THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

**COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 27 | APRIL 2021** 



ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Chithirai 14 Tithi: Pournami Star: Swathi Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm Yamagandam: 9 am to 10.30 am **PRAYERS** Fajar: 4.39 am

Luhar: 12.13 pm **Asar:** 3.13 pm Maghrib: 6.23 pm Isha: 7.36 pm **SUNSET TODAY 6.34 PM** 

**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.05 AM MOONRISE TODAY 6.57 PM MOONSET TOMORROW 7.55 AM** 

**CORONA C\*UNT** 

CASES

(+3,13,774) (+2.638)1,76,20,194 1,97,756

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS (+15,684)TN: 10,97,672

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

14,82,83,452 **DEATHS** 31,28,904

worldometers.info

#### Govt appoints EA Secretary on RBI board

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank on Monday said the government has appointed Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth on the central bank's board. Seth replaces Tarun Bajaj, who was appointed as Revenue Secretary earlier this month. A 1987-batch Karnataka cadre IAS officer, Seth assumed charge of the Department of Economic Affairs last week. "The Central Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India as a Director on the Central Board of Reserve Bank of India vice Tarun Bajaj," the RBI said in a statement. The nomination of Seth is effective from April 24, 2021, and until further orders, it



Shh! Don't say no oxygen. You might be booked under the Gangster Act!

Fish, chicken and all meat sales banned on Saturdays



FINANCIAL CHRONICLE | 7 Bank chief's tenure

capped at 15 years

SPORT | 8 Delhi Capitals to meet **RCB** today

even as Advocate General

Vijay Narayan told the Madras High Court that

most of the oxygen manu-

factured there was of

industrial quality and not

fit for medical use but

steps would be taken to convert all the 1,050 MTs of oxygen to be fit for med-

Though the nod to open

the oxygen manufactur-

ing plant alone was given

for four months, on a tem-

porary basis, at an all-party meeting, attended

by representatives of 'rec-

ognized political parties,

leaders of a few other political parties came down heavily to the deci-

The meeting took note of

the prevailing conditions,

wherein there was a

shortage of oxygen in hos-

pitals to treat people affected by Coronavirus,

which in its second wave

was sweeping through the

State with more virulence

than earlier, and favoured the opening of the oxygen

Among the conditions

laid out for Sterlite were

that none of the other units in the Thoothukudi

plant can be opened or

operated and the that the

oxygen produced in the

next four months, which

may be extended in view

of the continuing pandem-

ic, should be primarily

supplied to hospitals in

'Under no circum-

plant alone.

Tamil Nadu.

Ashwin, 2 Aussies pull out

sion.



Vol. 11 No.120 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | 4.00

COVID CARE

Sterlite can open

### Madras HC slams ECI for allowing poll rallies and spreading Covid

Court wants safety measures for vote counting day (May 2)

DC CORRESPONDENT

The Madras high court on Monday came down heavily on the Election Commission of India for not ensuring that political parties adhered to the Covid protocol at the time of election campaigns and rallies.

A bench of Chief Justice Banerjee and Senthilkumar Saniib Ramamoorthy, hearing a petition on whether there were adequate Covid-19 safety procedures in place during vote counting at the Karur constituency, went so far as to say, "Election Commission officers should be booked on murder charges probably."

"Were you on another planet when political rallies were being held?" the chief justice asked EC's standing counsel when he told the court that measures had been put in place to ensure Covid -19 protocol during vote counting. The first bench made the observations while passng interim orders on a peti-tion pertaining to counting of votes at assembly constituency No,135 in Karur

The petitioner apprehended that at assembly constituency No.135 in Karur, special measures have to be taken at the time of counting to maintain Covid protocol since 77 candidates were in the fray and even though an additional hall has been arranged by the Election Commission for the purpose of counting, that may not be suffice to accommodate the counting personnel and the agents of 77

The bench said in the suo Commission."

### **US oxy concentrators arrive**

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle

Recalling that India had "sent assistance to the United States as our hospitals were strained early in the pandemic" during the first global wave last year, US President Joe Biden on Monday assured that his coun-

try was "determined to help India in its time of need", even as 318 Philips Oxygen Concentrators were transported from New York to New Delhi on Monday in an Air India

### Karnataka locks down

Karnataka announced a two-week lockdown with only essential movement allowed

motu proceedings pertaining to the Covid situation initiated by this court on April 22, 2021, among the directions issued to the state, some were for appropriate measures to be put in place in consultation with the Election Commission for counting on May 2, 2021. Even though the polling was by and large peaceful in this state on April 6, 2021 it must be observed that the Election Commission could not ensure that political parties adhered to the Covid

protocol at the time of election campaigns and rallies. "Despite repeated orders of this court, going on like a broken record at the foot of almost every order on an election petition, that Covid protocol ought to be maintained during the campaign time, the significance of adhering to such protocol may have been lost on the Election

#### **IT Czars** reach out

Google CEO Sundar Pichai and his Microsoft counterpart Satya Nadella have assured help to India as

the country grapples with a ravaging coronavirus crisis.

### Free vax for all: Delhi CM

The Delhi government will provide free COVID-19 vaccines to all those above 18 years of age for which purchase of 1.34 crore doses has been approved

### Reduce prices, vax makers told

**VINEETA PANDEY** with agencies input NEW DELHI, APRIL 26

Reacting to criticism from several states and political parties over profiteering during a major health crisis, and many asking that there be uniform pricing of vaccines for the Central and state governments, the BJP-led government on Monday asked Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech to the lower prices of their Covid-19 vaccines – Covishield and Covaxin, respective-

It is learnt that the issue of vaccine pricing was discussed at a meeting chaired by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba on Monday after the two companies announced their vaccine prices. It is expected the two companies will now come up with revised, reduced pricing for their vaccines.

The price for Covaxin was fixed at ₹600 per dose for state governments and at ₹1,200 per dose for private hospitals, while Covishield was priced at ₹400 per dose for state governments and ₹600 per dose for private hospitals. Both vaccines are available to the Central government at a rate of ₹150

### PM SPEAKS TO **US PREZ, JAPAN** PM ON COVID

US President Joe Biden late

on Monday evening spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and assured him of America's "shoulder-toshoulder steadfast support and solidarity" with India in the battle against Covid "by quickly deploying resources" such as oxygen-related supplies, therapeu-tics, ventilators and "identifying sources of raw materials to be made available for the manufacture of Covishield vaccines", even as PM Modi thanked him and "underscored the importance of smooth and efficient supply chains of vaccine raw materials and medicines". PM Modi also conveyed to the US President India's "commitment to contain the COVID-19 pandemic globally through Vaccine "Maitri" (India's vaccine exports), and its participation in COVAX and the Quad Vaccine Initiatives'

al wave last year.

### G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, APRIL 26 The State government decided to allow Sterlite Industries to produce Oxygen at its Copper Smelter plant in Thoothukudi on Monday

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI

NEW DELHI, APRIL 26

New Delhi had last month appealed to the US to ensure smooth supply of vaccine raw materials even as India is currently being battered by a second ferocious wave of Covid. The US President had recalled earlier in the day that India had "sent assistance to the United States as our hospitals were strained early in the pandemic" during the first glob-

# to make O2: TN

Among the parties that attended the meeting were DMK, Congress, BJP, CPM, CPI and PMK.

### All set for O<sub>2</sub> production, say **Sterlite officials**

ARULOLI M | DC THOOTHUKUDI, APRIL 26

The Sterlite administration here on Monday said that the unit was ready for the production of medical grade oxygen in its two units.

Issuing a statement on its preparedness following the decision taken at the Chief Minister convened all party meeting on Monday, Sterlite administration said, "We are committed to making the entire production capacity of 1,000 tonnes available for the purpose of medical grade oxygen.'

stances will the company be allowed to produce cop-per or electricity or any other produce inside the plant,' said one of the resolutions at the meeting, which made it clear that the oxygen manufactur-ing would be monitored by a committee, led by the Thoothukudi Collector.

### **STRAY VIOLENCE IN SIXTH PHASE BENGAL POLLS**

RAJIB CHOWDHURI & PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE, APRIL 26:

The seventh phase of the Assembly Election in 34 seats spread over five districts in West Bengal recorded 75.06% polling peacefully by and large except some stray incidents of violence in Murshidabad on

While nine seats in Murshidabad saw a voters' turnout of 80.30%, six constituencies in South Dinajpur of North Bengal saw 80.21% polling with 78.76% and 70.34% voting in six seats of Malda and nine in Burdwan West respectively from 7 am to 5 pm.

### TN CM calls for fair vax pricing

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APR 26

Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami took objection to the differential prices fixed for Covid-19 vaccines by the manufactures who would be charging the States more than what they would charge the Centre. He urged the Centre to do the procurement for the States.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, he said "the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has announced a new policy to be adopted in the phase 3 of the COVID-19 vaccination throughout the country. As per this policy,

States have been given the responsibility to procure and administer vaccine to the people in the age group of 18 to 45."

The vaccine would be procured by States at a price be distinctly different from the price that the Centre would be paying since manufacturers had already announced an increased rate for States, he said. Terming the differential price mechanism as 'inherently unfair' since it places a higher financial burden on States and also 'iniquitous' since the States had considerably less fiscal than the resources Palaniswami Centre, urged the Centre to supply the vaccine for phase 3.

#### TO PM FUND Cummins gives \$50k

Australian pacer Pat Cummins who plays for Kolkata Knight Riders donated \$50,000 towards the PM CARES Fund for oxygen supplies in India. He also urged

other players to contribute to the fight against the deadly virus. "As players, we are privileged to have a platform that allows us to reach millions of people that we can use for good. I am advised that the Indian government is of the view that playing the IPL while the population is in lockdown provides few hours of joy and respite each day at an otherwise difficult time for the

country," Cummins said in his statement.

### of IPL for personal reasons C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, APRIL 26

Pressure is mounting on the organisers of the Indian Premier League to scrap the ongoing edition as more players pull out of the cash-rich league in the wake of a Covid-19 surge in the country. However, the BCCI has insisted that the tournament will go on. After the opening leg in Chennai and Mumbai, the IPL juggernaut has moved to Ahmedabad and Delhi with players being con-

fined to bio bubbles.
Off-spinner R. Ashwin announced in the small hours of Monday that he would be taking a break



in Chennai is "putting up a fight against COVID-19". 'I want to support them during these tough times. I expect to return to play if things go in the right direction," said Ashwin who represents Delhi Capitals. Ashwin's parents are hospitalised after testing positive. While Ashwin is the first

Indian player to announce his pull out, two more Australian cricketers joined the growing list of foreign withdrawals on Monday. "Adam Zampa and Kane Richardson have decided to leave India citing personal rea-

sons," said Royal
Challengers Bangalore.
Former Aussie skipper
Ricky Ponting, currently
the coach of Delhi Capitals, said the situation is "quite grim". "Yes, it's hard for the players to be away from their families and I can't even imagine putting myself in that situation," said Ponting.

# China censors history-making Oscar winner

**Beijing, April 26:** Beijingborn Chloe Zhao was scrubbed from Chinese social media on Monday as a nationalist backlash airbrushed out her remarkable achievement of becoming the first woman of colour to

win the best director Oscar. Zhao on Sunday night became the second woman ever to win the coveted award at the Oscars, as her film Nomadland — about marginalised Americans roaming the west — bagged best picture and its lead, Frances McDormand, won best actress.

But all recent posts containing her name and Nomadland were mysteriously wiped from the Twitter-like site Weibo by Monday noon Beijing time. Her win was also met with silence by Chinese media.



Producers Frances McDormand and Chloe Zhao, hold the Oscar for Best Picture for "Nomadland" as they pose in the press room at the Oscars on Monday at Union Station in Los

Initially hailed by state target of a nationalist back-media for her film's success lash after social media at the Golden Globes in March, Zhao became the

users dug up years-old

Chinese cinemas abruptly

pulled the film's scheduled release. This year's Oscars were also not aired on Chinese television or streaming channels. Zhao appeared to allude to these difficulties in her Oscars acceptance speech, saying, "I've been thinking a lot lately of how I keep going when things get hard."

She also quoted a line from a Classical Chinese poem that translates to "people are fundamentally good at birth" -- a move praised by many Chinese social media users, before

the posts were deleted. Weibo was initially flooded with posts praising Zhao on Monday morning, while others decried censorship. "Chloe Zhao becomes the

appeared to criticise her country of birth. first Asian/Chinese female filmmaker to win the best filmmaker to win the best director Oscar in history, wrote an entertainment blogger with more than 8.9 million followers, in a post that gained thousands of likes before it was deleted.

"China's public opinion control is outrageous. After Chloe Zhao's starling Oscars win, there is not even a fart on Weibo," wrote an outraged user.

Despite the censors' efforts, on the streets of Beijing, pride in an Asian director reaching the apogee of US cinema was easy to find.

"She's the pride of Chinese people... it's very rare for a Chinese to get an Oscar award," Yan Ying, a female engineer, told AFP on Monday morning.

### Knights gallop to five-wicket win



Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Pat Cummins (centre) celebrates a Punjab Kings wicket during an IPL game in Ahmedabad on Monday. Cummins took two wickets as KKR returned to winning ways by beating Punjab by five wickets.

#### OTHER STORIES

#### **After husband's** death, woman tries to kill two children in suicide pact

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 26

In what appears to be a suicide pact, a 34-year-old woman killed herself by consuming soft drink laced with poison, and also attempted to kill her two children in Tambaram on Sunday, the police said.

According to police, the deceased has been identified as, Neeta (34), a resident of Ambedkar Nagar in Selaiyur near Tambaram. Her children, 10-year-old son and a 6-year-old daughter, who were also fed with poison are undergoing treatment at Egmore Children's hospital.

Police sources said though the reason for the extreme step taken by Neeta is not certain. it is assumed that the family was grieving the loss of Neeta's husband and father of the two children Manoj Kumar

Manoj, who worked in a private company in the city, was fatally knocked down by a car on March 15 on Maduravoyal-Tambaram Bypass road.

Police said the incident hap-pened in the early hours of Sunday, when Neeta had allegedly mixed poison in juice and gave it to the children. While the children were sipping the drink, Neeta reportedly drank it and within a few minutes, she screamed in

Manoj's mother who lives on the ground floor of the house rushed to the house after hearing the cries of the two children. The trio was rushed to a private hospital nearby, where Neeta passed away. The two children are currently under treatment, the police said. Selaiyur police have registered a case and begun an investiga-

### **CM requests Centre to procure** and supply entire quantity of vaccine

From P1

He said it was a legitimate expectation as a budgetary provi-₹35,000 crore had



in the Budget Estimates for for the COVID-19 Vaccination programme.

He requested the Centre to procure and supply the entire required quantity of vaccine for administering all groups including those in the age group of 18-45 to the

'Further, the Government of India could also explore alter-native sources of supply of vaccine including possible imports to ensure that the vaccine roll out takes place across the country smoothly and expeditiously in the coming weeks,' the Chief Minister

# Fish, chicken and all meat sales banned on Saturdays

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 26

The state government banned sale of fish, chicken and meat on Saturdays to combat the spread of Covid-19 even as a new set of restrictions came into force on Monday, including closure of all places of worship, creating resentment among devotees.

