

DECCAN Chronicle

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CHENNAI TUESDAY 13 | APRIL 2021

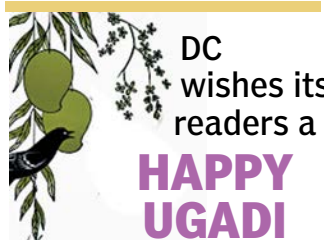
WEATHER



Max: 32°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Panguni 31
Tithi: Pradhamai
Star: Ashwini
Rahukalam:
3.00 pm to 4.30 pm
Yamagandam:
9 am to 10.30 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.50 am
Lunar: 12.16 pm
Asar: 3.25 pm
Maghrib: 6.21 pm
Isha: 7.33 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.22 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.57 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.45 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 8.13 PM



DC wishes its readers a **HAPPY UGADI**

COUNTER POINT



Not gold and diamonds... let's smuggle Covid vaccine and medicine!



CITY | 2
₹25,90,000 collected as fine for Covid norms violations



WORLD | 5
Suu Kyi hit with a new criminal charge



SPORT | 8
Mumbai to meet KKR today

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CBI SUMMONS DESHMUKH

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

The CBI has issued a summons to former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh for questioning over the corruption allegations levelled against him by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh. According to a CBI source, Mr Singh has been asked to appear before the agency on April 14.

The CBI recorded the statements of two of Mr Deshmukh's subordinates on Sunday and this is the first time the minister has been summoned for questioning after the CBI commenced a preliminary enquiry on April 6, on the Bombay high court's orders, into the allegations of corruption and misuse of his official post.

SC junks plea on Quran verses

New Delhi, April 12: The Supreme Court imposed a penalty of ₹50,000 on former chairman of Shia Waqf Board Syed Waseem Rizvi, who had sought the deletion of 26 verses from the Quran, which he claims were being used as "justifications" by Islamist terrorist groups for attacks on "non-believers".

"It is an absolutely frivolous petition," a bench, headed by justice Rohinton F Nariman and including justices BR Gavai and Hrishikesh Roy, said on Monday. The bench had cautioned Rizvi's lawyer against pressing the plea but the warning went unheeded

and led to the penalty.

The bench expressed displeasure at the contentions and junked the petition. Saeed Noori, founding member of Raza Academy, which had filed a caveat in the Supreme Court for a hearing if Rizvi's plea was to be entertained, expressed satisfaction at the dismissal of the petition.

Muslim clerics and organisations welcomed the Supreme Court's decision of rejecting a plea seeking removal of 26 verses from the Quran, saying this proves that religious books are treated with honour in the country. — PTI

All TN govt staff to be vaccinated in 2 weeks

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

All government officers and staff should vaccinate themselves for Coronavirus in two weeks' time and arrangements should be made for organising vaccination camps at apartment complexes and at workplaces by the managements of factories, companies and other offices.

A fresh set of instructions issued by the government after Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami held a consultative meeting with his cabinet colleagues, senior officers and experts on Monday said Standard Treatment Protocol has been fixed for all government and private hospitals to bring down the fatalities due to Coronavirus infection.

Round-the-clock control rooms to tackle the pandemic should be set up at the Health Secretariat and also in all districts and all frontline workers above the age of 18 years should be vaccinated. As of now arrangements had been made to vaccinate all citizens above the age of 45, an official press release said.

Coronavirus infections that stood below 4,000 in March have now shot up to 41,900 and the average death rate too shot up to 10 a day, the release said,

Experts approve Sputnik V

New Delhi, April 12: An expert panel of the central drug authority has recommended granting approval to Russian Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V for emergency use in the country with certain conditions, sources said. Dr Reddy's Laboratories is producing the vaccine in India. If approved, it will be the third Covid-19 vaccine to be available in India.

Covid-19 hits top court staff

New Delhi, April 12: Supreme Court judges held court from their residences on Monday and the benches sat an hour later than their scheduled time in the morning as around 44 staffers tested positive for coronavirus, sources said. A court official said 44 employees got infected in the last one week. About 3,000 staff work in SC.

Lakhs take holy dip in Ganga

Haridwar, April 12: Amid rising coronavirus cases nationwide, a sea of saffron-clad seers and ash-smearing Nagas converged at Har ki Pairsi in Haridwar for a holy dip in the Ganga during the second shah snan of the Kumbh Mela on Monday. Sadhus from different akhadas took out "shobha yatras" through the main thoroughfare of the pilgrimage city to gather at Brahma Kund, Hari ki Pairsi for the shah snan — or the royal bath — on Somvati Amavasya.

SI canes restaurant patrons, staff; video-clip goes viral

FULL REPORT ON PAGE 2

adding that family functions and not following Covid protocols were the reasons for the spike in cases.

The meeting stressed on the need for increased and aggressive testing with a view to bringing down the average positivity rate, contact tracing for up to 25 to 30 days, isolation and treatment of those infected to combat the spread of the virus.

The importance of con-

ducting fever camps and setting up of Covid Care Centres and the need to have ventilators, high flow nasal cannula, medicines and PPEs ready for use were highlighted in the meeting, which urged the people not to leave their homes other than for getting essential items.

Reiterating the need for wearing of facemasks, maintaining social distancing and washing of hands, the meeting decid-

ed to put the onus of ensuring people following the protocols to the managements of theatres, malls, shops and other establishments.

As of now there were 1,309 containment zones and micro containment zones would be created wherever three persons tested positive for Coronavirus with a view to isolating them and monitoring them, the release said. ■ P2

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New stores now open at Thoraipakkam, Ambattur, Cathedral Road & Chrompet in Chennai

OTHER STORY

Only 37,80,070 people vaccinated so far: EPS

From P1

As far as vaccination is concerned, already 37,80,070 persons of various categories had been vaccinated and the government had obtained vaccines for 54,85,720 persons.

Palaniswami, in his address, said that 80,284 beds were ready and of them 32,102 were equipped with oxygen cylinders, 6,997 with ICU facilities and 6,517 with ventilators. The government has also appointed 15,000 extra medical professionals to deal with the pandemic situation.

Apart from Allopathy treatment for infected persons, the government had also created facilities for Indian system of medicines and had made arrangements for people to have access to preventive measures, he said.

Over the past one year, the Chief Minister had addressed 14 such consultative meetings with district collectors and 14 with medical experts to take measures on managing the pandemic from time to time.

3 kg charas seized by NCB, two arrested

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

The Narcotics Control Bureau busted an interstate racket of Charas trafficking and seized three kg of charas in Chennai. Two persons were arrested.

Acting on a specific intelligence, NCB Chennai zonal unit intercepted a passenger at departure hall, Chennai airport.

The passenger was travelling in flight to Sharjah via Hyderabad. A thorough search of her baggage was carried out by the team and 3 kg of charas was recovered. The Charas was concealed in a space made in the thermocol, in-between the wall of Ice box. This passenger namely C.Karpagam, resident of Mylapore, Chennai, was arrested. In a swift follow up action, NCB team also apprehended

M. Mohaideen, a resident of Ramnad district who had handed over the seized contraband to the said passenger. Charas which is also known as hashish, is extracted from ganja plants.

Swindled investors lay siege to police station

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

Around 50 people on Monday lay siege to the Uthiramerur police station, demanding action against an AIADMK member for allegedly swindling money from more than 100 people under the pretext of chit fund. The accused, identified as Bhakiyaraj (39), a resident of Uthiramerur in Kanchipuram district, works as a driver. He is also a member of the AIADMK, a source said.

According to sources, Bhakiyaraj had been running a chit fund for over four years now and has since then been collecting deposits from investors. However, recently he allegedly vacated his house and fled the district. His phone too was switched off. The distressed people on Monday lay siege to the Uthiramerur police station demanding police action. They dispersed after the police promised to take action. A complaint was registered by the district economic offences wing. A search has been launched for the fraudster.

Off-centre

Mandarin sign board leaves public confused

A police booth in Chennai with a Chinese sign board has perplexed the public. When you cross the MRTS road between the Velachery and Thillaianga Nagar subway stretch of Inner Ring road, you might come across a digital board in Chinese language. Neither the police nor the public know the significance of such a board in the city or what it says. However, some say the board could be of a Chinese product and might be flickering due to malfunctioning, or child for running over the lawn. The mother exploded, 'Paatti!.. Don't touch my child.' That was just the beginning of a long spat. For all parties, it was a perfect ending for Happiness Day!

— Sindhiya Samuel

6,711 fresh cases in TN, 2,105 in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

The test positivity rate of Covid-19 cases continues to rise in the state. As per the data provided by the state health department, 6,711 new cases were on Monday reported across the state, a rise from 6,618 on Sunday. At least 19 deaths also were registered. The tally of positive cases in the state is 9,40,145 and deaths 12,927.

Chennai is still the major contributor with 2,105 cases adding to the total of 2,67,181 cases in the district. The positive cases in the district on Sunday were 2,124.

The positive cases in the neighbouring Chengalpattu district have also recorded a steady rise for the last few days, adding 611 new cases on Monday. The total tally in the district has touched 61,409.

Coimbatore, another concern for the authorities, reported 604 cases, but it is a slight decrease from Sunday's tally which was 617.

While Chennai, Coimbatore and Chengalpattu crossed the 500 mark, Cuddalore, Kancheepuram, Nagapattinam, Selam, Thanjavur, Thiruvallur, Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, Tiruchy and Tiruppur districts registered more than 100 cases each on Saturday.

The caseload in Thiruvallur, Madurai and Kancheepuram districts has crossed the 200-mark.

The active cases, meanwhile, have touched 46,308,

All in a day: 349 new Corona+ cases in southern districts

ARULOLI M | DC
TIRUNELVELI, APRIL 12

With the addition of 349 new Covid-19 cases, the total number of Corona patients under treatment in various hospitals in the four southern districts of Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Tenkasi and Kanyakumari, touched 2,107 on Monday.

Thoothukudi registered the highest number of new cases on Monday, compared to its three other neighbouring districts. Having 524 cases under treatment till Sunday, Thoothukudi district registered 138 new cases on Monday. The district too registered the

surging from 41,955 on Sunday. The total active cases in Chennai district, which is the major contributor, now stand at 17,098.

While eight people died in Chennai, Chengalpattu, Nagapattinam, Trichy and Thiruvallur districts recorded two deaths each. Coimbatore, Tiruppur and Vellore also reported deaths.

Meanwhile, at least 82,202 persons were subjected to RTPCR test on Monday, a dip from 87,767 on Sunday. A total of 2,02,71,805 individuals tested so far in the state.

lowest number of 18 discharges from hospitals among the four southern districts.

As many as 81 in Tirunelveli district tested positive on Monday, while the number of new positive cases in Tenkasi and Kanyakumari districts on Monday were 74 and 56 respectively. The total number of Corona patients who were discharged from hospitals in the four districts on Monday was 159.

Kovilpatti DSP, Kalaikathiravan, tested positive for Covid-19. In Tirunelveli, a private textile showroom (RmKv) was closed for three days, since three of its employ-

ees tested positive for Corona.

In view of the pandemic outbreak, devotees were not allowed inside temples to witness pujas at the Arulmigu Subramanyaswamy temple in Tiruchendur, Thoothukudi district.

However, after the pujas, devotees were allowed in small batches to offer prayers. No one was allowed to sit inside the temple premises. According to Tiruchendur temple authorities, devotees above 65 years, persons with blood pressure and sugar complaints, pregnant women and children below the age of 10 years, were not permitted inside the temple.

₹25,90,000 collected as fine for Covid norms violations

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

The Tamil Nadu police have collected a total ₹25,90,000 as fine for violation of Covid-19 protocols across the state.

