign ministry warned a Russian response was "inevitable.'

"The United States is not ready to come to terms with the objective reality that there is a multipolar that hegemony,' American spokeswoman Zakharova said.

BLINKEN IN KABUL TO SELL 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.

Blinken sought to assure senior Afghan politicians that the US 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.

quick

INDICATOR	RS	%
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



■ 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 Dhabi-based 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 Pyt 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



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 lakĥ 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

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 individuals/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

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.

Olympics over the coron-

avirus remains a possibili-

ty on Thursday, as a surge

in cases renews concerns

about the Games with less

Party's number two, said

Democratic

than 100 days to go. Toshiro Nikai, the

Liberal

is too severe.

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 countries, with its global CEO

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 agriculture 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 rendered 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

SANGEETHA G 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 val-ued 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



Cleartrip, which reported revenues of Rs 319 crore and loss of Rs 14 crore in FY20, according to Tofler. Cleartrip will continue

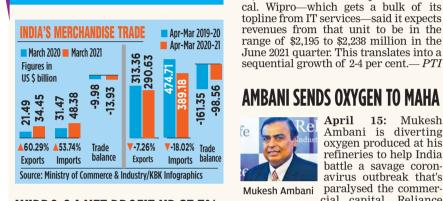
to operate as a separate brand, retaining all employees while working closely with Flipkart to further develop technology solutions to make trav-

el simple for customers. Cleartrip, founded in 2006, has been competing with MakeMyTrip, Yatra,

Ebix, and Booking.com. Most of the online travel aggregators have been suffering losses even before pandemic due to heavy competition and thin margins. The pandemic further 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 finan-

"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.

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-



Ambani is diverting oxygen produced at his refineries to help India battle a savage coronavirus outbreak that's Mukesh Ambani paralysed the commer-

cial 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.

—**Debjit Chakraborty**/Bloomberg

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Chess wizard Anand bereaved

Chennai: Five-time world chess champion Viswanathan Anand's father, K Viswanathan, died here ness. 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

daughter. 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, Diokovic, 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 years," said Djokovic. "I felt awful on the court overall. Nothing worked. Just one of those days." - AFP

Aditi gets off to

Ashok carded three birdies in

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

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 **Tokyo, April 15:** A senior will go ahead safely, but Japanese politician said Nikai said Thursday that Toshiro Nikai, the Japanese politician said cancelling the Tokyo

situation at the time," he told the private TBS television network. 'We need to cancel it without hesitation i they're no longer possi-ble," added Nikai, who is

all options were on the

table. "We need to make a

decision depending on the

the Olympics must be canthe LDP's secretary gener-"without hesitation" if the virus situation Asked if he considered cancellation an option, Nikai said: "Yes of course. A year after their his-If infection spreads because of the Olympics, I toric postponement, the Olympics remain don't know what the

beset by pandemic prob-lems, with parts of the torch relay forced behind Olympics is for." He added however that closed doors and public he sees the Games as an support consistently low. "opportunity", and it was Organisers and Olympic "important for Japan to officials insist the Games excitement with

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 tant to solve them one by

'MIGHT BE NO

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

agency: "The Games will 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 strong encouragement that we contain the coronavirus 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 of infections

Record numbers of cases have been reported in Osaka in recent days, and the government has been forced to authorise new restrictions just weeks after lifting a virus state of emergency.

Compounding the problem 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

SARITA FIGHTS

BACK TO KEEP

April

Scripting a sensational

ASIAN TITLE

Almaty,

Hardik promoted in BCCI contracts New Delhi, April 15: The LIST OF BCCI'S star trio of India captain **ANNUAL CONTRACTS**

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 Hardik Pandya earned a promotion despite an injury-

plagued season. A total of 28 cricketers were awarded central contracts in four categories on Thursday.

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

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.

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

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 Agarwal.

GRADE C (71 crore): Kuldeep Yadav, Navdeep Saini, Deepak Chahar, Shubmar 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 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 Bellingham gave Dortmund an early lead, Bellingham but a second-half Riyad Mahrez penalty 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 ast week's first leg in Manchester, England 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 season.
"The guys deserve it

because what they have

achieved this season is incredible. Guardiola was full of praise for Mauricio praise Pochettino's PSG after 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

Liverpool (Real Madrid win 3-1 on aggregate)

on aggregate)

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

"It's time to celebrate and drink a lot of wine,

then prepare to face

Chelsea (in the FA Cup

"We saw yesterday how

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 Park 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



scoring against Borussia Dortmund in their Champions League quarterfinal second leg match in Dortmund, western Germany, on Wednesday.