A government order said that fish markets, fish stalls, chicken stalls and other meat stalls should be closed on Saturdays and Sundays for effective containment of coronavirus.

Warning violators of strict action under the provisions of the Disaster Management Act and var-

Entire operation will be

supervised by the commitee,

only experts allowed inside

The committee will have the Superintendent of

Police, Sub-Collector, Tamil Nadu Pollution

Control Board district environment engineer,

two government officials with expertise in oxy-

gen production, three public representatives, one from the locality, one from an environment NGO and another from the anti-Sterlite protest

The entire operation in the plant, for which

power supply would be by the State electricity

board, would be supervised by the committee and only those the technological experts direct-

ly connected with the production of oxygen will

Addressing the all-party meeting, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami said Sterlite

has moved the High Court seeking permission for producing oxygen at his two units inside the

Sterlite had promised to provide the oxygen produced in the plant free of cost to hospitals in

Tamil Nadu and the meeting had been convened

to help the government take a call on the company's plea in view of the testing times in which there is a shortage of oxygen, the Chief

Since the case would be coming up in court in

the next two days, all political parties could not

be invited for the discussion, he said, adding

that only the important parties have been

Reacting to the decision taken at the meeting,

Makkal Neethi Maiam (MNM) founder Kamal

Haasan said that parties like the MNM, MDMK,

NTK and VCK were not called for the meeting

because they were fighting in the field against

Among the parties that attended the meeting

were DMK, Congress, BJP, CPM, CPI and PMK. Their leaders defended the decision to

permit Sterlite to produce oxygen in the plant

that was shut down in 2018 following a massive protest by the local people that ended in police

Sterlite Copper polluting the land and water.

plant that have a capacity for 1050 tonnes.

be allowed inside the premises.

huge crowds witnessed at fish markets and meat stalls with people not following social distancing norms prompted the government to bring in the new restriction.

Last Saturday's rush at fish markets and meat shops was triggered by the fear of the Sunday lockdown that came into force for the first time. So to stock up on food items for Sunday, the crowds had thronged the fish and meat vends at various places.

In fact, heavy crowds were seen in almost all shops on Saturday including vegetable shops, gro-ceries and other stores.

ious sections of IPC, the However, the vignettes of government said that the mad scramble at places like Kasimedu and other fish markets where buyers get just a few hours to grab at the fresh catches were frightening with most people seen without facemasks. On Monday, barber

shops, spas, beauty par-lours cinemas, malls, bars, places of worship and big format shops all remained closed, causing resentment among the people and also those who lost

Hotels and restaurants were allowed to provide only take away facility and not serve food on their premises. Since that rule was applicable to even tea stalls, people who just sip

shops found it difficult to take it away somewhere and drink.

Also the new regime of obtaining e-pass to enter the State from other States other than Puducherry also came into force, keeping the police and authorities on their toes particularly in the border dis-

Already parks and tourist spots had been closed down and the closing down of places of worship caused consternation in devotees, who wanted to know how places of worship could turn out to be spreaders of the virus if a limited number of people were allowed to enter.

However, people tried to

tions and work their way out of the inconveniences caused by them.

While many private companies expanded work from home facilities or reduced the number of staff attending offices, government offices and public sector companies insisted on 100 per cent attendance, adding to the strain on public transport, considered to be a major source of viral

infection.
Even those employed in the non-essential services in the government and public sector offices had to attend office regularly without fail, despite some of the premises turning out to be Covid-19 clusters.

### State adds 15,000 more Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 26

The state added over 15,000 new Covid-19 cases and 95

deaths on Monday.

According to the data provided by the health department, the state recorded a total of 15, 684 new cases that is a slight rise from 15,659 on Sunday.

With this, the total Covid-19 tally in the state has touched 10,97,672 while death toll reached is 13,651 including 4,602 in Chennai.

Chennai registered 4,250 new cases and 35 deaths jumping from 4,206 new cases and 30 deaths on Sunday. Now, total cases in the district touched 3,14,074.

New cases in Chengalpet district on Monday touched 1,142 cases while the count on Sunday was 1,242. Four people also succumbed to Covid in the district. Total cases in the district now

stand at 75,032. Number of daily cases in Coimbatore has gone up to 1,056 from 1,038 on Sunday with two deaths. Chennai Coimbatore, Chengalpattu districts,

which reported over 1,000 cases each, together added a total of 6,448 while it contributed 6,486 cases on

While Erode, Madurai, and Thiruvallur recorded over 500 cases districts like K a n c h e e p u r a m , Krishnagiri, Selam, Thanj-Thiruvnnamalai, Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, Tirupur and Trichy added 300 plus cases. Apart from this, 7 districts crossed 200mark and 11 districts

reported over 100 cases. The contribution Chennai and surrounding including districts

Thiruvallur Chengalpattu on Monday is 6,230 while the tally on Sunday was 6,333. Monday also added over one lakh active cases with

1,07,145 that is a rise from 1,05,180 on Sunday . The total active cases in the Chennai district now stand at 31,142 that is a dip from 31.535 on Sunday. Death cases touched 9

Kancheepuram Salem recorded 5 deaths. Thiruvallur, Thanjavur and Madurai reported 4 cases each in addition to Chengalpattu.

Three death cases reported in Vellore and Trichy and Dindigul, Kanyakumari, Tenkasi, Thirvannamalai, Thiruvarur and Thoothukkudi recorded two cases

Apart Cuddalore,Dharmapuri,Kal lakurichi,Karur,Nagapattin am, Perumbalur,Thirupathur, Tirunelveli and Villupuram districts registered death cases. A total of 1,15,642 persons were subjected to RTPCR tests through 264 labs while total individual tests were 1,22, 610 on Sunday. At least 2,17,63,365 individuals tested so far in the state.

With all the religious places closed owing to lockdown, devotees offer their prayers in front







Malls, aquatic centres, theatres and beauty parlours remained closed in the city and Vellore on Monday.

-N.Sampath, E.K.Sanjay and K.Senthil Nathan

### **Negative Covid report mandatory for air** passengers travelling from TN to six cities

DC CORRESPONDENT

Air passengers travelling from Chennai to six cities in the country will now be required to produce a negative RT-PCR report taken at most 72 hours before travel-

According to the sources, these six cities, Bhuvanes-hwar (Odisha), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Imphal (Manipur), Rajkot (Gujarat), Bagdogra (West Bengal) and Union Territory Andaman has asked the Chennai airport authorities to check the medical report the passengers, as Chennai is one of the sensitive spots in the country with surging Covid-19 cases. According to the sources

at the Chennai airport, a new SOP has been put in place for travel to these six places to contain the spread of coronavirus.

All the passengers shall provide a Negative covid-19 report and then allowed to board the flights. Social distancing should be ensured during boarding / deboarding and travel, sources at the airport said. If passengers travelling to these cities fail to produce the report, they will not be allowed to travel.

The city presently has over 31,500 active cases and is testing around 20,000 people a day. With the city registering 4206 cases on Sunday, the number of cases is expected to further rise by mid-May.

### Prepaid taxis at airport boon to passengers

P.A. JEBARAJ I DC CHENNAI, APRIL 26

Despite a total lockdown in the city due to the spiking Covid- 19 cases, the air passengers arriving at the Chennai airport could be able to book existing prepaid cab services without anv hassle.

While the total lockdown

in the city, the operation of trains and flights remain unaffected despite the total lockdown in the city on

On Sunday, there were complaints of commuters facing severe hardship in getting cabs and autorickshaws to reach their destination. Some of the com-

muters took social media to lash out on the issue, even though the railway authorities denied such allega-

Similarly, the airport authorities on Monday said that air passengers too had a hassle-free journey from the airport to their destinations in the city. The Airports Authority of India

has granted approval to offer pre-paid taxi services from the airport.

An officer said, "There is a counter inside the airport where passengers can book taxis 24/7 despite total lockdown. The Chennai airport has two taxi services functioning from its premises -Chennai Airport prepaid taxi Owners -drivers associ-

express." The rates of both taxi services are also approved by the AAI, according to the officer.

>>>> Passengers arriving at the Chennai airport are able to book prepaid cab services without any



### **Collector orders closure of liquor shops**

DC CORRESPONDENT NAGAPATTINAM, APRIL 26

The district administration here has ordered closure of all TASMAC retail outlets and its bars across the district from Tuesday until further orders. In a press release here on Monday, Collector Praveen P. Nair said the decision was taken to prevent the

spread of Covid-19. He warned that violations would be punished severely. Similar orders have been passed by S. Divyadarshini, V. Shantha, T. Rathna, P. Srivenkata Priya, B. Uma Maheswari and Prashant M. Wadnere, collectors of Tiruchy, Tiruvarur, Ariyalur, Perambalur, Pudukkottai, and Karur districts respectively.

### MACT awards ₹31.70 lakh as damages to woman researcher

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 26

The Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal (MACT) has directed a private insurance company to pay a compensation of ₹31.70 lakh to a woman research officer who sustained grievous injuries in an accident four years ago. In the petition, V. Poornima of

Medavakkam said she was working as a scientist fellow in Central Leather Research Institute, Chennai and earning ₹40,000 per month as stipend. On March 29, 2017 at about 7.15 am,

when she was riding a motorcycle on Velachery main road, opposite to Indian Bank, Medavakkam branch, a man driving his JCB in a rash and negligent manner hit her motorcycle. She sustained grievous injuries and was rushed to a hospital where she was treated for 43 days and underwent surgeries. She sustained 95 percent locomotors disability. The movement of her right hand was affected and she

faced difficulties in breathing, lifting heavy objects, bending right hand and hip. She was not able to ride twowheelers. Due to the injuries, she could not continue her PhD research and was unable to continue the job for

She said V. Palanivel, Tambaram, owner of the vehicle, was responsible for the accident. Hence, Palanivel and Reliance General Insurance Co. Ltd.. Nungambakkam, insurer of the vehicle, are statutorily and vicariously liable to pay her compensation with interest and cost.

Special sub judge, small causes court-I, P.Revathy said this tribunal comes to the conclusion that the accident occurred due to the rash and negligent driving of the JCB driver. The petitioner had sustained injuries and took treatment as an inpatient in three spells for 43 days and underwent surgeries. Hence, the petitioner is entitled for a compensation of

# Off-centre

### The art of show-off

amil Nadu politicians do not loathe show-off, whether it's about their academic qualification, party designation or admiration for their masters. It'll be displayed big on their luxurious car with the 'banned' sun film on the window shields. This correspondent on Sunday came across such a Toyota Fortuner, owned by Dr P Sashi Kumar, a DMK politician. His designation as Tiruvallur district president of the 'International Human Rights Council' was flaunted on the car's number plate. At least 10 per cent of the front glass reminds people, with a banner headline, that he is 'Dr Sashi'. It does not end there. A good portion of the rear end glass has his name in Tamil too.



### **Kudos to** kindness

After NGOs and government agencies, now members of the transgender the community have also come out to help the needy during Sunday curfew in Chennai. A few transgenders in Chennai have started a kitchen called 'Oru Pidi Anbu' as restaurants are closed on Sundays. The group has been feeding the needy, homeless, elders, migrant workers, sanitation workers and those stranded on the

— Sindhiya Samuel

#### Tunes to beat blues was a bizarre event in Coonoor town in the Nilgiris last Thursday, when band

masters, folk music artists and musicians attached to the local orchestra troupes, staged a different sort of performance, both to create awareness on Covid-19 and also to express their plight on how their livelihood has been affected by the Covid-19 crisis. These musicians performed

sorrowful tunes in an expression as to how sorrowful their lives were without a regular earning. One of the participant, Thamarai Selvan, said that due to stringent norms in hosting functions, marriages, festival

celebrations in temples other related things, music artists, especially wedding bands, orchestra troupes and other folk musicians who play ritual music in temples and other related functions, are totally deprived of their liveli-

"We are the one sector which are totally neglected. We wish the government consider giving us some sops to tide over the revenue crisis. Those sorrowful tunes we played were to attract the attention of the government and also create awareness on Covid-19 spread, he added.

- B. Ravichandran

### Stuck in homes again with fear

the state next week, gated communities and multi-storied apartments in the city have begun implementing strict safety measures on their premises.

All public areas including play zones and club house have been banned for residents from this week in several apartments due to surge in

Covid-19 cases. With online classes also over for the academic year, parents are finding it difficult to keep their children confined to homes. Residents have begun activating their online groups, quiet for the last few months, where they used to chat every week last year during the peak Covid days. An air of trepidation is — B. Vijayalakshmi **OTHER** 

#### No qualms over opening Sterlite for **02** production

ARULOLI M | DC THOOTHUKUDI, APRIL 26

public here calmly accepted the decision taken at the all party meeting convened by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to reopen Sterlite for oxygen production.

Though the situation was largely normal, a group of 11 men of the Anti-Sterlite Thoothukudi District People's Federation led by its coordinator, Krishnamurthy, came out in protest against the decision and staged a blockade all the way to the collectorate premises by around 2 pm. This small protesting group was cleared within 10 minutes and taken to a private marriage hall from where they were all released in

the evening.
None including the Fathima Babu-led Anti-Sterlite People's Movement or the Makkal Adhikaram-affiliated Anti-Sterlite movement came out in public to express any resentment.

Most of the common public feel that reopening Sterlite for oxygen production at this point of time was a good decision. A tea shop owner near the bus stand said, "Why should we oppose oxygen production activity of the copper company if it does not create any air pollution?"

Though the situation is normal without any major protests unlike what happened in 2018, security has been beefed up around the copper industry and inside the collectorate. Around 100 policemen were deployed in the SIPCOT area where Sterlite is located.

Most of the common public feel that reopening Sterlite for oxygen production at this point of time was a good decision. A tea shop owner near the bus stand said. "Why should we oppose oxygen production activity of the copper company if it does not create any air pollution?"

# Mixed reaction to decision on Sterlite

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR/ DC CHENNAI, APRIL 26

Once the DMK came to power after the May 2, Vedanta Group's Sterlite Industries in Thoothukudi would not be allowed to open under any circumstances, DMK President M K Stalin made it clear on Monday.

He said that just after his own party representatives Kanimozhi Karunanidhi and R S Bharati gave their assent to the government decision to permit Sterlite open its two oxygen producing units to overcome the prevailing oxygen shortage in the State.

Kanimozhi and Bharati represented the DMK at the all-party meeting convened on Monday morning to take a call on the plea by Sterlite that it may be allowed to produce oxygen at his Thoothukudi plant, promising to supply it free of cost to hospitals in the State.

the court with the plea and the government had been asked to explain its position on it, the all-party meeting was convened, which in the end decided in give permission to Sterlite to produce oxygen.

Even as the government's nod was evoking mixed reactions, Stalin put out a Facebook post averring that the company would not be allowed to operate if his party came to power and saying that the government decision was only a temporary one.

Otherwise all the parties that attended the meeting supported the government decision. Human lie was more important, said BJP president Murugan, who was at the meeting along with party

The plant would be opened only for oxygen Murugan production, said. Similar sentiments were expressed by all the leaders who were at the

colleague K. T. Raghavan.