The police made these collections in 6,465 cases registered between April 8 and April 11 across the state. On April 11 alone, 1,796 cases were registered and ₹8,51,800 collected from the violators.

On April 11, 547 cases were registered against those violating the physical distancing norm. Since April 8, 2,742 cases have been registered by the police. From the north zone, from April 8 to April 11, ₹8,21,400 have been collected from offenders.

In the central zone, 334 new cases against violators took the total number of cases from April 8 to 11 to 1,571. From the central



A crowded bus on Anna Nagar stretch on Monday. But the government had said no standing passengers would be allowed on buses.

— DC



Traffic cops impose a fine of ₹200 on people not wearing masks at Marina beach on Monday.

—DC

SHRC orders ₹3L as compensation to family members of torture victim

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed the Tamil Nadu government to pay a compensation of ₹3 lakh to the family members of a 32-year-old person who committed suicide following torture and harassment by a woman cop in Tirunelveli four years ago. The commission also recommended the government to initiate disciplinary action against the cop.

In a complaint, S.Anthony, 75, of Tirunelveli said there was a family dispute between his son Selvakumar and his wife Muthuselvi in 2017. He pacified the couple. However, on August 14, 2017, Muthuselvi lodged a complaint with Velammal, sub-inspector,

Vadakku Vijayanarayanam police station, Tirunelveli.

He said three constables assaulted and kicked his son. They took him to the police station. On reaching the police station he heard the screaming of his son. He entered the police station and saw his son being assaulted by the SI and other policemen. His wife Arputham requested the police not to beat his son. Immediately a constable assaulted his wife with lathi and she fell down.

Then they stopped attacking his son. He was let off at around 4 pm. After that the Selvakumar was upset and heartbroken. He said there was no point in living as he was humiliated. He committed suicide by consuming poison. He said he died following the torture and

harassment. Hence, he sought action against the cops.

Velammal denied all the allegations in the complaint.

SHRC member D Jayachandran said the commission is of the opinion that Selvakumar sustained injuries in the assault by police. This is also one of the reasons for Selvakumar to commit suicide. Velammal is responsible for the death of Selvakumar.

The commission recommended the state government to pay a compensation of ₹3 lakh to the family members of the deceased from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. The commission also recommended the government to initiate disciplinary action against Velammal.

SHRC seeks report on police excesses in Coimbatore hotel

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

After the video of a sub-inspector at the Kattoor police station in Coimbatore attacking the staff of a hotel and reportedly asking them to down shutters to prevent the spread of Covid-19 went viral, the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed city police commissioner to file a report about the incident. Based on the directions of the city commissioner, ADGP Davidson Devasirvatham, the SI was transferred immediately to the control room and an inquiry has been initiated against him.

Sri Raja Hotel had kept

SI canes restaurant staff; video-clip gos viral

its shutters half open at 10:21 pm on Sunday. A few people were seen having dinner, SI Muthu, who entered the hotel, started attacking everyone inside with lathi. He did not even spare the women customers who were carrying travel bag. Five persons, including a woman, suffered injuries. The video has gone viral on social media.

As per the latest Covid restrictions issued by the Tamil Nadu government, restaurants, food courts, tea shops (both dine-in and take away) are permitted to operate till 11 pm. Dine-in spaces need to function with 50 per

cent capacity. In a complaint, hotel owner B Mohanraj stated that the constable came to the hotel after 10 pm and asked them to down the shutters because Kattoor Inspector Latha was expected to come to the area for night rounds.

Mohanraj said the hotel shutters were half downed and a group of women from Hosur came asking the owner to provide them some food. The staff gave them dosas. The cop entered the hotel when they were having dinner.

He said the violent incident reminds about the ghastly Sathankulam

incident where a trader and his son died following brutal torture in Sathankulam police station last year.

In a similar incident, the SHRC directed the Madurai police commissioner to file a report in connection with assault of a homeopathy practitioner, Tamilarasan, by the cops of Thallakulam police station on road in Madurai. The doctor was proceeding to the government hospital to attend Covid-19 related duty. The cops also threatened the doctor of foisting a case against him if he gave a complaint regarding the incident.

Pregnant woman resists chain-snatching, dragged on road

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

In a shocking incident, a 24-year-old pregnant woman was dragged on the road for resisting a chain-snatching bid in Pallavaram, police said. The police have launched a search for the bike-borne duo involved in the incident.

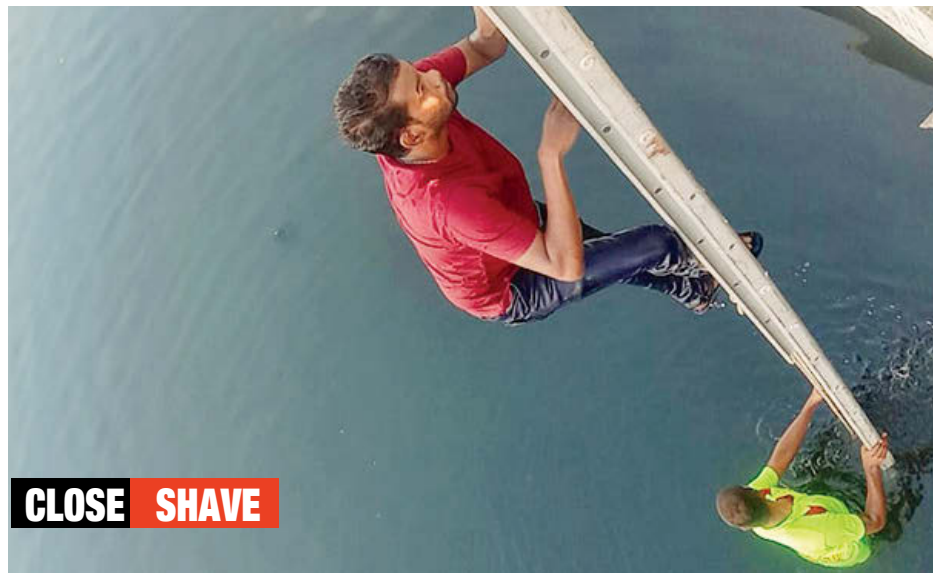
The CCTV footage of the incident went viral on social media. In the video, two men

on a two-wheeler were seen moving in Renuga Nagar, Zamin Pallavaram. One of them got off the bike when they spotted the pregnant woman. He was seen holding the woman's chain and subsequently dragging her on the road as she refused to cede the chain.

Failing to snatch the chain, the accused fled the scene on the bike. According to the police, the incident happened

around 7.30 am on April 9. The victim, identified as Geetha (24), a resident of Zamin Pallavaram, suffered injuries on her hands and legs. She was admitted to a private hospital in the city for treatment. A police complaint has been filed from the victim's side.

After the CCTV footage went viral, the Pallavaram police launched an investigation. Efforts are being made to nab the accused.



CLOSE SHAVE

Fire and rescue services personnel attached to the Triplicane station on Monday rescue a man who accidentally fell into the Cooum river while taking a selfie on the Napier bridge.

—DC

Summer tourism looks up in Ooty

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, APRIL 12

A good surge in tourist influx to Ooty this weekend has brought immense hope to the travel and tourism industry as the tourism stakeholders here wanted the government to encourage summer tourism in the Nilgiris with SOP in place.

While the arrival of tourists to the 'Queen of hill stations' for the summer season that commenced on April 1, had been good, the hospitality industry here is desperately looking forward to resume full-fledged tourism, especially summer tourism, to earn good revenue which hopefully would help compensate to some extent the loss suffered in 2020 summer, due to the lockdown.

Statistics show that the Government Botanical Garden here, the index for inflow of tourists to the hills, witnessed arrival of near 51,000 tourists since April 1. It was especially high during the past two days, as



Tourists enjoying the nature at Pykara falls near Ooty.

—DC

it recorded nearly 11,000 tourists. N. Chandrasekar, secretary, Nilgiris Hotels and Restaurants Association, said that rumour mongers are trying to create a fear by posting on social media that there would be strict restrictions for tourists visiting the Nilgiris, due to the second Corona wave. Some posts even mentioned about total lockdown in Nilgiris.

"The hospitality industry here was the worst hit by the pandemic

last year. Not a single paisa could be earned for nearly seven months last year. Things have just begun to change for the better now. The officialdom should encourage summer tourism by implementing SOPs. Lockdown is not a solution to address the pandemic crisis. We have to evolve ways to manage it and ensure that the hospitality industry here, is not affected by the continuing Covid-19 crisis," he added.

OTHER STORY

Man drinks alcohol mixed with washing liquid, dies

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

A 63-year-old man died on Monday morning after he allegedly consumed Ala washing liquid mixed with alcohol to get an extra high, the police said.

Kali, a resident of Kanchivakkam village near Manimangalam in Kanchipuram district, worked as a security guard of a private company.

Sources said he was an alcoholic and used to drink regularly after work. On Sunday night, after coming home from work, he allegedly mixed alcohol with Ala washing liquid he had at his house for getting extra high. Within minutes, he complained of breathlessness and fell unconscious. Following this, he was rushed to the Chromepet government hospital, where he passed away on Monday morning.

The police sent his body for post-mortem. The Manimangalam police registered a case and began an investigation.

VETERAN JOURNALIST

PASSES AWAY: The Madras Reporters Guild (Chennai Nirubargal Sangam) on Monday condoled the death of veteran journalist G. N. Srinivasan, a centenarian, who was one of the founding members of the Reporters Guild. He was 100. The death came on April 12, 2021. GNS had worked in the *Indian Express* and then joined *The Hindu* in 1953 where he served for over 30 years.

Duraimurgan stable

CHENNAI, APRIL 12: The condition of DMK general secretary Duraimurgan, who has been hospitalized after testing positive for Coronavirus, was stable and there was no cause for concern, according to the CEO of Rela Hospital, Ilankumaran Kaliamoorthy. A panel of doctors is closely monitoring him.

Watching over EVMS, a dull job

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

For the hawk eyed political party workers assigned duty at the 75 counting centres across the State, keeping a watch over the Electronic Voting Machines, locked up in strong rooms, is a dull job, much in contrast to the campaign bustle that they would have been part of till April 6.

Though all political parties can have three representatives for vigil at any point of time, only the main parties, the DMK and AIADMK have the full complement on duty round the clock. Other parties have their men posted randomly at the centres that are anyway guarded by three rings of security.

The major parties assign their workers for an eight hour shift and also change the batches at regular intervals for it is not an adrenaline-charged activity that the political activists are neither accustomed to nor relish doing.

The job involves keeping a close watch on the television screens that would beam multiple images from the slew of CCTV cameras fitted around the strong rooms round the clock. They have to look out for any abnormal activity that

could lead to the tampering or replacement of the EVMS that hold the people's will in their memory cards.

Officially, the State police provides the outer ring of security that would not allow trespassers into the cordoned off areas in the premises, the second ring of armed Tamil Nadu Special Police and the third ring of heavily armed RPF personnel would not let anyone into the strong rooms, come what may.

Complementing the eternal vigil – from the night of April 6 to May 2 – are these political workers, who are reportedly paid Rs 500 for an eight-hour shift, besides for food. Only those trusted by the local party satraps are picked for this assignment, which the participants consider as boring.

To break the boredom, they rely on their mobile phones. But then they cannot take their eyes off the screens beaming the images from the CCTV cameras. So, they ensure that at least one of them watches the screen carefully throughout.

Then, the irony is that they develop a sort of bonhomie with the other party activists with whom they might have fought it out during the campaign and who would also be their rivals once the counting gets over and they all go back

to the field, carrying their own party flags.

But the room in which they are provided space to stay put all through the needless gestation of the votes between their casting and their counting needs to be shared with the political rivals and also the officials assigned there, besides the security personnel.