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 Mongolia's Shoovdor Baatarjav. 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 chal-lenged 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 chal-lenged the call and lost that to give an extra point to Sarita, who won 10-7.

ALL-WIN DAY FOR INDIAN

New Delhi, April 15: It was a second successive allwin 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.

DECCAN CHRONICLE, VIJAYAWADA, FRIDAY, 16 APRIL 2021

Nitish Rana,

KKR Sanju Samson, RR

Manish Pandey, SRH

PURPLE

Harshal

Patel, RCB **Andre**

Russell, KKR **Avesh**

Khan, DC



Chris Lynn of Mumbai Indians winds down by surfing in Chennai

Kohli rebuked for breaching code

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 RCB won the by six runs.

"Kohli admitted to the Level 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,' said the IPL in a statement.

Vengalil Narayan Kutty was the match referee in the game while Nitin Menon and Ūlhas 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 ÎPL'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 is believed to be positive.

"DC have brought in Shams 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 by six runs in the IPL here.

SRH skipper David Warner was not happy with that call.
"He (Warner) was a little
animated because we weren't

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 second high no-ball, but the first one was not directed at the batter's body, so that wasn't a

warning," Bayliss said.

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RAJASTUN DELHI

Miller, Morris shine as Royals turn tables on Capitals

Mumbai, April 15: David Miller's combative 43-ball 62 and Chris Morris' timely 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 147 for 8.

Miller then anchored the Royals' chase but it was Morris whose blitzkrieg took Royals home with two balls to spare. It is Royals' first win of the season.

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 the final over.

Morris ended the run chase with a six off Tom

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

In the next over, Kagiso Rabada dismissed the dangerous Royals captain Sanju Samson — the only centurion so far this seawith Shikhar Dhawan taking the catch at the slip.

Shivam Dube (2) perished while playing an unnecessary uppish shot at a length ball off Avesh Khan with Dhawan taking his 78th catch of the IPL.

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

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

wicket burst from pacer Jaydev Unadkat helped RR restrict DC to 147 for 8.



Capitals at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday.

overs) dismissed Prithvi Shikhar Dhawan and Ajinkya Rahane to trigger DC's top-order collapse from which they

never recovered fully. Captain Rishabh Pant's blistering 32-ball 51, studded with nine fours, was not enough as DC could only post a modest total aing nut in to hat

DC made a disastrous start as they were two wickets down for 16 runs

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 Dhawan perished while attempting a ramp shot with RR captain and wicketkeeper Sanju Samson taking a stunning diving

Ajinkya Rahane's (8) underwhelming IPL form continued as he offered an 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 los Buttl

increasing once captain Riyan Parag's Pant came to the crease crashing onto the but still DC were 57 for 4 at

SCORECARD

Delhi Capitals: Prithvi Shaw c Miller b Javdev Unadkat 2, 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

overs) 147. 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 Stoinis 1-0-15-0.

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 by Rahul Tewatia.

Pant reached his fifty off 30 balls in the 12th over, with a four off Mustafizur The run rate started next over with bowler throw crashing onto the stumps.

+0.225+0.200+0.195 0 2 +0.0000 0 0 2 - 0.400

Dhoni & Co. look for winning ways

Mumbai, April Super Kings would look for inspiration from skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni and a much-improved 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 tournament 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 performance and give 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 batting, 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

 Puniab 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 singlehandedly took the game away from Punjab Kings with his whirlwind 63-ball opener, but fell short just by four runs in the end.

Young Arshdeep Singh (3/35) eventually emerged as Punjab'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.



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 Royal player for 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-per-former tag in the IPL. "He's shown a lot of

maturity, particularly today (against SRH on



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.

the 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 magnifi-cent. 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

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

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.

"Shahbaz, 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. -PTI

Chennai Super Kings captain M. S. Dhoni (left) and

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



xpect the unexpected is an epigram 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 Kings (PBKS) fans have

fan would expect. Who, for that matter, would have imagined the kind of turnaround wins by holders Mumbai Indians (MI) and pretenders Royal Bangalore Challengers (RCB) in their last match-

Neither would Punjab

Lokesh Rahul 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

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 Rahul Tripathi, Khan, Chetan Sakariya who played pivotal roles for their teams in the past week of the As predicted in my last

has brought into the limecolumn, the 2021 edition IPL was going to be one where newer, local talent light a new lot of heroes the uncapped players. Some of whom are not 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 circum-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

counted.
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 IPL tale.

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 Ajinkya Rahane.

IPL 2021 is bang on track