Since Sterlite had moved meeting. TNCC, which was represented by K. Thangabalu and K. Jayakumar, also said that it could be allowed as a temporary arrangement, given the grave circumstances.

Others like CPM's K Balakrishnan and A Soundarajan, CP's Mutharasan and M Veerapandy, Radhakrishnan and A Ganesh Kumar National Progressive Dravidar Kazhagam's S Amburai and V T Balaji were the others who took part in the discussions, attended by senior officials, includ-

ing the Chief Secretary. Chief Minister had told the meeting that the State was facing oxygen shortage. 'It is our duty and responsibility to save the lives of people,' he said in his appeal for support to let Sterlite supply oxygen.

'Don't we have any other company that can produce oxygen other than Sterlite,' asked Makkal Neethi Maiam founder

Kamal Haasan, saying that the government decision was 'unacceptable.'

Oxygen can be produced at any factory, Haasan said and cited an example of a cooperative Gujarat set up a plant in 72 hours, he said, adding that only the parties that would be compliant were called for the meeting.

The government should respect the sentiments of the people of Thoothukudi who fought a valiant battle against Sterlite, which led to the killing of 13 persons, and withdraw the decisions, Haasan said.

VCK general secretary nol Thirumavalavan Thol described the decision as shocking. There are many other ways of overcoming the oxygen shortage than allowing Sterlite, which has polluted the water and air in Thoothukudi to do

He said the government decision went against the sentiments of the people of Thoothukudi and

Opposition parties that were invited for the meeting were put under pressure to accept the resolution by suggesting that it was aimed at saving people's lives.

The government should have taken over Sterlite Industries fully and then gone for oxygen production in its plant it that was the only way out, MDMK general secretary Vaiko said.

Letting Sterlite open its unit is fraught with danger and si a shameful act, said Naam Tamizhaar Katchi coordinator Seeman. He said the decision had the potential to create another law and order problem as they people may protest against it once again.

He alleged that the government created a situation in which there was an oxygen shortage and then in the pretext of solving it they had allowed Sterlite to open its closed plant.

### **HC:** If necessary impose lockdown on May 1 and 2

CHENNAI, APRIL 26

In a bid to ensure that Covid protocol is being strictly followed during the counting of votes, both in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, slated on May 2, 2021, the Madras high court has said if necessary, the State may consider imposing a lockdown on May 1, which was traditionally a holiday, and again on May 2, which is a Sunday. Passing further interim

orders on a suo motu petition, the first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy said suggestions have also been made regarding strict restrictions being imposed and Covid protocol being strictly followed during the counting of votes, both in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, slated on May 2. 2021. If necessary, the state may consider imposing a lockdown on May 1, which was tradi-tionally a holiday, and again on May 2, which is a Sunday, and only allow movement of vehicles needed for the purpose of counting and related purposes, apart from emergency vehicles. If an appropriate announcement in such regard is made well in advance, say by April 28, 2021, the ordinary citizen may have sufficient notice and may complete the weekend purchases by Friday and abide by the restricted movement norms as was evident in course of the lockdown observed on Sunday, April 25, 2021. As of now, the situation does not appear to be completely out of control, though there are some horror-stories which are available in the media and some other anecdotal on the social media. However, continued vigil must be maintained and the matter dealt sternly appropriate personnel being empowered to take on-the-spot decisions which are

says that contrary to the earlier submission that Remdesivir was being sold at ₹783 per vial, Remdesivir was now being sold at rs 1,400 plus GST per vial and was already available from a counter specifically started for such purpose at Kilpauk in Chennai. However, not everyone seeking the drug will be given it. Only upon production of appropriate documents, including the screening report, a positive test report and the scan of the lungs, would the drug be released, the bench added.

The bench said though another aspect of the matter was being exclusively dealt with by the Supreme Court. the state informs this court that following an all-party meeting convened by the Chief Minister this morning, a tentative decision has been taken to allow the Thoothukudi unit of Sterlite Industries to manufacture oxygen. The state, however, says that only limited supply of liquefied oxygen may be initially available, but the owners have assured the state that immediate measures would be taken to put in pace a system by which gaseous oxygen will be converted into liquefied oxygen for medical use with the appropriate content in excess of 99 per cent oxygen, the bench added.

The bench said on the availability of Remdesivir 100mg, the state says that such drug was not meant for everyday use by every person, nor was it a cure for Covid-19, though it reduces the incidence of the person administered the drug in transmitting the virus to others. The state says that drugs Tocilizumab 400 mg and Enoxaparian 40 mg were also used in the treatment of Covid 19 and, there was sufficient supply of such drugs in the State, at least with government hospitals and government centres, the bench added.

# 4 on way to engagement and bus driver die in mishap

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 26

Four persons travelling to Kalpakkam to attend an engagement function were killed on Monday in a road accident on East Coast Road, after their private bus collided headon with a government bus near Koovathur. The driver of the state bus succumbed to injuries late in the evening.

A senior police officer said that the accident took place around 5. 40 pm on Monday when the private bus collided with a



government bus, TN 32 N4354 coming from Puducherry on the opposite direction. According to prelimi-

ed by the police, a group of 24 persons from the bride's side of the family Melmaruvathur's

Ramapuram were travelling to Kalpakkam for the engagement ceremony on a private bus, when the occurred. According to the reports, the government bus was allegedly speeding, when it collided with the bus.

Eye witnesses said they alerted Koovathur police. However, before police reached the spot, the locals and the passerbys began the rescue opera-

Four persons identified as Vet Alamelu Vettairayan (60),

Annapooranai (55), all residents of Ramapuram in Melmaruvathur, died on the spot, the police said. Their bodies recovered from the mangled remains of the bus were Madurantakam government hospital for post-

Muniammal

mortem. Twenty others have sustained critical injuries and are undergotreatment Chengalpet government hospital. Senior police from Koovathur station said that an accident case

has been registered.

### **COFFEE-BREA**

challenging and rewarding. Your financial troubles may continue with expenditure going up and

**Your day today** By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam Aries: You will find new work atmosphere both



**Faurus:** Working women may be inclined to prioritize domestic pursuits over professional obligations. You are advised to postpone negotiations on all pending issues.

income levels going down.



be busy with domestic chores. Academics will be your top priority. ancer: Unexpected money arrivals are indicated. You may waste a considerable amount of money on luxury and women. You

**Gemini:** Few of you will come in contact with people involved in public life. Housewives will



will hear good news related to your career. eo: Your services will be appreciated on the professional as well as on the domestic front. Educational pursuits and creative activities will



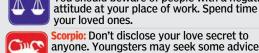
yield excellent results. Virgo: Past events may have been hard, but you have learned from them. It is time for you to be serious about your career. Frank discussions with employers can

give you confidence regarding job security.

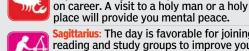
#### You share your b'day with Palanisamy Gounder Sathasivam is an Indian judge

who served as the 40th Chief Justice of India, holding the office from 2013 to 2014. He is famously known for his Reliance Gas Judgment (May 2010) ra: The day will bring you good results.

likely for some employees.



You should beware of people with a negative attitude at your place of work. Spend time with vour loved ones. corpio: Don't disclose your love secret to

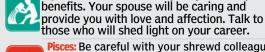


place will provide you mental peace. gittarius: The day is favorable for joining reading and study groups to improve your knowledge. Transfers and promotions are



ricorn: Business transaction needs to be tackled carefully. You will easily get annoyed because of slow performance of your subordinates. Best day to propose, as your love proposal will materialize.

arius: Concentrate on your job to reap



sces: Be careful with your shrewd colleagues. You will settle a long pending problem with relatives. Working women may receive unexpected income. Housewives will explore new ways of income.



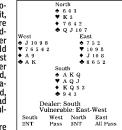
**PHILLIP ALDER AGAINST** 

First, look at the West hand in the diagram. What would you lead after the simple auction of two no-trump - three no-

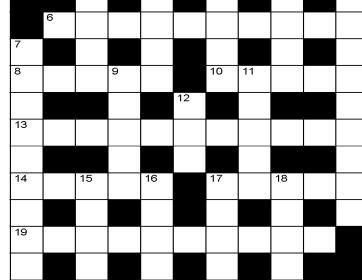
In general, your opening salvo depends primarily upon the contract. If it is in no-NO-TRUMP, trump, you often lead fourth **LENGTH OR** highest from your longest and strongest. However, there are several exceptions. STRENGTH?

fourth-highest. If an oppo-nent bid your longest suit, think three times before leading it (unless your holding is very strong). If partner bid, normally years bid, normally you should attack in that suit. (The last time I didn't do that, partner had opened one diamond, and I held a singleton dia-

mond. After my club lead. three no-trump made instead of going down three -- vul-nerable, too.) In today's deal, there are two options: the spade jack First, if the longest suit contains no honor, lead a high card (top of nothing), not



**OUICK CROSSWORD** 



Across 6.Judicial proceeding (10)

8. Drain (5) 10. Precipice (5)

13. Tea interval (anag) (11)

14. Lazes (5) 17. Branchlet (5) 19. In a confused jumble (5-5)

**Word Mine** 

W

0

How many words of four or

more letters can you make from

the letters shown in today's

puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only.

Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign

words and proper names are not allowed.

ANSWERS: await, scow, stow, swat, twist, twit, waist, WAISTCOAT, wait, watt

Down 1. Hobble (4) 2. Very small (4)

or uncertainty (5-4) 7. Strike back (9) 9. Topic (5)

11. Lull (3-2) 12. Wildebeest (3)

15. Track circuits (4) 16. River in Hades (4)

17. Cosy (4)

3. Bathroom powder (4)

5. Position of extreme danger

4. Flightless bird (4)

18. Enthuse wildly (4)

jumble MOCAE SUPAE **CYTIKS PMASYW** 

Jumbles: OPERA LIBEL SOCKET GUTTER and heart seven. Although

your spade suit is stronger, length (usually) rules against a no-trump contract. So, lead the heart seven. Now let's look at matters from declarer's point of view. He starts with six top tricks: three spades and three hearts. He will probably attack diamonds, hoping East has ace-doubleton or -third, so that three more tricks can be established there to give

Here, South isn't so lucky,

and if West keeps plugging away at hearts, he will col-lect two hearts, one diagnated and two clubs to defeat the contract before declarer can reach home. On a spade lead, however, only one defensive long is established, and declarer

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Basket, 3.

Flag, 7. Ship, 8. Adroit, 10. Nosegay, 13. Procure, 16. Margin, 17. Jolt, 18.

**Down:** 1. Best, 2. Spigot, 4. Look, 5. Gather, 6. Advance, 9. Refrain, 11. Prompt,

12. Troops, 14. Brag, 15. Stop.

Toga, 19. Gossip.

wins the race, collecting mond and two clubs.

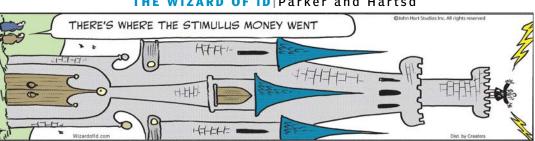
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#### CALVIN AND HOBBES | Bill Watterson

critical, the bench added.



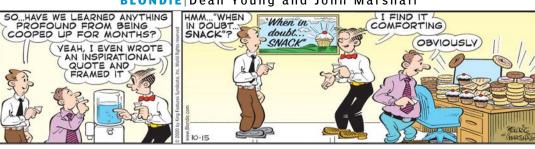
THE WIZARD OF ID Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE|Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



**BLONDIE** Dean Young and John Marshall

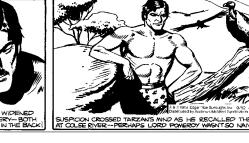


ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN|Edgar Rice Burroughs







#### **HOSPITAL FIRE: CUSTODY OF DOCS EXTENDED**

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 26

A local court on Monday extended police custody of the Vallabh Hospital in Virar in suburban Mumbai, where 15 Covid patients lost their lives in a fire three days ago, till Wednesday.

Wednesday.
Chief executive officer (CEO)
Dr Dilip Shah (56) and the
chief administrative officer Dr
Shailesh Pathak (47) were
arrested on Sunday and
remanded to police custody till
Monday by a heliday count Monday by a holiday court.

The crime branch unit 3 of the Mira Bhayander Vasai Virar commissionerate told the court that the custody of the doctors was required as various documents pertaining to the fire safety of the hospital was to be received from them. The hospital has been accused of not carrying out the mandatory fire audits.

A police official said that the nurses, ward boys and doctor on night duty when the incident took place are being questioned. They too are named in the FIR, as the police have come to know that before informing the fire brigade, the hospital staff tried to control fire for 10-15 minutes on their

A nurse has told the police that Dr Shah and Dr Pathak were immediately informed after sparks from the AC unit of the ICU were notice. It was Dr Shah and Dr Pathak who then called the fire brigade.

The police have booked Dr

Shah and Dr Pathak for culpable homicide not amounting to murder and other relevant sec-

tions of IPC.

A huge fire erupted on Friday in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) located on the second floor of the four-storey

At the time of the incident, there were 83 patients in the hospital and 17 of them in the ICU. The ICU of the 90-bed hospital was gutted and 15 Covid patients were charred to death

#### **CONG. MIFFED** WITH NCP ON **VACCINES' ISSUE**

**BHAGWAN PARAB | DC** MUMBAI, APRIL 26

Differences within the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) Government in Maharashtra over the free vaccination drive came to the fore as the Congress has expressed displeasure over the NCP announcing the decision uni laterally. The decision should be announced by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, said Maharashtra Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat.

'The decision to provide vaccine against Covid-19 for free to people of the state should have been announced by the chief minister. An attempt by others to take credit for it was not good," said Mr Thorat on

His comments came a day after Maharashtra Minority Affairs Minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik said the State Government will float global tenders for providing Covid-19 vaccines for free to people above 18 years of age in the state.

#### **EMINENT WRITER MANZOOR PASSES AWAY**

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, APRIL 26

Manzoor Ahtesham, whose works depicting the lives of Indian Muslims in independent India have received wide acclaim, died of Covid-19 early on Monday morning.

He was 73 and is survived by his two daughters.

The title of the writer's maiden work Ramazan Mein Ek Maut, a short story anthology published in 1973, has proved apocalyptic as he passed away in the holy month of Ramazan.

Born on April 3, 1948 in Bhopal, Ahtesham was a prod-uct of Aligarh Muslim University. His family wanted him to be an engineer. But, he chose to be a writer.

He has written many short stories, novels and dramas enriching Hindi and Urdu literature. His short story compilations titled Tashbih, and Tamasha Tatha Anya Kahaniyan, have been widely acclaimed in the Hindi literature world. His novels, *Dastan* E Laapata, Kuch Din Aur, Sukha Bargad Basharat маnzil and Pahar Dhalte have earned him a glorious place in the Hindi literature world.

#### Vaccination drive



People gather in large numbers to receive Corona vaccination outside a government hospital in Nadia, West Bengal on Monday. Total vaccination across the country has crossed over 14.5 crore with more than31 lakh doses of vaccine administered till 8 pm on Monday.