The halls, where they all kill time together, chatting, sharing gossip, joking and telling stories, is located close to the strong rooms and any unwanted activity there would have to be reported to their party higher ups immediately and also to the officials in charge there.

Their leaders, particularly the candidates whose prospect is locked inside the EVMS, do make a visit to the centres regularly as they too are entitled to enter the premises. The party district secretaries also visited them to ensure that everything was okay with the workers and if they were doing their work.

Rarely do top honchos visit the place to keep the spirit of the workers alive. But for the workers it is a tough job as they have to stretch themselves on sheets spread on the hard floor or on benches. But it is a role the unsung heroes play to keep our democracy live and kicking.

Plus-2 language exam postponed

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

The first examination, scheduled to be held on May 3, for plus-2 students has been postponed to May 31 in view of the counting of votes for the State Assembly that begins on May 2 at 75 centres across the state. According to an announcement from the Director of Examinations on Monday, only the language paper, slated for Monday, May 3, would be held on the later date while all the other examinations would be held as per the time

table put out by the directorate.

The Standard Operating Procedures to be followed by the students would be announced later on, the director of governing examinations, C. Usharani, said.

The announcement puts to rest all speculations of a possible postponement of the examinations in view of the surge in coronavirus cases that had necessitated more restrictions.

Since Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami held a meeting with officers and experts on

Monday, rumours were making their rounds through the day on the possibility of the government postponing the Plus Two board examinations with a view to curbing the spread of the virus.

The government press release on the new restrictions recommended at the meeting did not mention anything about the plus-2 board examinations and the director of examinations' announcement made it clear that the examination would be on schedule with the sole exemption of the first day's language paper.

Two try to smuggle ganja oil, held

DC CORRESPONDENT
THOOTHUKUDI, APRIL 12

The 'Q' branch police here seized ganja oil worth Rs 30 lakh, and arrested two persons in this connection, on Monday.

Acting on a tip off about ganja oil being smuggled to Maldives, 'Q' branch inspector, Vijaya Anitha, and his team raided a private farm house at Kootampuli village, and seized oil extracted from ganja.

The 'Q' branch police said, the farm house has been used as a factory for packaging the drug oil that was to be smuggled to Sri Lanka through Maldives.

Police arrested two, Britto (37), son of Chelladurai of Nanguneri and Victor (49), son of Rajapandi of Thoothukudi, and handed them over them to the Narcotic Control Bureau, and are on the lookout for farm house owner, Jegajeevan.

It is alleged that Britto, working

in Maldives, had returned to Thoothukudi just a week ago and procured the ganja oil from Theni.

In a similar seizure in nearby Tirunelveli district, two youths, Sankarapandian (21), son of Murugan of Kurichi, and Rajamani (21), son Ananthan of Vannarapettai, were arrested by the Tirunelveli police, and seized unprocessed ganja leaves weighing 1,500 kilograms.



Tirupur District Collector K. Vijayakartheeyan inspects the vaccination camp in Tiruppur on Monday. —DC

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today | By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: Creative persons impress clients with original ideas. Travel today gets tiring and boring. Work pressure of the past few days decreases.



Taurus: Lighten your mind professionally and undertake something different. Work hard to better your income. You'll come up with brilliant ideas. Don't let anything stop you.



Gemini: Discuss important issues with loved ones by taking time to clarify your wants to avoid misunderstandings. Your communication skills are your best professional asset.



Cancer: Be diplomatic in professional interactions. Don't neglect your diet/fitness regimes. Creative thinking brings you different ways to deal with complicated assignments.



Leo: Give colleagues some leeway; they have their own pressures. Good day for creative jobs. Interact with influential people. Expect an unpleasant situation and setbacks.



Virgo: Discard negative thoughts like fear, doubts, anger and greed. Take advantage of the new opportunities coming your way. You'll learn from people with experience.

You share your b'day with

Satish Kaushik, Indian film director, producer, and actor, primarily in Bollywood and theatre. He is best known for his roles in Mr India, Deewana Mastana, Ram Laxman and Saajan Chale Sasural amongst others.



Libra: It's time to make routine changes. With goals within your reach, your energy and confidence levels soar. Workplace decisions bring long-term rewards.



Scorpio: Use your knowledge to obtain benefits. Develop your mind to be receptive to good ideas. Never waste energy thinking negatively.



Sagittarius: Your over enthusiasm towards a deal may make you accept odd projects. Stay alert at work. Try to balance both personal and professional life.



Capricorn: Emotional support to your partner helps. Some work problems require immediate attention. Chances of getting back on talking terms with a lover seem bleak. Expect wasteful expenditure.

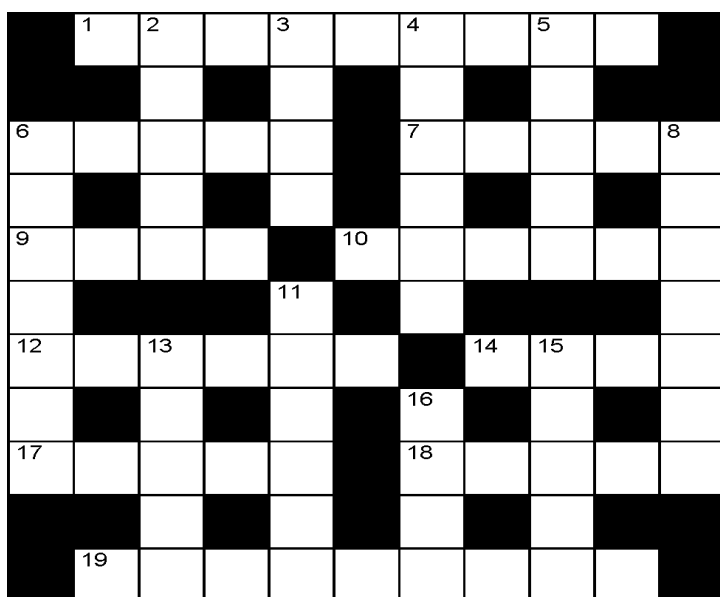


Aquarius: Acting judiciously saves your love relationship. Neglect causes those suffering from lifestyle diseases to get unwell. Today, you reflect on your career path. Get a senior's advice.



Pisces: You'll focus on improving your personal relations with those you dislike. Some get promoted at work. Socially, you may bite off more than you can chew, but people help you out.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

1. Boundless (9)
6. Carpenter's peg (5)
7. Vertical passageway (5)
9. Invalid (4)
10. Stick up for (6)
12. Indefinitely great number (6)
14. Heavy volume (4)
17. Intestine part (5)
18. Lifting apparatus (5)
19. Registered symbol (9)

Down

2. Stairway post (5)
3. Lazy (4)
4. Sent out (6)
5. Thrill (5)
6. Energetic, go-ahead (7)
8. Ditties (anag) (7)
11. Brown (6)
13. Measuring stick (5)
15. Basketry willow (5)
16. Counterfeit (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Keepsake, 7. Icons, 8. Kiosk, 9. Cosine, 10. Plan, 12. Iowa, 14. Sequel, 17. Rival, 18. Avian, 19. Presides.

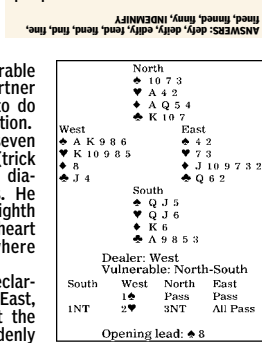
Down: 1. Knobs, 2. Easing, 3. Sake, 4. Knoll, 5. Circuitry, 6. Skinfint, 11. Retard, 13. Waver, 15. Units, 16. Pluse.

Word Mine

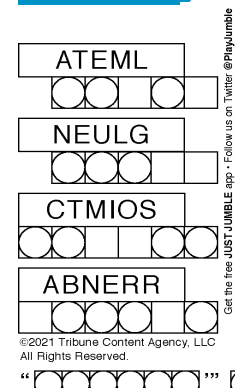
F
NIE
YNMID

TODAY'S RATINGS: 8 AVERAGE; 9 GOOD; 11 OUTSTANDING

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 only once. 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.



Jumble



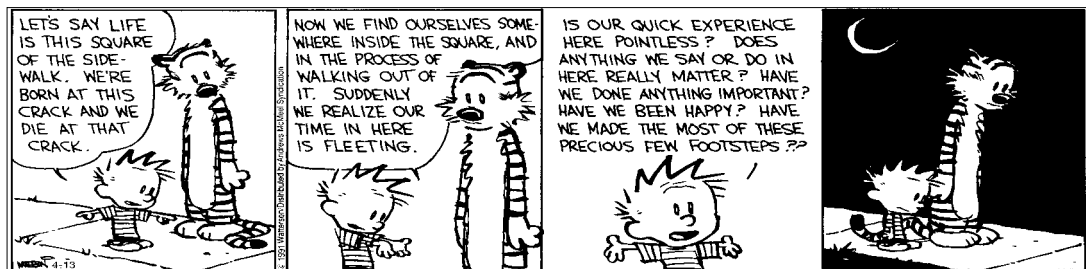
Yesterday's Jumbles: NICER
Answer: The rocker had been in their family for generations, and they would — "CHAIR-ISH" IT

he saw the solution. He returned a spade at trick two! If West had not taken all of his spade tricks, declarer would have conceded a club trick to East. But West cashed them. Declarer discarded one heart and one club from each hand, while East threw two diamonds and one heart. When West exited with a heart, South ran the trick to his queen and returned a heart to dummy's ace — but



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CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



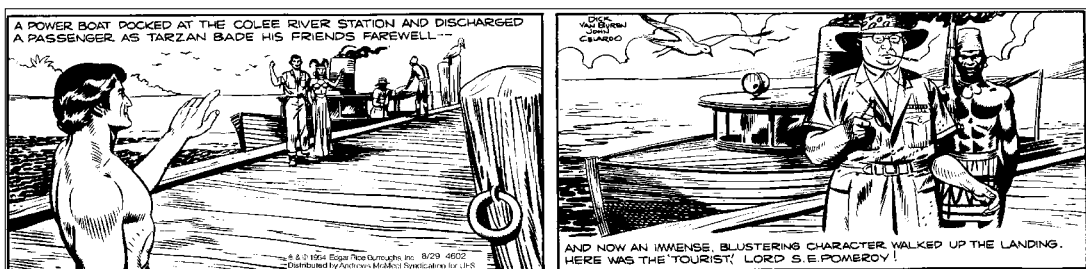
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



SHORT TAKES

MP DEFERS 10, 12 EXAMS AMID SURGE IN CASES

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, APRIL 12

Madhya Pradesh government on Monday announced fresh curbs to tackle Covid-19 pandemic amid surge in Coronavirus cases in the state. Accordingly, the 10th and 12th board exams in the state have been deferred to June while total lockdown has been enforced in Bhopal for six days till April 19.

"The 10th and 12th board examinations, schedule to commence from April 30 and May 1 respectively, have been deferred to June. The date for these board examinations will be announced later", state education minister Inder Singh Parmar said.

He said the school hostels barring that of Jawhar Navodaya Vidyalaya would be closed down till further order. Meanwhile, the state government on Monday decided to enforce six-day shutdown in Bhopal in the wake of sudden spurt in Coronavirus cases in the capital.

Bhopal on Monday reported 823 fresh positive cases and three deaths.

Total lockdown for nine have been enforced in 11 cities in the state since six in the evening on Friday.

RAINFALL LIKELY IN SEVERAL PARTS OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Several parts of the country are likely to receive rainfall in the next five days due to different cyclonic circulations, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday.