## 7th phase by and large peaceful, over 75% vote

### Raninagar BJP candidate Mashwara Khatun's car attacked

FROM PG1

However four hot seats -Bhowanipore, Rasbehari, Ballygunge and Kolkata Port - in South Kolkata clocked only 59.91 per cent polling during which chief minister Mamata Banerjee and her MP nephew cast their votes. A revised figure of polling is expected from the Election Commission on Tuesday.

Unlike other districts, Murshidabad remained tense since morning. At Senapara, Raninagar BJP Senapara, Raninagar Burcandidate Mashwara Khatun's car was attacked and her polling agent was hy armed her polling agent was hy armed hy armed hy armed her polling agent was hy armed her polling agent and her polling agent was beaten up by armed Trinamul Congress workers. The police had to res-

paramilitary forces of with Raninagar

block TMC president Mizanur Rahman's residence and destroying food. When district TMC president and MP Abu Taher Khan went there, angry workers of his party shouted "Go Back" slogans at him. He was soon seen leaving in his car in face of the protest. At Gurapasla High School in Nabagram, the Central forces allegedly beat an elderly TMC worker so much that he

In Farakka, an aged TMC worker, Janmejoy Mondai, Allegations again sur- was injured in an attack faced against the Central by the BJP workers armed with sharp-cutting weapons. He was admitted

had to be admitted at Nabagram Hospital.

at the Farakka Hospital. Murshidabad Congress candidate Niyazuddin Sheikh was caught by the TMC workers distributing money hidden in masks at a booth in Gudhia High School. But Mr Ahmed claimed that he distributed only masks to the voters for their protection Covid-19. The from Election Commission has sought a report of the inci-

Also, Jalangi Sanjukta Morcha candidate Saiful Islam Mollah from the CPI(M) and his three associates were attacked by the TMC workers with bamboo poles and sticks at Choanpara.

Meanwhile, the Election circle Jommission transferred a few police officers as West Bengal voted in the seventh phase of assembly polls on Monday, officials Das, the order said

Shantanu Sinha Biswas,

an inspector at the Directorate of Economic Offences, was transferred to the office of the DIG Jalpaiguri Range as a crime inspector, they said. Sinha was accused by the BJP of manipulating postal ballots. Srimanta Kumar Bandopadhyay, the Assistant Commissioner Asansol-Durgapur Police, was named the new Sub-divisional Officer of Bolpur, as per an order issued on Sunday night. Shubhendra Kumar, present SDPO of Bolpur, was diagnosed with Covid-19.

Nihar Ranjan Roy, the inspector Krishnaganj was made the new inspector in charge of the Murshidabad police station, replacing Atish

### Assam rules out Mask up even indoors: Centre

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, APRIL 26

Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Monday said that there will be no shortage of oxygen, ICU and isolation beds in the state for next 10 days and in between state has started augmenting its resources to build up its capacity to face any eventuality due to

Pointing out that the state government has made arrangements to import oxygen from neighbouring Bhutan, Sarma told reporters that the oxy-gen production capacity of

the state has reached to 61 MT per day while storage capacity has already been expanded to 468 MT.

full lockdown

Informing that they are going to operationalise three more oxygen plants soon, he said that there will be no shortage of Remdesivir too as he requested drug manufacturer Sun Pharma to expedite the production at its Palasbari plant to 80,000 vials per week. Sarma said that he visited Sun Pharma's Palasbari plant near Guwahati on Sunday and requested them to scale up production to ensure that there is no New Delhi, April 26: As a second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic rips through the country, government on Monday said it is time people start wearing masks inside their homes as well, and refrain from inviting

Addressing a press conference here, NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr V.K. Paul said if there is a Covid-positive person inside the house, he or she must wear the mask so as to prevent other family members from getting infected. "Rather, I'll say that the time has come that we start wearing masks even

otherwise inside our homes. We used to talk about wearing it outside homes, but the way the infection has spread, it will be better if we wear mask inside our homes if we are sitting with someone," he said. "But, definitely, if there

is a Covid-19 positive person, that person must wear the mask and others inside the house also must wear a mask and the positive person should be kept in a different room," Paul underlined. Paul added that people should also avoid stepping out of their houses unnecessarily and not invite guests at home.

### **ASSAM CONSTABLE HELD IN ONGC ABDUCTION CASE**

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, APRIL 26

In a significant development in three ONGC ment in three ONGC employee abduction case, Assam police on Monday arrested a police constable who is alleged to have helped the outlawed Ulfa-I rebels in kidnapping of three ONGC employees on April 21 from Upper Assam's Sibsagar dis-trict.

Constable Basanta Boragohain, Assam Police Battalion was arrested from Sadiya on Monday. He was in-charge of security of the ONGC rig site at Lakwa field in Sivasagar on the day of the abduction.
Indicating that police

constable was in touch vith Ulfa-I rebels and helped them in abducting the ONGC employees, police said that they have already apprehended three persons who were directly involved in the incident with Ulfa-I rebels while several others helped the outfit indirectly.

Meanwhile security sources feared that one

of three abducted ONGC employees who is yet to be rescued was in custody of another group of Ulfa-I rebels who might have succeeded in crossing over to Myanmar.

Asserting that security forces are leaving no stone unturned to rescue the third ONGC employee Ritul Saikia also, security sources said that security forces have got some inputs about the Ulfa-I rebels involved in the incident and operations have been launched to bust all the link points.

On Friday, in a joint operation army and Nagaland police had rescued two ONGC cap-

### Mamata aide Mondal gets **CBI** summons

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, APRIL 26

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has summoned a key Trinamul Congress leader and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's blue-eyed boy Anubrata Mondal for questioning over his sus-pected role in the highprofile cattle smuggling case. At around 12.30 pm on Sunday he was served the summons by the CBI directing him to appear at its anti corruption branch office at Nizam Palace in South Kolkata

at 11 am on Tuesday. Known to be a strongman of Birbhum which is going to the polls in the eighth phase on April 29, Mr Mondal is the TMC president of the district. He is also the third TMC functionary to come under the central agencies' radar in the case.

The CBI summons to  $\mbox{Mr}$ Mondal came close on the heels of a notice served by the Income Tax department to know the source of his income and assets following allegations of his disproportionate assets by Bolpur BJP can-didate Anirban Ganguly.

Furious over the summons to Mr Mondal, the TMC chief stood by him and accused the BJP of harassing him through the central agencies like previous occasions ahead of the polls. "Do you

FURIOUS OVER the summons to Mr Mondal, the TMC chief stood by him and accused the BJP of harassing him through the central agencies like previous occasions ahead of the polls.

know they are very scared? On Sunday two CBI personnel visited the residence of Kesto (nickname of Mr Mondal) and asked him to visit their office on April 27. He is kept under watch in every election so that he can not step out of home. Why will he go to the CBI office?" she wondered at her last poll campaign rally in North Kolkata.

Ms Banerjee alleged, "Though a democratic process like election has been underway, agencies are used intentionally. Won't Kesto work during the polls? Afterall he is the president of a party in a district. People are entering homes with Covid. They should be tested to know their health condition before their entry. I clearly told Kesto not to appear at the CBI office and instead inform them that he would be available after the election. The district head of a political party should not be obstructed from doing his work.

### **Didi wants EC** to withdraw central forces

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, APRIL 26

Welcoming the Madras High Court's severe reprimand to the Election Commission for the spike in Covid-19 cases during the Assembly Election, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday appealed to the country's judiciary to put its lens on the EC and demanded the withdrawal of the central paramilitary forces in the last phase of the polls to curb the spread of the infection in the state.

Emboldened by the Madras HC's stinging remarks on the central poll panel, the Trinamul Congress supremo also squarely held the EC and the central forces responsible for the explosion in cases in her last poll campaign rally in North Kolkata since it was also the last day of campaign for the eighth and last

phase of polls.
She said, "This Election
Commission can do anything and everything. We have to fight against it for our place. We are not getting the benefits of Raj Dharma of the EC. We welcome the ruling of the Madras HC. Let each and every court scrutinize the EC role. We also urge the Supreme Court to look into how it helped in the growth of Covid-19 cases by scheduling the polls in

scope of clubbing them.' The CM, who is also the state health minister, added, "Moreover, around three lakh central forces personnel have been deployed here for the last couple of months.
Occupying important places they are only spreading the infection which has not been giving us a window space at safe homes and increase the bed capacity in the hospitals. It is a crime. I ask the EC to withdraw the central forces. I think those whose poll-duty is over should be withdrawn now."

The state reported 15,992 fresh Covid-19 cases with 68 more deaths in the last 24 hours.

Ms\_Banerjee\_lambasted the EC for pulling her up for her provocative remarks instead of showcausing either Prime Minister Narendra Modi or union home minister Amit Shah despite their controversial comments in their rallies.

She once again made it clear that she would take legal steps against the central poll panel, unde-terred by its rebuttal of her claims of vindictive

The Trinamul Congress chief also reiterated that her party would be back in power for the third consecutive term in the state

COVID | BLUES

#### Govt expects cases to decline soon; Plus-II students demand cancellation of annual exams

### For Covid, Odisha passing through 'plateau' stage

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC

BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 26

As Odisha consistently logs over 6,000 cases daily, the case graph seems to have hit a plateau in the last few days. This is what the state director of medical education and training (DMET) Dr CBK Mohanty told reporters on

Monday. "Since the daily cases in Odisha are found to be stable at a particular level above 6,000 and below 6,500 for a few days now, it could be interpreted as a many ICU beds in desigplateau phase. The num-

ber or such period is expected to decline in the upcoming days," he said. However, the top health official said that nothing can be assumed specifical-

On April 22, the state recorded 6,164 cases while 6.215 persons were found infected with coronavirus the next day. On April 24, 25 and 26, the state recorded 6,647, 6,116 and 6,599

new cases, respectively.
Dismissing the report of shortage of beds in intensive care units (ICUs),' the DMET said that there were nated Covid hospitals.

"If the number of Covid patients rises further, the more number of ventilators will be set up accordingly," he assured. The statement of the

DMET has come as a great piece of consolation to people in panic due to the steep rise in Covid-19 cases since the beginning of the current month.

According to Dr Mohanty, usually there is an upsurge trend and sub-sequently plateau and then declining stage which is a natural course during any epidemic or pandemic situation. The DMET admitted that local contact

cases were certainly a worry sign. 'However, we are appealing everybody to follow

appropriate Everybody Covid-19 behaviour. needs to follow all the Covid-19 norms so that they do not spread the virus to others," he added. State health director Dr Niranjan Mishra said that 70 per cent of beds are currently available in different hospitals for Covid patients. "We have constituted a cluster comprising

2/3 districts. The patients

are shifted to other dis-

tricts after beds are filled

at hospitals in a particular

district," Dr Mishra said. Talking about the stock of oxygen, he said that Odisha is an 'oxygen sur-plus' state. "To avoid shortage of oxygen, directions have been issued to keep the oxygen stock by filling the cylinders. We have enough beds, oxygen and medicines to tackle the Covid situation," he said. "The micro management plan has been made to administer the Covid vaccines to the beneficiaries in the state," he added. Meanwhile, a group of Plus-II students on Monday staged a demonstration at Lower PMG

square in Bhubaneswar demanding cancellation of annual examinations conducted by the Council of Higher Secondary Education, Odisha.

It was for the second time that the students raised the demand for cancellation of Plus II exam in the

The students alleged that the state government was yet to make any announcement regarding the dates for the conduct of the exam due to which there is confusion and at the same time it will create problems in pursuing higher

education. The students

threatened to intensify their agitation if no step was taken to cancel the Plus II exam. The Naba Nirman Yuva Chatra Sangathan has also extended support to the demands of the students.

The group threatened to gherao Naveen Niwas, the official residence of Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, if no decision is taken within 10 days. Following the demonstration, police held a discussion with the agitating students. However, as they were reluctant, police took immediate steps to disperse them.

n's 2015 nuclear deal with

Already, sabotage targeted Iran's nuclear facility at Natanz during the talks

as Tehran has begun enriching a small amount of

uranium up to 60% purity,

which edges the country closer to weapons-grade levels. After the leak beca-me public, Iranian Forei-

gn Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh did not

dispute the tape's authen-

ticity. He told journalists

on Monday that the recor-

ding represented just a

portion of a seven-hour in-

terview Zarif gave to a

well-known economist

that was to be held for pos-

terity by a think tank associated with the Iranian pr-

Khatibzadeh called the release of the recording "illegal" and described it

as "selectively" edited.

esidency.

world powers.

Zarif's leaked

Dubai, April 26: A recor-

ding of Iran's foreign min-

ister offering a blunt appr-

aisal of diplomacy and the limits of power within the Islamic Republic has leak-ed out publicly, providing

a rare look inside the cou-

ntry's theocracy.
The release of the comm-

ents by Mohammad Javad Zarif set off a firestorm within Iran, where officia-

ls carefully mind their wo-

rds amid a cut-throat polit-

ical environment that incl-

udes the powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Gua-

rd, ultimately overseen by

the country's supreme lea-

der. Zarif has been sugges-

ted as a possible candidate for Iran's June 18 presidential election as well.

Outside of Iran, Zarif's comments could also affe-

ct talks in Vienna aimed at

finding a way for Tehran and the US to both come into compliance with Ira-

recording offers

blunt comments



### IN BRIEF

#### **Russia expels Italian diplomat**

Moscow, April 26: Moscow an Italian diplomat in response to the "unfriendly" removal of two Russian officials from Rome in March over an espionage scandal.

The foreign ministry said it had summoned Italy's ambassador and informed him that Russia was declaring "persona non grata" Rome's naval attache in Moscow, who would have 24 hours to leave the country.

Rome announced late last month it was expelling the two Russian officials after an Italian navy captain was caught by police selling confidential military documents to a Russian embassy official.

#### Romania to expel **Russian diplomat**

Bucharest, April 26: Romania said Monday it will expel a Russian diplomat, the latest European country to do so in solidarity with the Czech Republic, which is involved in a spat with Moscow.

The deputy military attache at the Russian embassy in Bu-charest, Alexei Grichayev, would be declared "persona non grata... in view of his activities and actions contrary to the Convention of Vienna on diplomatic relations," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Romania's foreign minister Bogdan Aurescu summoned Russian ambassador Valery Kuzmin to his offices on Monday, according to the state-

#### **Jihadists kill 31 Nigerian soldiers**

Kano, Nigeria, April 26: At least 31 Nigerian soldiers were killed when IS-aligned jihadists ambushed a military convoy escorting weapons and overran a base in northeast Nigeria's Borno state, military

sources said on Monday. Fighters from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) attacked the convoy with rocket-propelled grenades on Sunday in the town of Mainok outside the regional capital Maiduguri before

storming the nearby base. The attack was the deadliest this year against Nigeria's army which has been battling a decade-long jihadist insurgency in the region that has killed 36,000 people.

#### '14 protests: 108 on trial in Turkey

Ankara, April 26: Turkey on Monday put 108 Kurdish politicians on trial for their alleged roles in deadly 2014 protests that erupted as iihadists from the Islamic State group overran the Syrian town of Kobane

The case against current and former members of the pro-Kurdish HDP party — including its two former co-leaders stems from one of the darker episodes of the decade-long Syria war. Thirty-seven people died in violent demonstrations against the Turkish army's in-

action in the face of an IS offensive against the largely Kurdish northern Syrian town. The jihadists were driven out of Kobane in January 2015 by US-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters that Turkey officially

views as terrorists.

### **AFGHANISTAN ATTACKS KILL 12 POLICEMEN**

Kabul, April 26: At least 12 who were ambushed by the

The two separate attacks in the provinces of Logar and Kandahar came as the top US military commander in Afghanistan, General Scott Miller, said work had begun to withdraw the remaining American forces as ordered by President

Joe Biden this month. "Seven policemen were killed and three wounded when the Taliban ambushed their vehicles in Mohammad Agha district of Logar province,'

Dedar Lawang, spokesman for the provincial governor, said. The policemen were part of a

capital Kabul.

Afghanistan, whose economy has been severely impacted by decades of conflict and endemic corruption, has reserves of copper, iron, cobalt and lithium. In a separate attack on Sunday, a suicide bomber ran an explosives-laden car into a police vehicle in the southern Taliban bastion of Kandahar,

### **EU** mounts legal action on AstraZeneca for vax delay

### Charges vaccine maker for failing to respect terms of contract

**Brussels, April 26:** The European Commission on Monday said it has launched a legal action against vaccine maker AstraZeneca for failing to respect the terms of its contract with

Spokesman Stefan De Keersmaecker said, "The Commission has started last Friday legal action against the company AstraZeneca on the basis of breaches of the advance purchase agreement." He said that the reason for the legal action was that "some terms of the contract have not been respected" and that "the company has not been in a position to come up with a reliable strategy to ensure a timely delivery of doses". Contract with EU foresaw an initial 300 million doses for distribution among the 27 countries, with option for a further 100 million. But only 30 million doses were deliv-



A lone woman walks past stalls in an almost-empty shopping alley in Bangkok on Monday, amid an expansion of

### Burj Khalifa lit up with Tricolour

Dubai, April 26: Promisecond Covid-19 wave, the nent iconic buildings, in-cluding the Burj Khalifa, in the UAE were lit up with the Tricolour to solidarity with grapples

with a growing Covid-19 crisis.
The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADN-OC) headquarters and the world's tallest building, Burj Khalifa, in Dubai were lit up with the colours of the Indian flag in solidarity with

sign on Monday after clai-

ms he dismissed the pro-

spect of thousands dying

from Covid-19, as a row

over government "sleaze"

In a front-page headline, the *Daily Mail* newspaper reported Johnson had

said he would rather see

"bodies pile high in their

thousands" than impose a

third Coronavirus lock-

down. Ultimately, Johns-

on did order a new round

of restrictions in January.

But he is now locked in a

THAILAND

**FINE OF UP TO** 

**\$640 FOR NOT** 

**WEARING MASK** 

Bangkok, April 26: Authorities in Thailand

are imposing fines of

up to 20,000 baht (\$640)

for people who fail to

wear face masks in pub-

lic in 48 provinces, as

the government strug-

gles to cope with a new

wave of coronavirus cases that is straining

the medical system.

The capital, Bangkok, which has the largest

number of cases, is also

closing more than 30

types of businesses and

services, including cinemas, parks, zoos, bars,

pools and massage par-

lours. Gatherings of

more than 20 people are

official WAM news agency reported.
"As #India battles the

gruesome war against #UAE sends its best wishes. Glowing star @BurjKhalifa in

his Coronavirus policies last year and financial

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said the *Daily Mail* report, based on

unnamed sources, was

"categorically denied by

'None of this is serious.

The prime minister has

been utterly focused on

Cabinet colleagues, the response to Covid," he told *Sky News*. — *AFP* 

practically everyone".

and had beer

alongside

'not true'

delivering,

#Dubai lits up in Flag of India to showcase its support," Indian Embassy in the UAE tweeted on Sunday. The embassy also tweeted a video of the Burj Khalifa displaying the İndian flag and #stay-strongIndia. — PTI

London, April 26: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced a call to re-

### Google, MS Indo-American CEOs pledge aid to India

**April 26:** Google CEO Sundar Pichai and his Microsoft counterpart Satya Nadella have assured help to India. "Devastated to see the worsening Covid crisis in India. Google & Googlers are providing ₹135 crore in funding to @GiveIndia, @UNIČEF for medical supplies, orgs supporting high-risk communities, and grants to help spread critical information," Google CEO Pichai said in a tweet.

Nadella said that his

**UK VAX FOR ALL** 

**AGED 44, ABOVE** 

London, April 26: Everyone aged 44 and above in Britain will now be able to book their Covid-19 jab

starting on Monday as the

UK's National Health

Service (NHS) vaccine

programme expands fur-

ther to more younger age

groups. Around half a

million 44-year-olds will

receive a text message

inviting them to get their

use its resources and technology for relief efforts and support for buying oxygen devices. Nadella said he was "heartbroken" by the current Coronavirus situation in India. "I am heartbroken by the current situation in India. I'm grateful the US government is mobilising to help. Microsoft will continue to use its voice, resources, and technology to aid relief efforts, and support the purchase of critiUS President Joe Biden and Vice President Kama-

la Harris have assured India and its people of providing all assistance, including urgently sending necessary medical lifesaving supplies and equipment, to help the country combat the deadly crisis. "Just as India sent assistance to the United States as our hospitals were strained early in the pandemic, we are determined

### Boris in soup for 'dying' talk World military spending grows

**Stockholm, April 26:** Military expenditure worldwide rose to nearly \$2 think military spending would decrease," he said. "But it's possible to contrillion in 2020, defying the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, a significant impact on researchers said Monday

Global military spending increased by 2.6 percent to \$1,981 billion in 2020, when global GDP shrank 4.4 percent, according to a report from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Diego Lopes da Silva, one of report's authors, said the development was unexpected. "Because of the pandemic, one would

### **MISINFORMATION OF VIRUS: FB**

Sydney, April 26: Facebook removed Australian member of parliament Craig Kelly's page for repeatedly peddling pandemic misinformation. the social media giant said Monday.

Kelly previously had posts blocked on the platform and was forced to quit the governing Liberal Party, amid controversial statements on vaccine safety, lockdowns and unproven Covid

treatments. Facebook said it removed his popular page permanently after repeated violations" of ts policies. — AFP its policies.

ry spending out of total GDP had risen. —AFP **CHINA CARGO FLIGHTS** 

clude with some certainty

global military spending in 2020 at least," Lopes da

Silva said. He cautioned

however that due to the nature of military spend-

ing, it could take time for

countries "to adapt to the

shock". The fact that mili-

tary spending continued

to increase in a year with an economic downturn

meant the share of milita-

Beijing, April 26: Chicurb the latest surge, FM spokesman Wang Wenbin said. -PTIa

### Germany flays Navalny curbs

by Russian prosecutors Monday to suspend all activities by jailed opposition figure Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) and its

regional network. Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert said "using the instruments of fighting terror against politically undesirable opinions is in no way compatible with the principles of the rule of law".

A Moscow court had begun a preliminary hearing into designating FBK and its regional offices as "extremist" after prosecutors requested they be added to a list of "terrorist and extremist" organisations run by Russia's Anti-

Terrorism Committee. The Moscow City Court confirmed that the activities of the group's regional network were suspended, but clarified that prosecutors had the power to make the decision and

**Berlin, April 26:** Germany condemned an order said a final court ruling on designating the group as extremist was still due.

Russia's list of extremist organisations currently consists of 33 including the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and the Jehovah's Witnesses.

The groups are banned from operating in Russia and participating in their activities can result in lengthy prison terms.

Navalny, Russian President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent, was arrested in January on returning to Russia from Berlin after recovering from a near-fatal poisoning attack he says was orchestrated by Kremlin

Moscow denies the allegation.

He is serving two-and-ahalf years on old fraud charges — which he says are politically motivated — in a penal colony in the town of Pokrov east of

-AFP

### Suu Kyi court date postponed

Yangon, April 26: Myanmar's junta again postponed court proceedings against deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Monday her lawyers said, as they fight for permission to visit her 12 weeks

turmoil since the military ousted the Nobel laureate in a February 1 coup, shunting the country back into junta rule after a brief experiment with democracy. Large swathes of the population have taken to the streets in protest, with security forces unleashing a brutal campaign to quell the massive uprising.

Meanwhile Suu Kyi has been under house arrest, with the junta charging her under six cases — including for sedition and having unlicenced walkietalkies. But movement on delayed until May 10, her lawyer Min Min Soe said Monday after a hearing. Twelve weeks since Šuu

Kyi was detained, Min Min Soe said they still have not received permisface-to-face — one of many hurdles the team

(police) which stage they have reached, they replied they couldn't tell specifically," she said, adding that Suu Kyi was frustrated by the slow pace.

ting access to watch news and TV. I do not think she knows the current situation happening in the country," she said.

Afghan policemen were killed on Sunday, including seven Taliban south of the capital, officials said, as fighting continued in the violence-wracked

security force guarding copper mines in Logar, south of the

Police from Logar province

confirmed the attack. killing five policemen.

### Oz ventilators, PPE, oxygen for India

en, ventilators and perso-nal protective equipment to India as part of an immediate support package to the country which is battling with the latest surge of the Covid-19 cases, Health Minister Greg Hunt said on Monday.

The federal government was in the process of considering what it could send to help, the *Australi-*an *Broadcasting Corpo*ration news channel quot-

"India is literally gasping for oxygen," the federal health minister said. And while we can assist with the national medical stockpile, their particular request is for assistance

Melbourne, April 26: with regards to the physi-Australia will send oxyg-cal supply of oxygen. cal supply of oxygen. That will be one of the things we are looking at, in particular with the states, the minister said. The federal government

also confirmed to send oxygen, ventilators and personal protective equipment to India as part of an immediate support package to be announced on Tuesday, according to the report. However, Australia

would not send vaccines. Hunt further said: "We are in a strong position on that front because we don't need them at this point in time. We will still keep a reserve, but if they can be of assistance (they will be donated)." -PTI

**BLOCKS OZ MP TO INDIA SUSPENDED** 

na's state-run Sichuan Airlines has suspended all its cargo flights to India for 15 days, causing major disruption to private traders' efforts to procure the much-needed oxygen concentrators and other medical supplies from the country despite Beijing reiterating its readiness to help India. "China has been following the situa-tion in India and expre-ssed readiness to help after she was detained. Myanmar has been in

has faced. "When the judge asked

"I think she is not get-

Besides not being able to meet with Suu Kyi, juntaimposed mobile data shutdowns have also prevented video-conferencing in

previous hearings. The most serious charge Suu Kyi faces falls under Myanmar's official secrets law, with a hearing due in Yangon on May 6.

Nationwide protests continued Monday, with demonstrators holding signs that said "Free our leaders" and waving red flags emblazoned with a golden peacock — the symbol of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy Party.

— AFF

### 22 given death in Libya 'sham' trials

Tripoli, April 26: Eastern Libyan military courts have sentenced at least 22 people to death and jailed hundreds more since 2018 in "sham, torture-tainted" trials to exert control, Amnesty International said Monday.

"Military courts have convicted hundreds of civilians in eastern Libya in secret and grossly unfair military trials, the London-based rights

The trials were "aimed at punishing real or perceived opponents and critics" of the forces loyal to eastern military strongman Khalifa Haftar, it

Oil-rich Libya has been torn by conflict since the toppling and killing of dictator Moamer Kadhafi in a Nato-backed uprising -AFP

**Kiev, April 26:** President Volodymyr Zelensky was due Monday to visit the Chernobyl exclusion zone and address Ukrainians to commemorate the 35th

The exclusion zone is a 30-kilometre (20-mile) radius around the nuclear power plant that was evacuated in the aftermath of an explosion and was deemed unsafe for humans to

anniversary of the world's

worst nuclear disaster.

Ukraine marks 35 years since Chernobyl rs. Ahead of his arrival, dozens of people gathered in the nearby ghost town of Pripyat and held an overnight vigil with candles in memory of the those who lost their lives

in the accident.
The deaths of some 30 people were directly linked to the explosion in the fourth reactor at Chernobyl during a safety test on April 26, 1986.

feared to have died in the vears that followed from radiation poisoning across Ukraine as well as its northern neighbour Belarus and Russia to the east.

**NUCLEAR I DISASTER** Dozens gather in ghost town of Pripyat, hold candle vigil

The exact number of victims remains a subject of intense debate because the Soviet authorities kept most of the information about the disaster hidden. Hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated

from the area around the disaster site, and the exclusion zone has now become a ghostly uninhabited region. About 600,000 emergency workers and state employees who became known as "liquidators" were dispatched with little or no protective gear to help clean up the aftermath of the disaster.

A 2005 United Nations report estimated that up to 4,000 people could eventu-

ble poison in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. The Greenpeace environ-

mental group issued its own study the following year estimating that 100,000 people had already lost their lives as a result of the accident.

In November 2016, a mased over the remains of the

-AFP



# **Chronicle**

### Govt must wake up to reality, do a course correction swiftly

he world is waking up to the tragedy that India has found itself in, with scores of people dying for want of oxygen and critical drug shortages in several parts of the country. The United States, which had only last week insisted that its job was to vaccinate Americans first and held back critical raw materials for vaccine production in India, has now promised to speed up the delivery of such goods; and it is now "pursuing options to generate oxygen on an urgent basis" in India. Going by reports, these will include oxygen aggregators and concentrators. The European Union, France, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have also started sending vital medical supplies. Even Pakistan has offered to send help to India.