According to the National Weather Forecasting Centre of the IMD, under the influence of trough and cyclonic circulations over the south peninsula, scattered to fairly widespread rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds of 30-40 kilometres per hour are very likely over southwest peninsular India in the next five days.

The IMD said isolated heavy rainfall is also likely over south and ghat areas of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Mahe, coastal and south interior Karnataka during April 14-16.

Another cyclonic circulation lies over southwest Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring areas. Under its influence, isolated rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds (30-40 kmph) is very likely over Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gangetic West Bengal and Odisha during next 4-5 days and over Jharkhand during next 24 hours.

ON-BOARD MEALS BANNED IN FLIGHTS LESS THAN 2 HOURS

New Delhi, April 12: Airlines are not permitted to serve meals in flights that have a duration of less than two hours, the civil aviation ministry said on Monday, as Coronavirus cases continue to soar in the country.

The ban will come into effect from Thursday, the ministry said in its order.

When scheduled domestic flights were resumed on May 25 after Coronavirus lockdown last year, the ministry had allowed the airlines to serve in-flight meals under certain conditions.

Modifying the previous order, the ministry's fresh directive said: "The airlines, operating flights on domestic sectors, may provide meals services on board, where the in-flight duration is two hours or more." The ministry stated it has decided to review the on-board meal services in domestic flights.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a rally for West Bengal Assembly polls at Barasat in North 24 Parganas district on Monday.

— PTI

Don't scare BJP, you will serve under our feet: Ghosh to cops

Warns of sending Bengal cops to Bihar if they disagree with views of BJP

PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC BEHRAMPUR (WEST BENGAL), APRIL 12

A day after warning of more Shitalkuchi-style killings in the remaining phases of the Assembly election in West Bengal, state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh threatened to send state police personnel to neighbouring Bihar if they disagreed with the views of the saffron party.

On Monday the Midnapore BJP MP, under-terred by complaints of intimidation and the TMC's demand for a ban on him for his threat of repeating the Shitalkuchi killings, told the police at a party rally at Suti in Murshidabad: "Don't try to threaten the BJP. Remember, we are coming to power, and you will have to serve under our feet. If you do not agree with us, go to Bihar; buy land and live there. I will arrange it for you."

He also claimed: "We will bring back your lost pride and glory like the Ashoka symbol and independence, like the Uttar Pradesh police, so that no more Central paramilitary forces will be needed to combat law and order situations during elections."

In the evening Ghosh, however, swung into damage control mode on his threat to repeat the Shitalkuchi-style killings. He said: "We do not want a repetition of the Shitalkuchi incident, where TMC miscreants tried to loot EVMs and the

'Undeclared' President's rule in Bengal: Mamata

FROM PG1

The EC observed that Ms Banerjee "in her reply has yet again conveniently left out key parts of her speech, perhaps due to selective amnesia..." It concluded that it "carefully considered the matter and is of the considered view" that Ms Banerjee "made highly insinuating and provocative remarks laden with serious potential of breakdown of law & order and thereby adversely affecting the election process."

The EC stated that it "condemns such statements portent with serious law & order problems across the State(s) and sternly warns Ms Mamata Banerjee and advises her to desist from using such statements while making public utterances during

guns of Central forces, instigated by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. We demand that she be punished."

At another BJP rally at Farakka, Ghosh tried hard to woo Muslims, saying: "The Congress always won here. Though the situation is changing now, there is no change in the condition of poor Muslims. Murshidabad is one of the most backward districts in



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee during an election campaign for State Assembly polls at Ranaghat in Nadia district on Monday.

— PTI

the period when Model Code of Conduct is in force. The Commission also imposes a ban of twenty four hours on Ms Mamata Banerjee from campaigning in any man-

ner from 8.00 pm of 12.4.2021 till 8.00 pm of 13.4.2021."

Later the two-time CM tweeted, "To protest against the undemocratic and unconstitutional decision of the Election Commission of India, I will sit on dharna tomorrow at Gandhi Murti, Kolkata from 12 noon."

The central poll panel's move came hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi predicted that the BJP has scored a century by winning seats in the first four phases of the ongoing Assembly polls. He alleged that the saffron party's lead has left Ms Banerjee in despair as she had thought to hand over her captaincy of her rule to the state to her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee if she would have won again.

State Congress chief

TMC SPREADING LIES ABOUT NRC, SAYS SHAH

Kalimpong/Dhupguri (WB), April 12: Seeking to allay fears created among the people of the hills by TMC's "lies", Union home minister Amit Shah asserted on Monday that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will have no impact on the Gorkhas.

Shah, during an address after a roadshow in Kalimpong, said as long as the Narendra Modi-led BJP government is there at the Centre, no Gorkha will be harmed.

"NRC has not yet been implemented, but whenever it is done, not a single Gorkha will be asked to leave," the senior BJP leader said.

"The Trinamul Congress is lying about the possible fallout of NRC on the Gorkhas in order to create fear among them," he said.

Noting that Darjeeling and Kalimpong have suffered atrocities for long, Shah claimed in 1986, over 1,200 Gorkhas lost their lives, but they did not get justice.

The home minister also alleged that the Mamata Banerjee-government has also been responsible for the death of many Gorkhas in recent times.

"We will form an SIT and send those responsible for the wrongdoings behind bars," Shah said. — PTI

Assam polls: 12 BPF candidates moved to C'garh

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC RAIPUR, APRIL 12

Bodoland People's Front (BPF), an electoral ally of Congress in Assam, has shifted its candidates to Congress-ruled Chhattisgarh fearing horse-trading.

Sources said nine out of 11 candidates of the party landed in Raipur on Monday and were taken to a private resort on the outskirts of the state capital.

"Nine candidates of BPF along with half-a-dozen senior leaders of the party arrived here. They were taken to a resort on the outskirts of Raipur. They are scheduled to spend their 'vacation' in Chhattisgarh till May 2 when the results of Assam assembly polls are scheduled to be announced", a senior Congress leader told this newspaper here requesting not to be quoted.

Sources said Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel who was appointed poll observer by Congress for Assembly elections in Assam, greeted the BPF

candidates after they arrived here.

When contacted by this newspaper, media cell chief of Congress in Chhattisgarh Sailesh Nitin Trivedy, however, said he was not aware of the development. "Let me verify it", he said.

The three-phase Assembly polls in Assam which ended on April 6 promises to throw up a nail-biting verdict with ruling BJP locked in a keen contest with 10-party Opposition grand alliance led by Congress.

On Sunday, Pramila Rani Verma, the only BPF candidate who stayed put in Assam, told the local media in Guwahati that other party candidates left Assam on Saturday.

Assam's minority-based All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), another constituent of Congress-led grand alliance, sent all its candidates to Congress-ruled Rajasthan in a chartered plane to thwart any bid by BJP to poach them.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Ghelot has sponsored their stay in Rajasthan.

'Cyclone Fani' to decide Pipili fate

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 12

Nearly two years have passed since the cyclonic storm Fani ravaged Odisha's coastal Puri district. However, the wounds and injuries it inflicted are still explicitly visible on the landscape of the area. Many trees in villages still lie uprooted blocking walkways while other battered plants are yet to regain their green cover.

The degree of destruction the cyclone wrought can be seen in the pastoral villages. People are living in huts and shanties built with bits and pieces collected from the collapsed houses. The Union government had provided ₹95,000 ex-gratia for the affected people to rebuild their houses. However, discrepancy in identification of the affected persons and nepotism in selection of the beneficiaries has deprived many deserving people of the ex-gratia.

Scores of people are seen living perilously in shanties and sheds covered with torn and tattered polythene sheets and

coconut leaves. And this "deliberate" deprivation is going to immensely influence the outcome of the Pipili Assembly by-polls.

"On April 26, 2019, my house was razed to the ground in the 250-km per hour gusty wind of Fani. We were promised many compensations, including ₹95,000 ex-gratia for rebuilding our houses and ₹5,000 for livelihood support. However, I have not received any support. I doubt some influential people deliberately omitted my name suspecting that I do not support them politically," says Mir Sabir, a mini-truck driver, hailing from Nuagudi village under Teispur gram panchayat.

Narendra Das, the ruling BJD supported Sarpanch of Teispur, admits the omission of deserving people in the beneficiaries' list. "Almost all affected persons who lost their houses in Fani were listed to get government assistance. However, after complaint petitions were filed by some people, a second survey was conducted by block-level officials. During this exercise many deserving people's names were dropped," he said.

Declared dead, Covid patient alive

NAYYAR AZAD | DC PATNA, APRIL 12

In a shocking incident reported from Patna, a man, who had been admitted to Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH) with Covid-19 complications was mistakenly declared dead by the hospital authorities.

The dead body in sealed condition was handed to the family members along with a death certificate on Sunday. The issue snowballed into a controversy when the wife of the man wanted to have his last glimpse before the cremation. When the cloth covering was

removed from the face, the body turned out to be a person other than her husband.

The dead body was taken back to the hospital and after much hue and cry, the wife found her husband alive. The PMCH authorities later dismissed the health manager Anjali Kumari on charges of "negligence".

Sources said that the hospital authority is also trying to find out whether other doctors or officials were involved in the incident. The health manager was dismissed by the hospital authorities immediately after the matter surfaced, sources said.

KARNATAKA CM: LOCKDOWN COULD BE IMPOSED IF THE NEED ARISES

Bengaluru, April 12: Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Monday said the state government could impose lockdown if the necessity arises.

"People need to respond for their own good. If they don't heed then we may have to take stringent measures. If required and if necessity arises, we will impose lockdown," Yediyurappa told reporters in Bidar. Reacting to queries on the growing

Coronavirus cases in the state, which saw the numbers breaching 10,000 on Sunday, he said the Prime Minister had also spoken to him about the measures taken by his government.

"(I told him) we have imposed night curfew in the districts where the Coronavirus cases are rising," Yediyurappa said.

He insisted that people should wear face masks, use hand sanitisers and maintain social distancing. — PTI



Large number of people at flower market near Dadar station ahead of Gudi Padwa festival in Mumbai on Monday, amid surge in Covid-19 cases across country.

— PTI

HOLY BATH

Devotees defy Covid norms during 2nd royal bath of Kumbh Mela

Kumbh: Thousands take a dip in Ganga

Dehradun, April 12: Amid rising Coronavirus cases in the country, thousands of saffron-clad seers and ash-smeared Nagas flouted Covid-19 norms and converged at Har Ki Pauri in Haridwar for a holy dip in the Ganga during the second royal bath of the Kumbh Mela on Monday.

The seers of different akhadas, led by their Mahamandaleshwars, by

turns took out grand Shobha Yatras through the main thoroughfare of the pilgrimage city to gather at Brahma Kund, Hari ki Pauri for the holy bath on the occasion of Somvati Amavasya.

Marching barefoot to their destination with many of them not wearing masks or observing social distancing, the seers took a dip in the river as they were showered with flow-

er petals from helicopters flying above on behalf of Uttarakhand government.

While Har ki Pauri, considered the holiest of the Ghats was reserved exclusively for the akhadas from 7 am onwards, common people also took the holy dip on the other ghats of the Ganga, revered by millions as a goddess.

The mela administration claimed that approximately 17.31 lakh devotees had

taken the holy dip in the Ganga till 10 am.

Uttarakhand DGP Ashok Kumar said the Shahi Snaan was being conducted smoothly throughout the Mela Kshetra from Haridwar to Devprayag. So far, seers of three out of a total of 13 akhadas have bathed in the river at Har ki Pauri while bathing by devotees is underway at the other ghats, the DGP said. Seers of Niranjani Akha-

da led by their Mahamandaleshwar Acharya Kailashanand Giri were the first to take a dip in the river on the occasion. Seers of Ananda Akhada also took bath along with them.

They were followed by Joona Akhada saints led by Acharya Kailashanand. Former King of Nepal Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah was also among those who took a dip in the Ganga on the occasion. — PTI

SC judges to hold court from home after 44 staffers test +ve

PARMOD KUMAR | DC with agency inputs NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

With 44 Supreme Court staffers out of over 3,000 testing positive for the Coronavirus infection in the past one week, the Judges on Monday decided to hold the court through video-conferencing from their residences — a setback for hybrid hearing that the top court had started in March after a gap

of nearly one year.

While some judges had been coming to the apex court premises to hold court, few others have been presiding over proceedings from their residences till now.

As a consequence the hearing today was rescheduled with courts that were to assemble at 10.30 am assembled at 11.30 am and the courts that were to assemble at 11.00 am assembled at 12.00 noon.

The other notification sus-

pending physical mentioning of cases for urgent hearing by advocates from Monday till further orders. However, the mentioning of the matters for urgent hearing or listing through video-conferencing will continue.

The entire court premises including the court rooms were sanitised. While everything appeared to be in retreat, the top court officials said that the situation was not alarming.

IN BRIEF

34 migrants die as boat capsizes

Djibouti: Thirty-four migrants drowned on Monday after their boat capsized off the coast of Djibouti, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said, the second such accident in just over a month. Survivors reported that the boat capsized in rough seas at around 4.00 am (0100 GMT) after leaving Yemen with around 60 passengers on board, an IOM official in Djibouti said, asking not to be named.

Huthi claim attack on Saudi

Dubai: Yemen's Huthi claimed on Monday to have launched drone strikes against Saudi energy giant Aramco's facilities, amid an upsurge in fighting between the insurgents and the Riyadh-backed government in northern Yemen. Neither Aramco or Saudi authorities immediately reported any attack. Huthi spokesman Yahya Saree said in a statement that the strikes took place overnight, in retaliation for the six-year military campaign led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen.

Five new species found in Tibet

Beijing: Five new animal species have been discovered in Tibet, including three kinds of frogs, one old-world monkey and a bushmaster snake, challenging the long-held view that the Himalayan mountains are a desolate and lifeless region. The discovery of the five new species was the result of an eight-year investigation of the terrestrial wildlife in the Tibet Autonomous region carried out by the regional forestry bureau, state-run Global Times reported on Monday. The discovered species are: a type of macaque (a genus of gregarious Old World monkeys), bushmaster snake (venomous), and three kinds of frogs.

Activist on trial for pornography

Moscow: A Russian court on Monday opened the trial of a feminist activist and artist charged with disseminating pornography after she shared artwork depicting female anatomy online — a case in line with the Kremlin's conservative stance promoting "traditional family values" that has been widely seen as controversial and elicited international outrage. Yulia Tsvetkova, 27, from the far-eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur, faces up to six years in prison on charges reportedly related to her group on the popular social network VKontakte where colourful, stylised drawings of vaginas were posted. Tsvetkova is not allowed to give details of accusations against her.

HUAWEI, HSBC AGREE ON PAPERS FOR EXTRADITION

Hong Kong, April 12: Chinese telecommunications equipment firm Huawei said on Monday that it has reached an agreement with HSBC in Hong Kong to obtain documents that its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou hopes will help prevent her extradition to the US. Meng, who was detained in Canada in 2018 at the behest of US authorities, has been fighting a legal battle over the last two years as the US seeks to extradite her over allegations of bank fraud and violations of sanctions against Iran.

The US accuses Huawei of using a Hong Kong shell company called Skycom to sell equipment to Iran in violation of US sanctions. It says Meng committed fraud by misleading HSBC about the company's business dealings in Iran.

An earlier request by Meng's legal team for documents from HSBC was rejected by a court in Britain. In a court hearing on Monday, Hong Kong High Court judge Linda Chan approved the document-sharing agreement between Huawei and HSBC.

"An agreement has been reached with HSBC in relation to the Hong Kong legal proceedings for document production and an order has been approved by the court," Huawei said in a statement on Monday. It is not clear which documents Huawei has obtained or what the scope of the agreement covers.

Report: Syria used chemical weapons

2018 Saraqib attack involved chlorine: OPCW

The Hague, April 12: The Syrian regime's air force used the chemical weapon chlorine in an attack on the town of Saraqib in 2018, the global toxic arms watchdog said on Monday after an investigation.

The report is the second by an investigations team set up by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which has the new power to apportion blame for attacks.

The OPCW said in a statement that the Investigations and Identification Team (IIT) "concludes that units of the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons in Saraqib on 4 February 2018".

"There are reasonable grounds to believe that, at approximately 21.22 on 4 February 2018, a military helicopter of the Syrian

● **THE TEAM** issued its first report a year ago, in which it said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's air force used the nerve agent sarin and chlorine in two attacks.

Arab Air Force under the control of the Tiger Forces hit eastern Saraqib by dropping at least one cylinder," the OPCW report said.

"The cylinder ruptured and released chlorine over a large area, affecting 12 named individuals." OPCW investigators interviewed 30 witnesses, analysed samples collected at the scene, reviewed symptoms reported by victims and medical staff and examined satellite imagery to reach their conclusions, the Hague-based organisation said.

"Symptoms... included shortness of breath, skin irritation, chest pain, and coughing," the report said. However, it said it "regrets" that the Syrian regime refused to grant access to the site, some 30 miles (50 kilometres) south of Aleppo, despite repeated requests.

The team issued its first report a year ago, in which it said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's air force used the nerve agent sarin and chlorine in two attacks on the village of Lataminah in March 2017.

Despite strong objections by Damascus and its ally Moscow, OPCW member states voted in 2018 to set up the team to attribute blame for attacks. Previously the watchdog could only say if chemical attacks had happened or not.

Navalny, who barely survived a poisoning with nerve agent Novichok last August, began refusing food in protest at what he said was a lack of proper medical treatment in prison for severe back pain and numbness in his legs.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's best-known opponent, was arrested in mid-January when he returned to Russia from Germany, where he had been treated for the poisoning, and was sentenced to two and a half years in prison on old embezzlement charges in February.

— *AFP*

Russia threatens to force-feed Navalny

Moscow, April 12: Russian prison officials are threatening to start force-feeding jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, his team said on Monday, after he lost eight kilograms (18 pounds) since starting a hunger strike.

"Seeing the seriousness of the hunger strike, the administration is threatening every day to start force-feeding," Navalny's team said in a post on his Twitter account.

It said Navalny, who last week said he had a cough and fever, had been transferred back to the prison barracks from its infirmary.

"They are still not allowing a doctor to see him," it said.

The 44-year-old opposition politician now

weighed 77 kilograms (169 pounds), it said, down from 85 kilograms (187 pounds) when he started the hunger strike on March 31.

Navalny, who barely survived a poisoning with nerve agent Novichok last August, began refusing food in protest at what he said was a lack of proper medical treatment in prison for severe back pain and numbness in his legs.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's best-known opponent, was arrested in mid-January when he returned to Russia from Germany, where he had been treated for the poisoning, and was sentenced to two and a half years in prison on old embezzlement charges in February.

— *AFP*

Suu Kyi hit with a new criminal charge

Yangon, April 12: Myanmar's ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi was hit with a fresh criminal charge on Monday, as the junta's tough crackdown on dissent rolls on.

The 75-year-old Nobel laureate has not been seen in public since being detained in the early hours of February 1 as the military deposed her government and seized power.

The generals have used increasingly brutal methods to try to quell a growing protest movement against their rule, while Suu Kyi faces a raft of criminal charges that could see her barred for life from office.

"Amay Suu has been charged again under section 25 of the natural disaster management law," lawyer Min Min Soe said after a court hearing in the capital Naypyidaw, where Suu Kyi appeared by videolink.

"She has been charged in six cases altogether — five charges in Naypyidaw and one in Yangon." The most serious charge Suu Kyi faces falls under Myanmar's official secrets laws.



Aung San Suu Kyi

Min Min Soe said Suu Kyi, who is under house arrest in Naypyidaw, appeared in good health but it is not clear if she has any idea of the turmoil that has unfolded in Myanmar over the past two months.

Near-daily protests seeking her release and the restoration of democracy have been met with rubber bullets, live rounds and even grenades by the security forces.

More than 700 civilians have been killed in the space of just 70 days since the coup, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group, which says more than 3,000 have been arrested.

— *AFP*

HISTORIC | FEAT

Quiet composure under pressure made him first human in space

Gagarin almost died on first space odyssey

Moscow, April 12: Crushed into the pilot's seat by heavy G-forces, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin saw flames outside his spacecraft and prepared to die. His voice broke the tense silence at ground control: "I'm burning. Goodbye, comrades." Gagarin didn't know that the blazing inferno he observed through a porthole was a cloud of plasma engulfing Vostok 1 during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, and he was still on track to

return safely.

It was his quiet composure under pressure that helped make him the first human in space 60 years ago. Gagarin's steely self-control was a key factor behind the success of his pioneering 108-minute flight. The April 12, 1961, mission encountered glitches and emergencies — from a capsule hatch failing to shut properly just before blastoff to parachute problems in the final moments before touchdown. From the time

● **GAGARIN'S PIONEERING**, single-orbit flight made him a hero in the Soviet Union and an international celebrity.

20 Soviet air force pilots were selected to train for the first crewed spaceflight, Gagarin's calm demeanor, quick learning skills and beaming smile made him an early favorite.

Two days before blastoff, the 27-year-old Gagarin wrote a farewell letter to his wife, Valentina, shar-

ing his pride in being chosen to ride in Vostok 1 but also trying to console her in the event of his death. "I fully trust the equipment, it mustn't let me down. But if something happens, I ask you Valyusha not to become broken by grief," he wrote, using a nickname for her. Authorities held onto the letter and eventually gave it to Gagarin's widow seven years later after he died in an airplane crash.

She never remarried. Gagarin's pioneering, sin-

gle-orbit flight made him a hero in the Soviet Union and an international celebrity. After putting the world's first satellite into orbit with the successful launch of Sputnik in October 1957, the Soviet space program, rushed to secure its dominance over the US by putting a man into space.

"The task was set, and people were sleeping in their offices and factory shops, like at wartime," Pyodor Yurchikhin, a Russian cosmonaut, recalled.

EU tries to save Iran N-talks

Iran blames Israel for sabotage at Natanz site

Brussels, April 12: The European Union on Monday warned against attempts to derail talks aimed at returning the United States to the Iran nuclear deal, after Tehran accused Israel of an attack on its main Natanz site.

EU spokesman Peter Stano said the reported incident "could have been an act of sabotage" but insisted that there had been no official attribution over who was responsible.

"We still need to clarify the facts in detail as quickly as possible," he said, adding: "We reject any attempts to undermine or weaken diplomatic efforts on the nuclear agreement."

The Natanz site near Tehran was hit by a power outage on Sunday that Iran labelled "terrorism", a day after officials announced the country had started up advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges.

Negotiators in Vienna are trying to find a way to return the United States to the 2015 pact with world

Dubai, April 12: Iran blamed Israel on Monday for a sabotage attack on its underground Natanz nuclear facility that damaged its centrifuges, an assault that imperils ongoing talks over Tehran's tattered nuclear deal and brings a shadow of war between the two countries into the light.

Israel has not claimed responsibility for the attack. It rarely does for operations carried out by its secret military units or its Mossad intelligence agency.

However, Israeli media widely reported that the

● **THE ATTACK** also further strains relations between the US, which under President Joe Biden is now negotiating in Vienna to re-enter the nuclear accord.

country had orchestrated a devastating cyberattack that caused a blackout at the nuclear facility. While the nature of the attack and the extent of the damage at Natanz remains unclear, a former Iranian official said the assault set off a fire while a spokesman mentioned a "possible minor

explosion."