The world media is awash with the details on how the NDA government's

lackadaisical approach during the interregnum between the first and second waves of the pandemic have landed India in the mess. And they cannot be faulted. Reports of the parliamentary committee on health in February warning about "an unprecedented increase in the demand for non-invasive oxygen cylinders and instances of lack of oxygen cylinders" have already appeared. It had also recommended that the government "encourage adequate production

Reports of the parliamentary committee on health in February warning about "an unprecedented increase in the demand for non-invasive oxygen cylinders and instances of lack of oxygen cylinders" have already appeared.

of oxygen for ensuring its supply as per demand in the hospitals". It's not that the government had done nothing; it had initiated steps but not with the urgency with which a nation prepares for a second wave which experts had warned was coming. The Prime Minister's Office had on January 5 announced the PM-Cares Fund had allocated ₹201.58 crore for installing 162 dedicated pressure swing adsorption (PSA) oxygen generation plants in public health facilities. However, only 33 had been built by April 18. The procurement of the plant was to be done by the Central Medical Supply Store, an autonomous body under the Union health ministry. It may be hoped that the 551 new PSAs the PM Cares Fund has newly

sanctioned will not meet with a similar fate. From the responses, one cannot be faulted if one thought that the Government of India was the last to get a grip

Augmenting healthcare infrastructure is a long-term programme even in the face of a pandemic. The immediate, effective and assured tool to fight it is universal vaccinations, but the government has been displaying a lack of urgency about that too. The mandarins deciding vaccine policy are yet to wake up from their slumber and see the unfolding events. Parliament has passed a budget with a sum that will be sufficient to inoculate every eligible Indian free of cost if it bought the doses at the price the manufacturers decided in the first phase. The government has several legal and administrative options, including the compulsory licensing route, to enhance production. However, it seems to be in no hurry and, worse, it has passed the responsibility for inoculation first to the state governments and then to citizens. The government may, at least now, make a course correction in order to obviate a similar global initiative to vac-

### Oscars in pandemic times

sanitised Oscars ceremony was befitting in the dark times the world is going through. Even then, it didn't have to end the way it did with the oldest actor to win the coveted prize, Anthony Hopkins, not tuning in even by video from his home in Wales. Hollywood, well-known for its love of a cinematic climax to all stories big and small, also didn't quite time it right. An empty stage with a golden Oscar statuette and then just the titles was a strange but, perhaps, symbolic climax to a ceremony which, clubbed with a narcissistic red carpet and extravagant parties, used to represent the glitz and glamour

"It has been quite a year, and we are still smack dab in the middle of it," Regina King said in reference to the pandemic as well as the verdict on the George Floyd killing. "Our love of movies helped to get us through," she added. That is significant because in many people's reckoning some parts of life must go on despite the pandemic. And what can be better than entertainment brought to people's homes on a screen? We would do well to remember that 97 per cent of people have proved immune to the infernal pathogen. Perhaps much the same argument drives the IPL, which is India's biggest entertainment extravaganza.

This year's awards were a "woke" Hollywood's ode to diversity, with Chloe Zhao, of Chinese origin, becoming the first woman of colour to win the best director statuette. Predictably too, China rubbed her out because she is not in ync with its nationalistic ideals. Emnathy was at the very heart of the m that went to Frances McDormand who starred in Nomadland, with real-life actor-nomads from marginalised, itinerant communities in a post-recession United States reflecting an American dream gone awry. The greatest disappointment may have been in black actor Chadwick Boseman not winning best actor posthumously while Hopkins won it for portraying an older man with dementia in The Father. It was, however, a historic day for women and people of colour, and no one can complain about that.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER

K. SUDHAKAR

Resident Editor

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:
Chennai: SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748

Coimbatore: 77 Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256 Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4. Fax: (0-40) 27803930-4.

2/803-256.

Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500; Fax: 080-22960551/52/55

Visakhapatnam: Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334, Fax (0891) 2755285

Vijayawada: No. C 3 & 4, Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 5284/ 2555287, Fax (0866) 2555234 Z352264 Z352264 Z352264 Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618
Anantapur: Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903,
Fax: 08554-276904

Fax: 08554-276904
Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore.
Phone: (0861) 2348581/82, Telefax (0861) 2348580
Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar 505 001.
Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax (0878) 2220433

Kochi: No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph. 0484-4039408 Kozhikode: No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001

Fax: 0495 4019018

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph Press Thycaud post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/6/7, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08ss



## Covid mess to cost govt dear at home & abroad



K.C. Singh

n March 12, US President Joe Biden convened the inaugural summit of the "Quad" countries, comprising Australia, India, Japan and the United States, held in a virtual format. Their joint statement headlined "The Spirit of the Quad" emphasised the combating of Covid-19. In the last paragraph, they committed to combining medical, financing, manufacturing and delivery as well as development capabilities to address the "historic crisis". India was seen as the hub of vaccine manufacture and the vanguard in this battle.

Covid-19's second wave hit India soon afterwards, with India's leadership preoccupied with crucial state elections, the Kumbh Mela and cricket. The mutant virus had begun wreaking havoc in Britain. Unmindful of this, India was exporting Astracines to friendly developing countries and fulfilling its Covax commitments. The cases began spiking, first in Maharashtra and Punjab, and finally in the nation's capital, Delhi. Two virus variants, the British B.1.1.7 and a local double mutant B.1.617, may have accelerated the spread. The Quad spirit of cooperation ran into vaccine nationalism when India's pleas to the US for assistance were rudely rejected. The public discourse started getting toxic, especially in the social media, with escalating criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his deputy, home minister Amit Shah, for campaigning without masks and amidst mammoth crowds. The Election Commission too irresponsibly conceded the BJP's desire for the eight-phase, month-long polls in West Bengal. Alongside, the lack-

adaisical vaccination programme started, with frontline workers and

then the older, more vulnerable population. But as the vaccination was stepped up, the demand began outpacing the supply. Ins-tead of being the "Vishwa Guru" and global factory for vaccines, India now blocked exports. The Ser-um Institute of India, pro-ducing the AstraZeneca vaccine Covishield, and Bharat Biotech, producing Covaxin, fell behind their production targets. The European Union sued SII for breach of commitments. In turn, it complained its production was being hampered by US

restrictions on raw mater-

India-US relations came

ial exports

under strain as public opinion in India soured. Both sides failed to communicate their respective concerns properly. In America, newly elected President Joe Biden assumed office, promising to undo the harm done by the unscientific and populist approach of his predeces-Trumn He sor Donald invoked the old Defence Production Act (DPA), within two weeks of ass uming office, to marshal all resources. His target of 200 million shots in the first 100 days was achieved before time. The US also started building up a strategic reserve of vaccines, now amounting to over 300 million surplus shots. But the DPA constrains the export of vaccines. Consequently, the four million doses given to Mexico and Canada were called a loan.

The US had other considerations for not sharing its vaccines. Both Pfizer and Modena have obtained liability protection from the US government for civil or criminal liability for any untoward health episode post-vaccination. If exported, they would seek similar protection from the importing nations. Only about one-third of the US population has been fully vaccinated so far and thus a fresh surge of cases was troubling. The new spike is driven by mutated ver-

sions, the efficacy of vaccines against which is still unclear. The British mutant B.1.1.7 is believed to be 60 per cent more contagious and 67 per cent deadlier. As per the Centres for Disease Control (CDC) data, adults in their 20s to 50s are getting hospitalised in the Midwest, South and Northwest. The New York Times said: "From Minnesota to New Jersey to North Carolina, younger people are making up a growing share of hospitalisations" Currently, 45,000 persons

are hospitalised in the US. Thus, an India unprepared for the second surge ignored US concerns when publicly seeking relaxations of DPA restrictions on the export of vaccine production raw material and a possible loan of unused AstraZeneca vaccines, so far unapproved for emergency use. The initial rejection was taken as a snub and allowed to play in public. China's glee was palpable as its English mouthpiece Global Times chided India for depending on the US and not seeking Beijing's help. Russia also rushed to supply oxygen,

When India's mishandling and the fresh surge became lead news in the US media, and after mass cremation pictures appeared on the front pages of its major newspapers, the Democrats and the Biden administration finally woke up. The liberal wing of the Democratic Party, which the Indian government and especially external affairs minister S. Jaishankar chided over their criticism of India's Kashmir policy, now came to India's rescue. US national security adviser Jake Sullivan tweeted on April 25 that after he talked to India's NSA Ajit Doval the US agreed to 'deploying more supplies and resources" to aid India as both nations had the greatest number of cases globally. Among this

When India's mishandling and the fresh surge became lead news in the US, the Democrats and the US administration finally woke up.

would be raw materials, protection kits, therapeutics, rapid diagnostic kits,

ventilators, etc.
The US Development Finance Corporation will aid the expansion of vaccine manufacture by Hyderabad-based Biological E Ltd, which has finished its Phases 1 and 2 trials. Baylor Medical College has provided the proven and simpler yeast-based expression technology. The company is to produce one billion doses by the end of 2022 at an affordable price. This is the magic bullet for the developing and underdeveloped world, now without access to a vaccine. Africa doesn't have even a vaccine producer now. Globally, the developed nations, with 16 per cent of the world population, have cornered 52 per cent of vaccines. But the US has still not cleared the export of unused AstraZeneca vaccines. President Joe Biden said the US was helping India in its hour of need as India it them in the past, but the focus is on capacity build-

How does India return to being seen as the world's vaccine hub rather than a troubled victim? Political mismanagement, electoral partisanship, religious pandering and the lack of foresight have damaged India's image. It has left China smirking, though on the positive side Pakistan's political comments and public opinion have been empathetic. The current electoral cycle ends on April 29 in West Bengal, but immediately another begins as the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election is due in February 2022. Has the government learnt the lesson that public health and safety must remain above politics? Also, US help will come laced with unsaid conditions. For one, majoritarianism and the democracy deficit may invite more forceful US intervention. India's Kashmir, Pakistan and Afghanistan policies will also see closer US monitoring. The mismanaged pandemic at home will diminish the government's political space both

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh

at home and abroad.

#### LETTERS

#### **NEED CLEAR INFO**

It is extremely sad to know

that four police personnel in Chennai had reportedly died due to Covid-19 since April 19. We salute their great bravery shown as dutybound, committed frontline warriors in the huge battle presently being fought by the nation against the deadly pandemic. However, we also understand those frontline warriors were the first in the population to be vaccinated throughout the country. We are informed by medical experts through the media that persons getting fully vaccinated would be protected against being hospitalised and the risk of their death would be considerably reduced, even though they could still get potentially infected by the virus. In the light of this, citizens getting vaccinated would certainly be keen to have some official data as to whether, till date, those like frontline workers, despite already having both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine administered, had to be hospitalised due to the virus or very, unfortunately, if some even lost their lives. If so, we need clear information from the government.

A. Mohan. Chennai

#### WITHDRAW AGITATION

It is very sickening to note that the striking farmers have decided to prolong their strike further despite the spread of the pandemic with greater virulence. The pandemic is a common enemy that should be fought by all persons with common sense. The farmers should withdraw protests against farm laws. The disease will not distinguish between persons on the basis of their profession and social status. The time has come for the SC to declare the agitation as illegal and unlawful. Just because of their numerical strength, one group cannot be allowed to be the source of danger to others due to their obstinacy. SC should on its own do this in the interest of all others who are anyway connected with the agitation that had lost its sheen and sup-

Kongunaattan,

### Aakar Patel



India's health calamity has exposed flaws in Guj Model

ust before the 2014 election, two of India's most famous economists had a public quarrel. Because they were academics the language was mostly polite, but the disagreement was not minor. It was about the so-called "Gujarat Model". Jagdish Bhagwati took the side of Narendra Modi, and Amartya Sen took the opposite side. In brief, the Bhagwati-Modi view was to prioritise economic growth over social spending. Sen's view was that economic growth was not possible without social spending.

Sen did not oppose a liberalised business environment: his concern was primarily what the government did. Bhagwati did not oppose social spending: his concern was what the

government should not do.
Both sides had rational arguments, but Sen had one unanswerable question: Could anyone name a nation that had become developed without a healthy and well-educated population? The answer to that was no. There is no nation on the world that has ignored investing in the health and education of its population and become developed. It is social spend-

ing that leads to growth and not the other way around. You cannot have a population that is not very literate and not very healthy and expect that industrialists will do all the work necessary to make a nation developed. The state and the government have the primary responsibility and

function in this area.
The "Gujarat Model believes that if the government supports industrialists by offering them subsidies, ease of doing business, freedom from workers' unions and holding vibrant Gujarat melas — if it does this for a sufficiently long period, then the benefits will accrue to the general population because it is business that makes the economy strong.

The Sen model believes that a healthy and educated population is both an end in itself and a means to achieving economic prosperity. It was in fact possible for the government to create a healthy and educated population even when it had no real economic strength, and Cuba is an example of this. There is no example of a developed nation that had a Third World education and healthcare system. For this reason, the

State must focus on building a strong education system and a strong healthcare system and prioritise its spending in these areas. Sen supports schemes like MNREGA and the right to food, Narendra Modi opposed MNREGA and called it a monument to failure. The Congress Party said this week that in 25 years under the BJP, including 12 years under Mr Modi, Gujarat did not build a single new government hospital. The BJP has not denied the claim, meaning that it is correct. Of course, many Vibrant Gujarat summits were held. What did they produce ultimately? The answer is not development, whatever definition we can use for it. Yes, it is true that some Gujaratis have become very wealthy, a few even managing to triple their wealth in 2020 a year, when many of us lost work. But for the majority there was no benefit. The large industries that came up in Gujarat did not employ a lot of people. This is why the most dominant political community of the state, the Patidars, took to the streets demanding reservations in jobs.

The sacrifice that was made by the population for the Gujarat Model was

very great. Gujarat was low on the Human Development Index and in 2012 Mr Modi told the Wall Street Journal that malnutrition in his state was high because its girls were "fashion conscious" and didn't want to drink milk. This sort of contempt and igno-

rance of fundamental issues has come at a cost to India. The Sen model is not only about expenditure, it is also about the focus of the State. A government which believes that it is the well-being of its citizenry as measured through their health and education will be geared and organised in a particular way. It will not be caught scrambling one year after a global pandemic because it does not have enough oxygen or medicines or beds. The Gujarat Model expected that the private sector would take care of health because it was a business and there would be consumers. That is not how the rest of the world has achieved it.

It is not necessary to say today that Bhagwati was totally wrong because he was, and we can see that all around us. As India suffers and the ruling party is on the defensive, the truth is that the only way that this wave will pass is if exponential growth of the virus stops on its own. The intervention of the government is so poor and so weak that it cannot by itself do anything significant to save us. In the short term we have to suffer the consequences and there is

no option. This is the reason why Prime Minister Modi has been missing from the public eye after stopping his rallies in West Bengal abruptly. The reason why Mr Modi was furious that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal showed their interaction to the rest of us was not because it was a breach of protocol but because the truth was exposed and it was embarrassing. At a moment of crisis, we are choosing to run away from the fact that core beliefs about what the government should do have been proven wrong. We should have an honest discussion once again about the Bhagwati and Sen debate and what we should do in the medium and long

The writer is a columnist and a













<b>INDICATORS</b>		%
Sensex	48386.51	1.06
Nifty 50	14485.00	1.00
S&P 500*	4,189.51	0.22
Dollar (₹)	74.73	0.39
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.99	0.11
Euro (₹)	90.41	0.04
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,976▼81	0.17
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.57	-0.82
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.038	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.568	0.001
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

### **Mankind Pharma** to give ₹100 cr to families of dead

Mankind Pharma will donate Rs 100 crore to the families of deceased doctors, police officers, pharmacists, and other healthcare workers who have lost their lives fighting the pandemic. The firm plans to start releasing the money with immediate effect and hopes to complete it within three months, Mankind said in a statement. The firm said it is standing alongside the families of the heroes who lost their lives



### ■ Age ceiling for top tier set at 70 years **Bank chief's tenure**

# capped at 15 years

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, APRIL 26

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday fixed the tenure of managing directors and chief executive officers (MD & CEO) and whole-time directors (WTD) in private sector banks at 15 years and prescribed the maximum age of 70 years for such func-The central bank also said a CEO, MD or WTD,

who is a promoter or major shareholder of a bank as well, will not be eligible to hold these posts for more than 12 years, with an extension of up to 15 years permitted at its sole discretion. Bank chiefs and WTDs who are not promoters will be eligible for a second-term even after the 15year period after a three-year break. During this three-year gap, the individual shall not be associated with the bank or its group entities in any capacity.

The RBI also said the chairman of the board must be an independent director. It also listed other

audits, remuneration and risk-management commit-The RBI has given banks until October 1 to comply

guidelines on the pay of

non-executive directors, age limits and setting up of

with the rules. Analysts pointed that promoter Uday Kotak, who has been at the helm of Kotak Mahindra Bank for over 12 years, had been reappointed for a term of years starting three January 2021, may not be immediately impacted.

Similarly, the RBI approved the reappointment of N. Kamakodi, MD & CEO of City Union Bank,

for three years effective May 1, 2020 will continue. Kamakodi has been heading the bank since 2011. However, one will have

to wait and see as to what view the RBI takes on Bandhan Bank. Does the limit include the MD and CEO's tenure when he was heading Bandhan as an NBFC? Similarly, the MDs of Federal Bank, DCB Bank and RBL Bank have been there for long but the upper limit of 15 years may not have an immediate impact on these banks, said an analyst.

J.N. Gupta, former execu tive director of Sebi, said, "I am unable to understand as to why the RBI feels that independent directors and non-executive directors should be paid a fixed sum which is in total contradic-tion with the provisions of the Companies Act. Secondly, how can a promoter who owns substantial equity in the bank be asked to sit on the fence and watch non-interested parties manage the bank.

#### **AUTO INDUSTRY VETERAN JAGDISH KHATTAR PASSES AWAY**

New Delhi, April 26: Former managing director of Maruti Suzuki India, Jagdish Khattar, passed away Monday morning following a cardiac arrest, according to people close to

Khattar (79), a former bureaucrat, was considered as one of the most high profile leaders of the Indian automotive indus-



the govern-Jagdish ment began its disinvestment in 2002 and gradually exited from its joint venture with Suzuki Motor Corporation (SMC).

laying He had joined the then the founda-Maruti Udyog Ltd in July 1993 as director (market-Maruti's f u t u r e growth after

Maruti Suzuki chairman R. C. Bhargava, who persuaded Khattar to leave IAS and join Maruti, termed him as a "first class person" and his demise as a "big loss" both personally as well as for the automotive industry. -PTItive industry.

### **MPHASIS OWNERSHIP CHANGE TO SET OFF OPEN OFFER**

New Delhi, April 26: Shares of Mphasis Ltd closed with a gain of over 1.6 per cent on Monday after Blackstone said funds managed it will acquire a majority stake in the mid-sized IT firm.

This, the private equity firm said, will trigger an open offer for acquisition of up to 26 per cent stake for about Rs 8,262 crore.

A wholly owned subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Investment Auth-ority, UC Investments (Office of the Chief Investment Officer of The Regents, University of California) and others will co-invest with Blackstone PE fund in the company, a statement said.

A different fund managed by Blackstone had acquired a controlling stake in Mphasis from Hewlett Packard Enterprise in September 2016. Based on the open offer subscription, the blended purchase price will vary between Rs 1,452 and Rs 1,497 per share and the purchase consideration will vary between Rs 15,200 crore and Rs 21,000 crore (about \$2 bn-2.8 bn), the statement said.

At the end of March 2021 quarter, Marble II Pte Ltd, a fund managed by Blackstone held 56.03 per cent stake in Mphasis.

Mpĥasis in a regulatory filing said Marble II will sell up to 55.31 per cent stake as part of a share purchase pact signed on Monday.—

### Price gap of ready and under construction houses narrows

**SANGEETHA G** CHENNAI, APRIL 26

Sluggish demand has narrowed down the price difference between ready-tomove-in and under-construction residential units to as low as 3 per cent.

The price gap between ready and or under-construction housing, which has been narrowing since 2017, has come down to 3 to 5 per cent, indicating the sluggishness in demand in the market, finds Anarock Property Consultants.

In 2017, the price gap stood at 9 to 12 per cent and it had narrowed to 5-8 per cent in 2018.

In Mumbai, the price difference shrunk from 12



per cent in 2017 to 3 per cent in Q1 2021. In the case of Bengaluru, it was 12 per cent and 4 per cent and Pune, the gap narrowed from 12 per cent to 5 per cent.

According to Anarock, average prices of ready-to-occupy homes in Delhi NCR were Rs 4,650 per sq.

tion ones Rs 4,500 per sq. ft. In Mumbai it stood at Rs 10,700 per sq ft and Rs 10,350 per sq ft respectively. Apart from sluggish demand, unsold stock too held back the price rise of ready-to-occupy homes in these years. Construction delays and stalled projects also made customers averse to investing in under-construction units.

ft. and for under-construc-

attraction. "The shrunk price gap works well for end-users as well as investors," said Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Property Consultants.

Further, ready-to-occupy homes do not attract GST

and this has been an added

### **BUSINESS**

### **TECH MAHINDRA Q4 NET UP 34.6% TO ₹1,080 CR**

Mumbai, April 26: Tech Mahindra reported a 34.6 per cent jump in net profit to Rs 1,081 crore for the March 2020 quarter and guided towards target ing for a double-digit revenue growth in FY22. Its post-tax net profit grew 9.8 per cent to Rs 4,428 crore in 2020-21, on the back of a 2.7 per cent growth in overall revenues to Rs 37,855 crore. CEO and MD C. P. Gurnani said 2020-21 was the "repair" year when the company faced the pandemic impact, and promised 2021-22 to be a "growth year". -PTI

#### TATA MOTORS TO CUT PRODUCTION

Pune, April 26: Tata Motors said it has decided to "calibrate" production of its vehicles with actual demand to prevent oversupply and a pile up of inventory at the company and dealers. It did not give any details about the likely quantum of

#### -Michael Gonsalves **POWERGRID INVIT'S IPO THIS WK**

reduction in production. "The lock-down enforced in various parts of the

country is expected to impact vehicle

demand temporarily," the auto major

said, adding, Hence, the firm has set in

motion a comprehensive 'Business

Agility Plan' to protect and serve the interests of its customers, dealers and



Deepika, Atanu

trap triple gold

Guatemala City, April • This was the best

**Mumbai, April 26:** Powergrid InvIT will come out with India's first PSU infrastructure investment trust IPO on Thursday, April 29. The IPO seeks to

raise Rs 7,734.92 crore from units sold at a price band of Rs 99 to Rs 100 apiece. IRB InvIT and Indi Grid InvIT are already listed on the stock exchanges. An InvIT is a collective investment scheme similar to a mutual fund that inve4sts in infrastructure projects. The Powergrid InvIT IPO comprises fresh issue of units for up to Rs 4,993.48 crore and the selling unitholder is offering units aggregating up to Rs 2,741.50 — Ravi Ranjan Prasad

SHORT TAKES

#### **Hockey captain** Rani, 6 others +ve

New Delhi: Seven members of the Indian women's hockey team, including captain Rani Rampal, and two support staff members on Monday tested positive for Covid-19 ahead of a training camp at the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Centre in Bengaluru.

All the players and support staff are asymptomatic and have been placed under observation at the SAI centre 'They were tested on April 24,

post quarantine after their return from their respective home towns to their training base at SAI Bengaluru, as per the laid down protocol," the SAI said in a statement. - PTI

#### **Nadal bags 12th Barcelona crown**

Barcelona: Rafael Nadal saved a championship point to beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-7 (6/8), 7-5 on Sunday and claim a 12th Barcelona Open title in the ATP's longest match of 2021. He secured his first title of the year and 87th of his career, denying Tsitsipas back-to-back triumphs following his maiden Masters 1000 title at Monte Carlo last week. Nadal avenged his Australian Open quarter-final loss to Tsitsipas and will return to second in the ATP rankings on Monday by climbing back above Daniil Medvedev after his marathon 3-hour 38-minute win.

### **Cirstea wins WTA** title after 13 years

Istanbul: Romania's Sorana Cirstea said she "didn't expect" to win the Istanbul claycourt tournament on Sunday, her second career title coming 13 years after her first. The 31-year-old Romanian

defeated top-seeded Elise Mertens of Belgium 6-1, 7-6 (7/3) in the final having not dropped a set all week Cirstea, ranked at 67 in the

world, captured her maiden title at Tashkent in 2008. Sunday was her fifth final, having made her maiden championship match as a 17-year-old qualifier at Budapest 2007. "I'm very, very happy for this trophy," Cirstea said at the winner's ceremony. - AFP

### FOUR IN A ROW FOR CITY Guardiola's men outclass Tottenham to retain League Cup in front of fans

**London, April 26:** Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said winning felt much better with fans in attendance after beating Tottenham 1-0 at Wembley to lift the League Cup for the fourth consecutive year in front of 8,000 supporters on Sunday.

Aymeric Laporte's header eight minutes from time finally rewarded a dominant performance from City as they extended Spurs' 13-year wait to win a trophy.

For the first time in 13 months, a football match in England had designated fans from both teams inside the stadium in one of a series of test events at 90,000 capacity Wembley as coronavirus restrictions are eased. "It's not full, but it is nuch better," said

much Guardiola. "To celebrate with them is much better. We played really well. We are incredibly happy to

win the first title, four in a row in this competition, but especially because in the last 33 games, we won

Defeat by Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-finals last weekend means City cannot claim an unprecedent-



Manchester City players celebrate with the trophy after winning the League Cup final against Tottenham Hotspur 1-0 at the Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday.

ed quadruple of trophies this season.

However, they remain on course for a treble with the Champions League semifinal against Paris Saint-Germain to come on Wednesday before possibly

after another Atletico slip

the Premier sealing the Premier League title next weekend. Victory takes Guardiola's personal tally of major trophies to 25 across his spells in charge of Barcelona, Bayern Munich and City, seven of which have come

in England.

"I was in big clubs: Barcelona, Bayern Munich and here, that's why it is easier to do it," added the Catalan modestly. By contrast, Tottenham's

long wait for just one goes on. Spurs could have no complaints, though, at the

Italian clubs in rebel league

to be banned from Serie 'A'

along with City and four otner English clubs, pull a proposed European Super League amid fan fury.
Son Heung-min was reduced to tears after full-

end of a chaotic week that

saw them sack Jose Mourinho on Monday and,

time, but in caretaker boss Mason's second game in charge, Spurs were completely out-classed by a far superior

"It's difficult to take for everyone associated with the football club," said former Tottenham midfielder Mason.

'It hurts. I know that feeling and it is normal that they are hurting. This group of players care deeply about this football club. We tried, it wasn't enough today and it's tough to take."

After a slight dip in form in recent weeks, City were back to their best as they pinned Tottenham back from the first whistle and should have won by a far more comfortable score-

Hugo Lloris's goal lived a charmed life, particularly during the first half.

#### couple Deepika Kumari finish by India's and Atanu Das led the recurve archers with show with two individual gold medals as the country capped its best ever perone team gold formance in a World Cup, claiming three golds and a bronze in the tournament's first stage here. Former world number

26: Indian archery's star

one Deepika claimed her career's third individual World Cup gold to add to the team's triumph, while her husband Das grabbed his first ever World Cup individual medal in style winning the men recurve individual final.

The two are now automatically qualified for this season's most-coveted Archery World Cup Final. "We travel together, train

together, compete together and win together," Das, who got married to Deepika in June last year after a two-year courtship, said after claiming the gold medal on Sunday.
"She knows what I like, and I know what she

This was the best ever

World Cup finish by India's recurve archers with two individual and one team gold medals in their return to the top International calendar year event after almost

two years.
Also, this was India's best ever individual recurve men's result since

medals in their return to the top International calendar year event after almost two years. Jayanta Talukdar tri-

ever World Cup

two individual and

umphed in Croatia way back in 2009. India started with the

women's trio of Deepika, Bhakat Ankita Komalika Bari winning the first team gold after seven years. They scripted a stunning turnaround to down fancied Mexico 5-4 (27-26) in an intriguing shoot-off.

The performance rubbed off on the mixed pair of Das and Bhakat as they bagged a bronze, upsetting top seeds USA 6-2 with yet another fightback at the Sports Complex Los Arcos

But the icing on the cake came in the individual events later in the day when Deepika and Das bagged two individual golds in their respective events.

This was Deepika's third career stage win and first since Salt Lake City 2018.

### ATLETICO DEFEAT BY BILBAO HANDS INITIATIVE TO BARCA

Madrid, April Atletico Madrid's title hopes suffered a setback on Sunday as a shock 2-1 defeat at Athletic Bilbao handed Barcelona the upper hand in a thrilling race at the top of La Liga. Real Madrid's draw with Real Betis on Saturday gave Atletico the chance to pull further clear but instead they ended the weekend with their lead reduced, a loss at San Mames the latest twist in Europe's most unpredictable domestic chase.

Barcelona had earlier

Griezmann's

beaten Villarreal by the same scoreline, with

quick-fire double becom-

ing all the more valuable

Sevilla have largely been overlooked as possible champions in Spain but they are right in the mix as well now after a 2-1 win over Granada puts them just three points off the top and one behind Real

Yet Barcelona were the biggest winners, with Ronald Koeman's team able to go top of the table if they win their game in hand at home to Granada on Thursday, even if Atletico might have a way back given they are still to play at Camp Nou on May

Real Madrid host Sevilla -AFP

Rome, April 26: The Italian football federation (FIGC) said on Monday that clubs who join a breakaway league would be banned from all domestic competitions including Serie 'A'.

Three Serie 'A' clubs -Juventus, Inter Milan and AC Milan — were among 12 major European sides who were involved in the plans to launch a European Super League plans last week.

"(Clubs) who plan to play in competitions outside of FIFA or UEFA will lose their affiliation to our championship," Gabriele Gravina said after a meet-

Three Serie A clubs — Juventus, **Inter Milan and AC** Milan — were among 12 major **European sides who** were involved in the plans to launch a **European Super** League last week.

ing on Monday.

Inter Milan announced their withdrawal from the proposed Super League last Wednesday after the departure of the 'big six' English clubs.

But Juventus and AC Milan were less clear,

acknowledging the failure of the plans without specifying whether or not they were leaving the project. "It is obvious that if, on

June 21, the closing date for applications for registration, some wanted to participate in competitions of a private nature, they would not take part in our championship," said Gravina in a state-

ment. "At the moment, we have no information on who staved and who left the Super League.'

The new rule will be added to the licenses of the clubs and into the regulatory texts of the FIGC.

### **TOKYO TO DECIDE ON FAN**

**Tokyo, April 26:** Tokyo 2020 President Seiko Hashimoto said on Monday that she will decide the upper limit of spectators for the Olympics and

Paralympics by the end of April. "As for the upper limit of spectators, we will make a decision on that regard by the end of April. In order to flexibly address the virus situation including the state of emergency, we will work closely with the IOC, IPC, the central government and the Tokyo metropolitan government in order to gain consensus,' said Hashimoto during Tokyo 2020 executive board

meeting held in the capital. Hashimoto noted that she was highly aware of concern about the virus resurgence as the state of emergency has been issued in Tokyo and three other prefectures but will have anti-virus measures that address all the possible issues that may be caused by holding the games amid the pandemic.

 CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
 DELHI CAPITALS
 KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS
 MUMBAI INDIANS
 PUNJAB KINGS • RAJASTHAN ROYALS • ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE • SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

DECCAN CHRONICLE, COIMBATORE, TUESDAY, 27 APRIL 2021

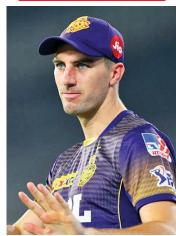
Shikhar Dhawan, DC KL Rahul, **PBKS** 

Faf du Plessis, CSK **PURPLE** 

Harshal Patel, RCB **Avesh** 

Khan, DC Rahul Chahar, MI

Off the field



KKR pacer Pat Cummins.

#### **Cummins donates** \$50K to PM fund

Kolkata Knight Riders' Australian pacer Pat Cummins on Monday Cummins on Monday announced a \$50,000 donation towards PM CARES Fund for oxygen supplies in India's COVID-19 ravaged hospitals and backed the IPL to continue, saying he has been "advised" that the Indian government views it "as few hours of joy" in a difficult time. "As players, we are privileged to have the platform that allows us to reach millions of people that we can use for good. With that in mind, I have made a contribution to the PM CARES Fund, specifically to purchase oxy gen supplies for India's hospitals," he stated.

#### **Cricket Australia** monitors situation

Cricket Australia have said they are in touch with their player after three of them pulled out of the IPL and returned home. "We will continue to listen to feedback from those on the ground in India and the advice of the Australian Government. Our thoughts are with the people of India," it added.

The Sydney Morning Herald on Monday reported that many Australian players are "nervous about securing safe passage back home after the Scott Morrison government reduced the number of incoming passengers allowed from India.

#### **Coulter-Nile feels** safer in bio-bubble

Australian pacer Nathan Coulter-Nile understands why some of his compatriots decided to leave home midway from the IPL but he feels safer being part of the Mumbai Indians' bio-bubble.

"Everyone's got their own opinions on it and different situations for them," Coulter-Nile told cricket.com.au where more than 20,000 cases have been reported daily for the past one week.

"I was surprised to see AJ go home, and then Zamps and Richo, but when you speak to them, you definitely understand where they're coming from. I spoke to Zamps a little while ago and he made a very compelling argument for going home. But for me, I feel like it's safer for me to stay in the bubble."

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# BUBBLE WOBBLES

### Pressure mounts as Ashwin and two more Aussies pull out

New Delhi, April 26: Anxiety pierced through IPL's bio-secure bubble on Monday with leading off-spinner Ravichandran Ravichandran Ashwin and some Australian players withdrawing from the league amid the escalating COVID-19 crisis in India even as the BCCI insisted that the glitzy league will go on.

The 34-year-old Ashwin, competing for Delhi Capitals, decided to take a break saying that his family is currently "putting up a fight against COVID-19" and he wants to support them. He hopes to return to the side "if things go in the right

However, the duo of Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa (both Royal Challengers Bangalore) withdrew as apprehension set in after a couple of weeks went by smoothly for the league being held in front of empty stands across six venues.

#### Fear of getting

While Zampa and Richardson have not yet spoken about their "personal reasons" for leav-Andrew (Rajasthan Royals) who pulled out on Sunday said he feared getting locked out of his own country owing to mounting quarantine cases from India in his hometown Perth.

"I just thought to try and get on the front foot and get home before I got locked out of the country...think I've had 11 days at home out of the bubble since August, so for me I just wanted to get home," Tye told SEN Radio from Doha, the transit point before his flight to Perth.

#### BCCI keen on

continuing the show The BCCI, on its part, insisted that the event continue and it wouldn't come in the way of those wanting to leave. "As of now, IPL is going ahead. Obviously, if anyone wants to leave, that's rules.

Board official said on con- May 30 in Ahmedabad.

New Delhi, April 26: Kolkata Knight Riders

mentor David Hussey has

said that some of the fel-

low Australians in the

IPL are a "bit nervous" about getting back home

in the wake of a COVID-

whether they can get

back into Australia. I dare say there will be a

few other Australians a

bit nervous about getting

back into Australia,

Hussey, a former Australia international,

told the Sydney Morning

Lead Australia pacer

Pat Cummins is also part

Hussey praised the strict bio-bubble in place

for the IPL but said it is

natural for the players to

be nervous about the cur-

rent situation in India.

of the KKR squad.

nervous

Everyone is sort of a

19 surge in India.



My family and extended family are putting up a fight against #COVID19 and I want to support them during these tough times

> - R. ASHWIN DC off-spinner



While Zampa was bought for ₹1.5 crore, RCB spent ₹4 crore to buy pacer Richardson at the players'

Richardson featured in one match for RCB, returning figures of 1 for 29 in three overs against Rajasthan Royals in Mumbai, but Zampa couldn't make it to the playing XI this season.

The 34-year-old Tye had also not got a game with the Royals so far and his contract with the franchise was worth ₹1 crore. Several England and New Zealand players are also competing in the event but haven't yet spoken about their concerns.

#### ECB to work with

**its players** "We continue to monitor and work with the players Our thoughts are with the people of India during these difficult times," a spokesperson of the spokesperson of the England and Wales Cricket Board said.

The players from New Zealand, including Kane Williamson and Trent Boult, are expected to leave early in any case as they have a Test series against England starting June 2. They will have to head back in last week of May to be available for it because of quarantine The IPL final perfectly fine," a senior scheduled to be held on



### Royals down with just four foreigners, seek player loans

New Delhi, April 26: Sunday, Andrew Tye left sion of the league stage Rajasthan Royals have for Australia, citing fear Tye, who had not playe approached fellow IPL teams to loan players after the departure of their four foreign players due to various reasons that include injuries, fatigue and COVID-19 fear.

Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer are out of the IPL due to injuries while

Everyone is a bit nervous: Hussey

KKR batting coach David Hussey (left) talks to bowling

for Australia, citing fear due to surge of COVID-19 cases in India, making Royals the worst affected team from player pull-outs. "The team is looking to loan players and has written to other franchisees but nothing is decided at this point," a source close the team management said.

Liam Livingstone had The IPL loan window gone back home citing started on Monday and fatigue. On will end with the conclu-

how lucky we are to play the game and try to enter-

tain people around the

world," said Hussey. However, he said the

players are pragmatic

and want the tournament

nervous about what's

going on over here, but

they're also pragmatic. A

couple of players, their fathers have passed away.

One person in particular,

he's one of the staff mem-

bers with us and his

father passed away last

year from COVID, and he

was really pragmatic by

saying it was his time to

of view, we're desperate

for the tournament to

keep going, purely

because everyone's in

lockdown, there's not

much else to do," added

"From a Kolkata point

to go on. "Everyone's

Tye, who had not played a game this season, flew back home on Sunday fearing being locked out of his own country with India reporting record COVID-19 infections for the past few days.

IPL rules state that a

player who have played less than two matches in the season can be loaned and cannot play against his home franchise.

**TYE QUESTIONS** 

**'INSANE MONEY'** 

Melbourne, April 26: Rajasthan Royals pacer

Andrew Tye, who left for

Australia midway the IPL

in the wake of COVID-19

surge in India, was criti-

cal of the franchises spending "insane money"

on cricket at a time when

their country is facing an

unprecedented health cri-

sis. Tye, however, said the

league should go ahead if

it was a means to reliev-

"How are these compa-

spending so much money

when there's people not

being able to get accepted into hospital?," he asked.

He said players in the

IPL are safe now but at the same time asked "if

it's going to stay safe"

and franchises

nies

**SPENT IN IPL** 

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POINTS TABLE

### KKR return to winning ways

Ahmedabad, April 26: Kolkata Knight Riders recovered from initial jit-ters to successfully chase down a modest 124-run target against Punjab Kings in 16.4 overs in an IPL match here on Monday.

For Punjab, opener Mayank Agarwal top-scored with a painstaking 31 off 34 balls but Chris Jordan's 30 off 18 balls took them past 120-run

Prasidh Krishna had best figures of 3 for 30 while Pat Cummins and Sunil Narine also chipped in with a couple of wickets

While chasing, KKR were in trouble at 17 for 3 before Rahul Tripathi (41 off 32 balls) and skipper Eoin Morgan (47 not out off 40 balls) put them on course with a 66-run fourth wicket

suffering four defeats on the trot in Chennai and Mumbai, the bottom-placed KKR's campaign finally got some boost as the bowling unit led by Pat Cummins fired

Youngster Shivam Mavi (1/13) started it all, tying things down with the new ball, bowling 15 dot balls in his four overs on the trot, before Cummins (2/31) and Prasidh Krishna (3/30) tightened the noose sharing five wickets between them at the death.

The pace troika removed the top three KL Rahul (19), Chris Gayle (0) and Deepak Hooda (1) in space of 12 balls for six runs to leave PBKS in a disarray in the first 10 overs.

**SCORECARD** Punjab Kings: KL Rahul c Narine b Cummins 19, Mayank Agarwal c Tripathi b Narine 31, Chris Gayle c Karthik b Shivam Mavi O,

Karthik b Shivam Mavi O, Deepak Hooda c Morgan b Prasidh Krishna 1, Nicholas Pooran b Varun 19, Moises Henriques b Narine 2, Shahrukh Khan c Morgan b Prasidh Krishna 13, Chris Jordan b Prasidh Krishna 30, Ravi Bishnoi c Morgan b Cummins 1, Mohammed Shami (not out) 1, Arshdeep Singh (not out) 1. Extras (lb 1, w 4) 5. Total (for nine wickets in 20 overs) 123. Fow: 1-36, 2-38, 3-42, 4-60, 5-75, 6-79, 7-95, 8-98, 9-121. Bowling: Shivam Mavi 4-0-13-1, Pat Cummins 3-0-31-2, Sunil Narine 4-0-22-2, Sunil Narine 4-0-22-2, Prasidh Krishna 4-0-30-3, Andre Russell 1-0-2-0, Varun

Chakravarthy 4-0-24-1.

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shubman Gill Ibw b Mohammed Shami 9, Nitish Rana c Shahrukh Khan b Henriques O, Rahul Tripathi c Shahrukh Khan b Hooda 41, Sunil Narine c Ravi Bishnoi b Arshdeep Singh O, Eoin Morgan (not out) 47, Andre Russell run out (Arshdeep Singh/Rahul) 10, Dinesh Karthik (not out) 12. Extras (lb 6, w 1) 7. Total (for five wickets in 16.4 overs) 126. FoW: 1-5, 2-9, 3-17, 4-83, 5-98. Henriques O, Rahul Tripathi c

98.

Bowling: Moises Henriques 10-5-1, Mohammed Shami 40-25-1, Arshdeep Singh 2.40-27-1, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-19-0, Chris Jordan 3-0-24-0, Deepak Hooda 2-0-20-1.

On a pitch where ball stayed low and gripped a bit, the Punjab batsmen failed to apply themselves with Sunil Narine (2/22) and Varun Chakravarthy (1/24)denting



Kolkata Knight Riders celebrate a Punjab Kings wicket

### Capitals, RCB in battle of equals

**Ahmedabad, April 26:** Seeing the loss in their previous game as a blip, Virat Kohli-led Challengers Bangalore will have to be at their best to beat a formidable Delhi Capitals unit in the IPL

While RCB will have to shrug off their 69-runs thrashing at the hands of Chennai Super Kings in their last game and start afresh, Delhi's confidence would be boosted by their thrilling 'Super Over' win against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Sunday night.

here on Tuesday.

against Delhi Up Capitals, RCB will need to address their middle-order woes, to return to winning ways, in what could be touted as a battle of equals. For the RCB, it will be

important that the openers — the in-form Devdutt Padikkal (171 runs) and Kohli (151 runs) — continue to provide a solid start at the Narendra Modi sta-

But the opening duo would need the much-needed support from the middle-order, which crumbled against CSK.

The likes of Glenn Maxwell (198 runs), Ab de Villiers (129 runs), and the misfiring all-rounder Washington Sundar (25 runs), will have to perform in unison against a strong Delhi attack.

Delhi Capitals vs Royal Challengers Bangalore from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

Live on TV

**HEAD to HEAD** 

Matches **RCB** 14 DC

**FOR THE RECORD** Rishabh Pant who has hit 199

11

fours in 73 innings needs just one four to become only the second batsman after Virender Sehwag (266 fours in 79 innings) to complete

a double century of fours for Delhi Capitals in IPL. AB de Villiers with 4,978 runs at an average of 40.47 in 160 innings needs 22 runs to become the sixth

batsman to complete 5,000 runs in **LAST YEAR'S MATCHES** 

 Delhi Capitals defeated Royal Challengers Bangalore by 59 runs at

Delhi Capitals beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 6 wickets

**STATS:** S. PERVEZ QAISER

Australian Maxwell did justify his high price tag in the first few matches and

again. The RCB bowlers will have to forget the hammer-

would be raring to go once

ing received at the hands of the CSK batters.

## We're safe, but it's grim outside: Ponting

after the game last night, Hussey.

**Ricky Ponting** 

nament, citing the COVID-

us here because it's quite

been taken for everyone's

"It is on the radar. It's on

the news every minute of

the day. You see people in

hospital beds. It puts a lot

of things in perspective.

We actually discussed

IPL has created the "safest" bio-hub for its participants but Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting says he is also well aware of the "grim" COVID-19 situation outside the bubble in India and often discusses it with his players.

The Australian great, while admitting that IPL can be a welcome distraction in these tough times, said that COVID-19 has dominated the conversations within his team.

"This IPL, probably more than any other, has become more about what's happening on the outside rather than what's hap-

ably the safest people in the country probably because of the bubbles we are in," Ponting told the DC *YouTube* channel.

coach Kyle Mills.

"We're stuck in bubbles.

It's probably not too dissimilar to what all Victorians experienced last year in lockdown

really. You get tested every second day. So it's

quite full-on but I think

every precaution has

"Continually, I am asking the boys at the breakfast as to what's happening on the outside and if their families are safe amd happy. That's really an important thing.
"I think IPL in a situa-

tion that the country is in, cricket can bring a lot of joy to people," he added.

However, there is no denying that state of affair is pretty gloomy at

moment

has pulled out of the tour-

Ravichandran

19 "fight" his family is enduring. "Here in DC, we are talking about being one big family and it's important that we are thinking about Ashwin extended family not just

It's important that we are thinking about extended family not just us here. Yes, it's hard for the players to be away from their families and I can't even imagine putting myself in the situation - RICKY PONTING Delhi Capitals coach

grim. Yes, it's hard for the players to be away from their families and I can't even imagine putting myself in the situation," Ponting known for his

straight talk said. He, in fact, didn't name Ashwin but spoke about

he was in before he left home after the match SunRisers Hyderabad. "Guys living in Chennai, they are actually at home

now but can't see their families. It's incredibly difficult. The more we can share these experiences, the better off we are," Ponting had said after the win against Mumbai Indians.

"We can keep our fingers crossed and hope people on the outside remain safe. Players can take care of their families on the outside and we can do whatever we can on the inside," he said.