The attack also further strains relations between the US, which under President Joe Biden is now negotiating in Vienna to re-enter the nuclear accord, and Israel, whose Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to stop the deal at all costs. Netanyahu met on Monday with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, whose arrival in Israel coincided with the first word of the attack. The two spoke briefly to journalists but took no questions.

— *AP*

powers aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions, after former president Donald Trump withdrew.

The EU's mediator on Friday described the talks

as "constructive", as those involved look to persuade Washington to drop sanctions reimposed by Trump and for Tehran to roll back breaches of the deal.

New US President Joe

Biden has said he wants to revive the agreement, which places limits on the Islamic republic's nuclear programme in return for relief from biting economic sanctions.

— *AFP*

BIDEN WALKS TIGHTROPE \$2T INFRA BILL

Washington, April 12: President Joe Biden holds a rare meeting on Monday with opposition Republican lawmakers, as well as Democratic allies, to push his more than \$2 trillion infrastructure bill — a daring bid to rebuild the United States and cement his place in history.

The White House meeting between Biden and eight members of Congress is being stage managed to show that the new president has made good on his promise to end the divisiveness that turned Washington into a permanent dog fight under Donald Trump.

Four senators and four members of the House of Representatives were invited — half of them from each party.

● **FOUR SENATORS**, four members of the House of Representatives were invited.

Second Ramzan amid Covid



Ahead of the holy month of Ramzan, an Iraqi man sells food at the Shorja market in central Baghdad on Monday after the curfew imposed by authorities was eased amid Covid pandemic.

— *AFP*

Astra's diabetes drug suffers setback

Virus may give rise to crimes: Europol

London, April 12: British pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca on Monday said that following a trial, its diabetes drug Farxiga was not successful in treating Covid patients at risk of severe complications.

AstraZeneca, whose separate Covid vaccine roll-out has been hampered by health concerns, said its trial "assessing the potential of Farxiga to treat patients hospitalised with Covid-19 who are at risk of developing serious complications... did not achieve statistical significance".

The trial was carried out alongside Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute and looked at potential complications including diabetes and heart failure.

"While the trial did not achieve statistical significance, the findings are very interesting and valuable, and will inform future clinical science," Saint Luke's cardiologist Mikhail Kosiborod said in a joint statement.

Public confidence in AstraZeneca's Covid-19

The Hague, April 12: The Coronavirus pandemic could fuel organised crime for years to come in Europe, a continental already at "breaking point" from an unprecedented flood of cocaine, the EU's policing agency warned Monday.

In its flagship four-year report, Europol said increasingly violent criminal gangs are likely to muscle in on legitimate businesses left vulnerable by the economic damage caused by Covid-19.

Criminals are also offering fake Coronavirus vaccines and home-testing kits as they seek to capitalise on global efforts to recover from the virus, the Hague-based agency said.

vaccine has meanwhile been badly shaken by reports linking it to rare, but potentially fatal,

"We are at the breaking point," Europol's director Catherine De Bolle said. "The impact on the lives of citizens, on the economy, on the rule of law is too big. That's what we see from this... report." The "Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment" is an in-depth report issued every four years which will be used by EU member states to set crime-fighting priorities until 2025.

"A prolonged pandemic will put heavy strain on European and global economies" and a predicted economic recession "may shape serious and organised crime for years to come," the report said.

— *AFP*

blood clots, and by conflicting recommendations over its use.

— *AFP*

CENTRAL RAILWAY**VARIOUS OHE WORKS**

E-Open Tender is invited: Description: Design, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning of OHE for DN 3rd Line & UP 4th Line & Modification of Existing OHE due to infringement from proposed DN 3rd line and UP 4th line in Bulburi (Inch)-Khapri (Inch) in Sawargam - Nagpur Section of Central Railway in Nagpur Division. **Estimated Cost of the Work:** ₹ 9,86,90,700/-. **Cost of Tender Form:** ₹ 0. **Address of Office of the Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer (Construction), 3rd Floor, DRM's Building, Kingsway, Central Railway, Nagpur - 440 001. Earnest Money Deposit:** ₹ 0. **Completion Period:** 30 Months. **Date and Time of Submission of Tender:** On 06/05/2021 up to 15:00 hrs. **Date and Time of Opening of Tender:** On 06/05/2021 at 15:15 hrs. **Web Address:** For details of Tender Notice Visit: www.irops.gov.in **E-Tender Notice No:** NGP-TDC-ELECT-2021-22/01 **Date:** 06/04/2021

RailMadad Helpline 139

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE

Tender Notice No. 563-SNT-R-2021. Dated: 08.04.2021. **Name of Work:** Execution of work in connection with (1) Interlocking of LC Gates (03Nos) having TVLU more than 20,000 at LC No. DD-15 (MXA-RSA Section), LC No. DD-48 (LBO-BXA Section) and RV-13 (R-MNDH Section) of Raipur Division, (2) Raipur Division: Provision of Sliding barrier (12 LCs). (3) Raipur Division: Provision of Track Machine Stabling Siding at Marauda. (4) Cable shifting work in connection with construction of RUB at Km 829/31-35(829.541) by PWD Department, Raipur (State Govt. CG) connecting Telghanihaka to Ramnagar. (5) Cable shifting work in connection with construction of ROB for traffic facility near Telghanihaka Chowk beside the existing ROB near railway station between OHE mast no. 829/23N-27N on NGP-HVH main line by PWD department (State Govt. CG) (6) Bhatapara- Extension of Goods shed platform at HN end. **Tender Value:** Rs. 19968950.37 **EMD:** Nil. **Completion period:** 12 (Twelve) Months. Bidders will be able to submit their original / revised bids upto 15:00 hours on 11.05.2021 only. manual offers are not allowed against these tenders. Details are available on our website: www.irops.gov.in

Sr. Divl Sig & Telecom Engineer PR/R/S&T/AP/03 SEC Railway/Raipur

f South East Central Railway @seccrail

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby informed to the General Public that my clients are absolute owners of the below mentioned property. My clients state that there is no encumbrance on the below mentioned property and they have clear and marketable title over the same. My clients have asserted that the following original documents which was registered on the file of Chennai South Joint I, Saidapet, has/have been lost/misplaced and/or is not traceable pertaining to the Schedule Property is 01) Original Sale Deed Doc.No.3235/1964 for S.Nos. 429, 456 & 459/4 02) Duplicate Sale Deed Doc. No. 1252/1989 for S.No.458/2B, 03) Original & Duplicate Sale Deed Doc.No.1287/1989 for S.No.458/2B2, 04) Original Sale Deed Doc.No.1484/1981 for S.No.458/2B 05) Original & Duplicate Sale Deed Doc. No.2400/1989 for S.No.457/5, 06) Original & Duplicate Deed of Exchange Doc.No.1303/1984, for S.No.457/5 07) Original & Duplicate Deed of Exchange, Doc.No.1304/1984, for S.No.457/5, 08) Original Sale deed Doc.No.3712/1983, for S.No.457/5, 09) Original Sale Deed Doc. No. 1458/1980, for S.No.457/5, 10) Original Exchange Deed Doc.No. 2669/82 for S.No.460/2, 11) Original Sale Deed Doc.No.2315/1982 for S.No.460/2, 12) Duplicate Sale Deed Doc.No.1903/89 for S.No.459/5, and the same is not traceable till date in spite of diligent search.

Any person / institution having possession of the said document or any right, interest or claim and or any other objection in this regard are hereby called upon to raise and notify your objection in writing to the undersigned within seven days from the date of publication of this notice with documentary evidence, failing which it shall be deemed and construed that the aforesaid documents are lost beyond recovery. **SCHEDULE PROPERTY** All that piece and parcel of land totally measuring acres 2.92 Cents, comprised in Survey Numbers 459/4 (10 Cents); 458/2B1 (100 Cents); 458/2B2 (75 Cents); 457/5 (13 Cents); 460/2 (83 Cents); 459/5 (11 Cents); situated at Manapakkam Village, Alandur Taluk and Chennai District.

K.Mohan, Advocate No.49/42, Nallan Street, Vanniya Teynampet, Chennai - 600018. Ph-7401462906

DECCAN Chronicle

13 APRIL 2021

US Navy foray: Will Delhi stand up to Washington?

When the US Seventh Fleet entered the Bay of Bengal in December 1971 to boost Pakistan's morale and threaten India's security as the birth of Bangladesh was being midwived, New Delhi used the counter-weight offered by the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in August that year to call out Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. The Americans withdrew, cursing. Not so now.

This time the around Americans are hectoring and Indians are praying they will emerge from this with their prestige unscathed. It does really boil down to the vision of the leadership which sees the United States as the reliable heavy-weight partner. The US is of course quite clear about one thing: with no country does it have a relationship that is "taller than the mountains and deeper than the seas" — China's description of its ties with Pakistan.

As part of its "freedom of navigation operations" (FONOP), a warship of the US Navy's Seventh Fleet, *USS John Paul Jones*, passed through India's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) some 240 nautical km off Lakshadweep. An official Seventh Fleet communication said two things: that its action was to repudiate India's "excessive maritime claims"; and two, its action was consistent with international law and therefore the US wilfully disregarded the Indian condition of prior permission.

About the first, it's evident the US doesn't doubt the legitimacy of the extent of India's EEZ in that area. What it's saying is that it has no regard for India's domestic law which does not permit the passage of a warship of any country without permission. As for international law, the US has not endorsed the UN Conference on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS). Furthermore, the US privileges its domestic laws over any international law but may not give the same consideration to other countries.

When New Delhi pointed out through diplomatic channels that the terse, even brazen, communication of the Seventh Fleet was unwarranted in respect of a friendly country that had participated in a summit of the Quad, hosted by the US President, only three weeks earlier, Washington sought to convey that its FONOP aren't country-specific. The government here seems to have fed the media the speculation that President Joe Biden is trying to signal China that its naval movements in the South China Sea should not be misunderstood by Beijing since India is getting the same treatment.

This is the overlord's show of neutrality which India is entitled to call out. But will it, or will it make excuses for the US? Surrounded by a peppery China and a hostile Pakistan, with Russia now adopting a somewhat cool stance in view of evolving zonal and international alignments, New Delhi gives the impression of standing before Washington, cap in hand.

The latter is seeking to exploit the situation to the hilt. The US and India both know the Americans had carried out FONOP in the same area in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019. India was happy to lump it so long as no one made a song and dance about it, but this time the Americans are announcing the story aloud for all to hear. This is Mr Biden's America seeking to re-assert the doctrine of US superiority. If India doesn't make its disapprobation plain, who knows, we may have the Chinese or the Pakistani Navy follow in America's footsteps in India's EEZs.

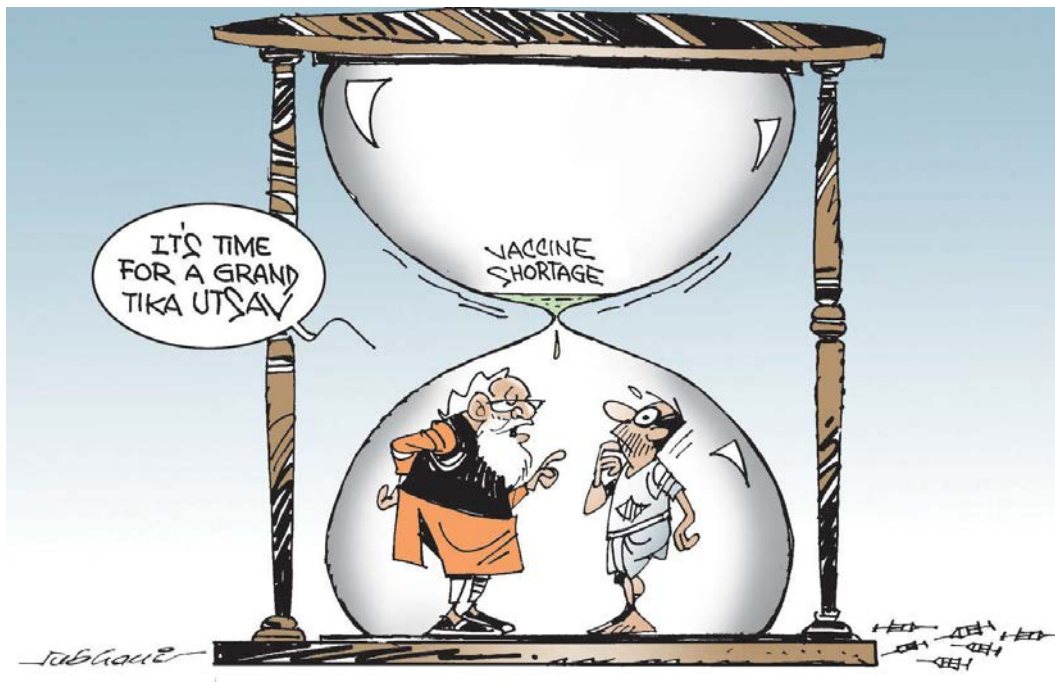
Fresh Israeli adventurism?

Iran's Natanz nuclear enrichment facility was struck by a suspected cyber-attack on Sunday, just a day after Tehran had unveiled new centrifuges on the site that can enrich uranium for use as reactor fuel in generating power or make deadly nuclear weapons. The world knows that Israel is the only power in the region with the capability to carry out such a brazen attack through cyber means that may have been launched in combination with a physical intrusion into a heavily fortified site to knock out the power source with an explosion. Far from denying the intrusion, the Israeli intelligence agency has fed the news to the world's media that its operation may have set the Iranian nuclear programme back by more than a few months.

The reason for this dangerous hit on a nuclear facility is not far to seek. Only last week Iran and the EU started negotiations to revive the Iran nuclear deal struck in 2015 under the leadership of US President Barack Obama, which his successor Donald Trump revoked in 2018 as one that gave away far too much to Iran. The negotiations in Vienna, with all parties to the nuclear deal except United States, were also to do with having about 6,000 US sanctions lifted but Iran's leverage in the talks may have been hit hard by what is typically Israeli adventurism, aimed particularly at Iran's nuclear programme, based purely on its own strategic interests.

Far from rebuking Israel, its action will probably be applauded by its friends in the United States as well as in the Middle East, where Israel has new friends like the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Joe Biden's eagerness to roll the clock back on many of Mr Trump's brash actions may have received a rude jolt from the Israeli strike, but he can do little against a powerful Jewish lobby in his own country. Ironically, US defence secretary Lloyd J. Austin was in Israel over the weekend stressing the strong ties binding the two countries. Iran stresses its nuclear ambitions are peaceful but, with its enriched uranium, can't convince the world, and there is no reining in Israel either.

Subhani



Why world can't afford to take a chance with China



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

The white paper titled "Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution" that Beijing issued earlier this month to mark the Communist Party of China's 100th anniversary hardly helps to explain the contradictions of a China that is as much "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma" as the old Soviet Union was in Winston Churchill's famous words.

Is China rich or poor? The evidence suggests both. Travellers in China certainly see none of South Asia's grinding poverty. But then, it's a vast land, and movement is strictly regulated. Bursting with billionaires, China holds \$3,399.90 billion in the US Treasury's foreign exchange reserves. Yet, intermediaries and snakeheads (secret society gangs) exploit illegal Chinese workers from Angola to England and Malaysia to Saipan in the Pacific.

In a year of many records, China led the pack of billionaires who bounced back according to *Forbes*' 35th annual World's Billionaires List. The one-time Middle Kingdom is now home to 626 billionaires — against 388 last year — and this is second only to the United States, which has 724. China's roaring stock market and quick recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic (for which Americans blame China) led to 205 new billionaires and the return of another 53 who had dropped out of the list. That excludes the ones based in Hong Kong and Macao, which are listed separately by *Forbes* magazine.

These crazy rich Asian Chinese seem to be getting even richer in the aftermath of the pandemic. A Chinese billionaire's \$4 billion average net worth represents a 33 per cent jump from last year. Collectively, the 626 billionaires own \$2.5 trillion, which is more than double last year's total. The top ten's \$447 billion is also nearly double last year's figure.

At the other end of the scale, India leads the world in expatriate remittances because millions of desperately poor Indians fan out across the world, and particularly so all across the Middle East, to toil in ports and plantations, on building sites and in private homes. They can't find jobs in India's sluggish economy. But why does apparently buoyant China come second in the remittance stakes? Chinese expatriate workers send back an impressive \$68 billion annually, against the spectacular \$83 billion that Indians repatriate.

That can mean two things. One, even China's economy cannot absorb the skills of all its able-bodied men (and some women). Two, China might be flowing with milk and honey, but this is only for the privileged like the *taizidang*, or princelings, as the sons of party veterans are called.

Like the former Soviet Union, China, too, might qualify for a British journalist's dismissal as "Upper Volta with rock-ets".

Is China a land of peace contented with its status? Or is it arrogantly determined to be the next superpower? The UK's recent 100-page "Integrated Review of Security, Defence,

Development and Foreign Policy" suggested both. It called China a "systemic challenge to our security, prosperity and values". It also promised to "adapt to China's growing impact on many aspects of our lives as it becomes more powerful in the world".

Besides preface and conclusion, the document had five sections — "The Solemn Commitment of the CPC", "Final Victory in the Fight against Extreme Poverty", "The Strategy of Targeted Poverty Alleviation", "Exploring a New Path of Poverty Alleviation" and "A Global Community of Shared Future Free from Poverty" — that predictably applauded the Chinese people's fight in eliminating extreme poverty. They also indicated that China's novel approach would benefit the world.

However, three reported tragedies hardly bear out these lofty maxims. First, 58 illegal immigrants suffocated to death in a container in Dover. Second, 39 were similarly killed in a tractor trailer in Essex. In the third and most poignant instance, 23 labourers were drowned while picking cockles off the Lancashire coast when the tide swept in. One of them managed to dial 999, but it was too late. He could only repeat in his broken English: "Sinking water, many many, sinking water... Sinking water, sinking water."

An old saying claims that the Chinese will go wherever there is land and water. Nowadays, they will go wherever there are jobs, even though the cockle pickers received a miserable pound for a gruelling

nine-hour day. But as a Chinese immigrant told the *Financial Times*: "By working abroad for a few months, you can live a year in China."

These economic refugees are the Han Chinese, not Uighurs or Tibetans. They are victims of what Britain's former Labour prime minister Tony Blair called a harrowing "evil trade in people". The snakeheads that can extort as much as \$70,000 to smuggle them out move people from country to country until they reach the wealthier nations of Europe, North America, Australia, or perhaps Taiwan and Japan.

A veteran Chinese Singaporean journalist bemoans in an impassioned denunciation of China in *The Straits Times* that "anyone without scales over his eyes and who has not succumbed to cerebral shampooing by the West will have realised by now that large parts of its media are biased, if not outright antagonistic, in their reporting of China." Bias probably, but China does not make it easier for foreigners to understand itself by presenting so many contrary faces.

Perhaps the Chinese enjoy taking the world for a ride. There was the well recorded case of an unknown Chinese man turning up at the coronation of Queen Victoria — or was it her jubilee? — in mandarin robes and a pillbox hat perched above his pigtail, without being able to say a word of English. Unsure of whether he was an envoy from the Son of Heaven, the British seated him between a marquis and an archbishop at the ceremony at Westminster Abbey. Only next day did the police discover that he was the owner of a small junk moored in the Thames.

The moral: The world can't afford to take chances with China.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

An old saying claims that the Chinese will go wherever there is land and water. Nowadays, they will go wherever there are jobs

LETTERS

LIFE ENERGY

Scientists explore whether there is life in other planets. But there is life on earth. If there is no life on other planets and if it is on earth, some element, molecule or compound must make life on earth.

What is it? We know electricity is due to flow of electrons. But it is not automatic. Someone should enable it. But in life it is automatic once it gives birth. Can we call this as life energy till someone invents it as in electrical energy? Life is created by mixing of Pancha Bootham (air, water, fire, land and sky) in many ways. Scorpion comes in tiled roofing after some years. Does anyone plant it there? No, it is due to mixture/exposure of clay tiles, moisture, air and sunlight. Now a life is born. What is this new compound of life? Yes, life is a compound. Till we find it, let us call this as 'life energy'.

R.Ganesan, Chennai

CORONA FEAR

This has reference to Jagan cancels campaign due to Coronavirus fears. The decision by the CM, AP to cancel his Tirupati bypoll campaign scheduled for April 14 in view of the likely spread of Covid-19 is welcome and appreciated. In fact, Tirupati Parliamentary constituency, which is spread across Chittoor and Nellore districts, recorded a big spike in the last few days. Further, when online classes are being held by the educational institutes and WFH is encouraged by employers due to corona pandemic, election rallies and roadshows by all political parties need to be dissuaded and restrained in order not to spread the virus. New guidelines in this regard may be drawn up.

Dr C. Ghanshyam, Visakhapatnam

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Aakar Patel



It's wrong to say Indians have right to choose faith

Last weekend the newspapers carried the headline: "People are free to choose their religion: Supreme Court".

The report was about a public interest litigation petition which sought to stop Indians from converting out of the faith they were born into.

The judges were angry. They said: "What kind of writ petition is this? Why should a person above 18 not choose his religion?"

The petitioner was the BJP's Ashwini Upadhyaya.

The Indian judiciary has had a long history with the freedom of religion. It might be appropriate to revisit it. First, let readers understand this. You have no freedom of religion. You have no right to convert out of the faith you were born into. I do not know if our judges know this or have actually read the law. But it is a fact.

Article 25 of our Constitution reads: "All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion".

This is apparently a fundamental right, meaning one which enjoys a high degree of protection from State encroachment. The fundamental right was drafted after a debate in which

India's Christians had specifically asked for the right to propagate (to convert other people) because it was an article of their faith. In India, Muslims do not do mass propagation; even the Tablighi Jamaat only seeks to make Muslims better Muslims. It is the Christians who believe their religion requires them to spread the good word of Jesus Christ and to invite people into their faith. They asked for this right and were given it specifically by our Constitution's makers, including arch Hindu fundamentalists like K.M. Munshi, who agreed with the Christians. Only one Hindu in the Constituent Assembly opposed the right to propagate and that was a 26-year-old Brahmin man from Odisha, Loknath Misra, whose brother Ranganath Misra and nephew Dipak Misra would both become Chief Justices of India.

Loknath Misra said that by making India secular, Hindus had done a favour to other communities and that propagation should be allowed but not be made a fundamental right. He need not have worried because this right was taken away by subterfuge as has been the case for many rights in India under the approving eye of the Supreme Court. Let us see how by

looking at one just state, my own.

In 2003, under Narendra Modi, Gujarat passed a law that essentially removed all freedom of religion for Gujaratis. It requires individuals changing their faith to take the permission of the government. They had to fill out a form explaining to the district magistrate the reasons they were choosing to convert; their occupation and monthly income; how long they had been in the religion they were converting out of; to reveal whether they were Dalit or Adivasi; the date and time of their conversion; the names, addresses and ages of themselves and all in their family; the names and addresses of all guests attending the ceremony. If they did not do so within 10 days of their conversion, they faced one year in jail.

The person who is converting them has to fill out another form with all of the details referred to above and must submit, one month before the conversion, an application to the district magistrate seeking permission. The bureaucrat has one month in which to approve or deny permission. This denial of propagation obviously also affects the right of the person who wants to change their faith. One had to remain in the faith they were born

into unless the government approved.

The district magistrate must also maintain a register that has the number of applications received, approved, denied or pending which he must report every quarter. The coercion can be imagined.

Gujarat's Assembly was told in January 2020 that in the previous five years a total of 1,895 "applications" for conversion had been filed in the state. Gujarat had denied permission to convert to 889 individuals.

The government "gave permission" to 1,006 applicants, almost all of whom were Dalits in Surat converting to Buddhism. The number of Dalit applicants to convert to Buddhism had swelled because in 2014, they had been denied permission to convert in a mass ceremony. The Narendra Modi government attempted to modify the law to exclude conversions from Buddhism and Jainism to Hinduism and vice versa from the state's regulation. Meaning that Jains and Buddhists would be seen legally as Hindus and therefore would not really be "converting". But this was objected to by Gujarat's Jains, who resisted being clubbed with Hindus, and the modification was withdrawn.

I have used the example of Gujarat,

but almost all of India's states have these laws criminalising what is supposed to be a fundamental right.

The Gujarat law's punishment for propagation is three years (four if the convert was a woman, Dalit or Adivasi). But how the district magistrate's denial of permission would work at the level of faith was unclear. One priest I spoke to said India's religion laws made no sense because of the nature of belief. He said: "Suppose I stopped believing in Christ today. This would be a conversion from being a believer to a non-believer. I am supposed to take permission from the State for this change, but I have already stopped believing."

In recent months, BJP-ruled states like Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and others have passed the "love jihad" laws, which tighten the State's grip on religious freedoms further. It is totally and demonstrably false to say Indians have freedom of religion.

This is the background to which the newspapers have brought us the headline: "People are free to choose their religion: Supreme Court".

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	47883.38 -3.44
Nifty 50	14310.80 -3.53
S&P 500*	4,129.44 0.002
Dollar (₹)	75.06 -0.40
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.11 -0.69
Euro (₹)	89.33 -0.50
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,070▼57 0.12
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.19 0.38
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.011 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.676 0.010

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Over five lakh download ‘Mera Ration’ app

The government's 'Mera Ration' mobile app has been downloaded by more than 5 lakh people within a month of its launch, a senior government official said. The app, launched on March 12, is helpful to ration card holders, particularly migrants, for identifying the nearest fair price shop and checking details of their entitlement and recent transactions. The Android-based app is currently available in Hindi and English.

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■ Market falls 3.5%, investors lose ₹8.77 L cr Panic wave in mkt

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

Sensex and Nifty-50 fell close to 3.5 per cent on prolonged lockdown fears, as the second Covid wave became more severe with 1.69 lakh people affected in a single day.

Investors suffered a notional loss of over Rs 8.77 lakh crore, as BSE's market capitalisation dipped to Rs 200,85,806 crore from Rs 209,63,241 crore last Friday.

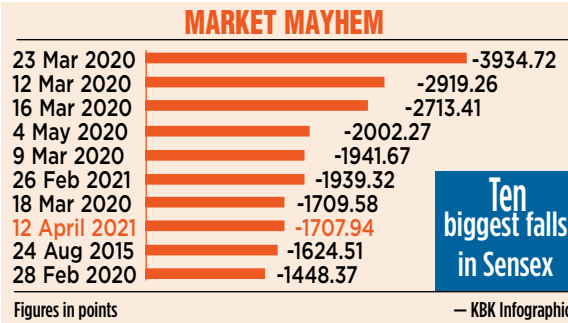
The Sensex fell 1898 points intra-day to 47693.44 with the weekend spike in cases making investors jittery, who resorted to profit taking in stocks and sectors that had run up sharply in recent weeks.

The Sensex closed below the 48000-mark, down by 1707.94 points at 47883.38 while the Nifty-50 closed 524.03 points down at 14310.80, after touching an intra-day low of 14248.70.

Foreign portfolio investors net sold stocks worth Rs 1,746.43 crore and there was little support coming from the domestic institutions as they were net buyers by just Rs 232.76 crore.

"The rising cases of Covid-19 and a fear of probable lockdown in some parts of the country led to a sell-off in our markets which resulted in a huge under performance compared to the global peers," said Ruchit Jain, analyst-technical and derivatives, Angel Broking.

NSE's India VIX index, an indicator of market volatility in coming days, climbed up 16.22 per cent to 23. Among the sectoral indices the top losers were Nifty Metal (-6.07 per cent), Realty (-7.50 per cent), Bank (-5.10 per cent).



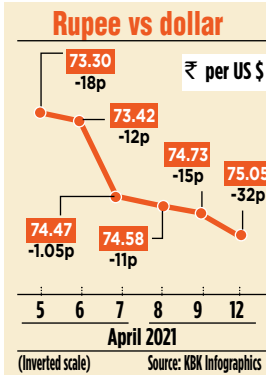
Choppy times ahead for rupee

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

The rupee plunged below 75 against the dollar for the first time in eight months on Monday as investors worried over the likely economic fallout of several states considering lockdown restrictions and a strong dollar globally. Analysts believe volatility is ahead for the rupee, with more states joining localised lockdown to contain the Covid-19 second wave. This was the sixth straight session of loss for the rupee, during which it has depreciated by 193 paise.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee closed at 75.05 against the dollar after trading in the 74.78-75.14 range, down 32 paise.

Adding to the panic was the Reserve Bank's policy of providing more and more liquidity to the system through the government securities acquisition programme, under which it will purchase Rs 1 lakh crore worth bonds from the market. GSAP, though positive for the bond market (where yields have softened by 5-8 basis points) is not so for the currency.



There is now excess liquidity of Rs 7 lakh crore in the reverse repo basket and there will be an infusion of Rs 25,000 crore on the 15th of this month. Such high liquidity means interest rates will remain low. The problem is, the US 10-year yield is now at 1.66 per cent, while Indian bonds are being driven down. This makes India less attractive for investors.

"Choppy times are ahead for the rupee, which was definitely not expected as the liquidity dimension added by the RBI and the commentary provided have spooked the market," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Care Ratings.

TCS Q4 NET RISES 15% TO ₹9,246 CRORE

FC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Monday ushered in the March quarter earnings season, reporting a 14.9 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 9,246 crore.

The country's largest software services firm had posted a net profit of Rs 8,049 crore in the year-ago period.

In a regulatory filing, TCS said its revenue grew 9.4 per cent in the March 2021 quarter to Rs 43,705 crore from Rs 39,946 crore a year ago.

"Our investments over the last decade in building newer capabilities, and in research and innovation, position us well for the multi-year technology services opportunity ahead. While we continue to dominate in our traditional areas of strength, we are making good progress in gaining share in the growth and transformation opportunity," Rajesh Gopi-nathan, chief executive officer and managing director, TCS, said.

The company's net profit for the financial year ended March 2021 was up at Rs 33,388 crore (excluding legal claim provisions) against Rs 32,340 crore in the previous financial year. Its net profit on a reported basis stood at Rs 32,430 crore for FY21.

The board has proposed a final dividend of Rs 15 per equity share.

SMEs to get ₹250 cr of ₹10,900-cr PLI

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

Micro, small and medium enterprises, which account for the majority share of the food processing industry, will receive incentives valued at a mere Rs 250 crore in six years under the recently announced Rs 10,900-crore Performance Linked Incentive Scheme for the segment.

The draft PLI scheme says Rs 9,040 crore has been allocated for companies producing ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat foods, processed fruit and vegetables, marine products and mozzarella cheese. But only 2 per cent, or Rs 250 crore, of this amount will go into the

kitty of SMEs, that too, to those who produce organic and innovative products.

"This includes Rs 250 crore or approximately 2 per cent of the outlay, which has been earmarked for innovative/organic products in the SME sector..." said the draft. The remaining will be allocated to select large manufacturers of food products.

"The allocation for SMEs is less and is only for those who produce organic and innovative products. We will reach out to the government on this," said Piruz Khambatta, CMD of Rasna.

He says some 30,000 to 40,000 FSSAI-registered SMEs are there in the food processing industry.

INFLATION RISES, IIP CONTRACTS

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

With a sharp spike in food inflation, retail inflation jumped to 5.52 per cent in March, the highest in three months, while the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) contracted by 3.6 per cent in February, data from the statistics ministry showed.

Food inflation saw a steep rise of 4.94 per cent in March from 3.87 per cent in February, but vegetable prices fell to 4.83 per cent last month from 6.27 per cent in February.

The IIP also showed a worrisome trend by contracting 3.6 per cent against an expansion of 4.5 per cent in February 2020. The IIP had contracted 1.6 per cent in January 2021 as well.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

PASSENGER VEHICLE SALES DROP 2.24% IN FY21: SIAM

Pune, April 12: Passenger vehicles sales fell 2.24 per cent to 27.11 lakh units in financial year 2020-21, down from 27.73 lakh units sold in FY20, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said on Monday. The two-wheeler industry has been badly hit, with a significant 13.19 per cent contraction in year-on-year sales at 151.19 lakh units. Commercial vehicle sales dropped 20.77 per cent at 5.69 lakh units and three-wheeler sales saw a 66 per cent decline at 2.16 lakh units. This dip in sales has largely been a fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, when sales came to a complete halt in April 2020. While monthly passenger vehicles sales in the last few months have set new records, the surge fuelled by more discretionary spending on cars and an affinity towards personal mobility has not compensated for the subdued months during last year's lockdown. — *Michael Gonsalves*

KALPANA SAMPAT TO HEAD PRAMERICA



Kalpana Sampat

Mumbai, April 12: Pramerica Life Insurance on Monday announced the appointment of Kalpana Sampat its MD & CEO, from April 9. Prior to this, she was the chief operating officer at the

firm. Before joining Pramerica Life, Sampat was the CEO for Swiss Reinsurance Co, India branch, and was instrumental in its launch in 2015. — *PTI*

FLIPKART PARTNERS ADANI GROUP

Chennai, April 12: Flipkart has entered a strategic and commercial partnership with the Adani group. In this two-pronged partnership, Flipkart will work with Adani Logistics to strengthen its supply chain infrastructure. Flipkart will also set up its third data centre at Adaniconnex's Chennai-based facility. Adani Logistics, on its part, will construct and lease a 534,000 sq. ft. fulfilment centre in Mumbai to Flipkart. At the AdaniConneX unit, Flipkart will be able to design its data centre. — *FC Bureau*

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Man Utd hit back to sink Tottenham

London: Manchester United staged a superb fightback to shatter Tottenham's top-four bid with a 3-1 win, while West Ham climbed to fourth place in the Premier League as the revitalised Jesse Lingard inspired a 3-2 victory against Leicester on Sunday.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side trailed to Son Heung-min's first half strike, but United scored three times after the break through Fred, Edinson Cavani and Mason Greenwood. Second-placed United's fourth successive league win avenged their embarrassing 6-1 home defeat against Tottenham in October. — *AFP*

Son racially abused on social media

London: Tottenham Hotspur are to take action after Korean star Son Heung-min was subjected to "abhorrent racist abuse" on social media following Sunday's 3-1 defeat by Manchester United. Son is the second Spurs player in as many matches to suffer such abuse following Davinson Sanchez after the 2-2 draw with Newcastle United on April 4. Son scored Spurs's goal but was involved in a controversial incident when he went down clutching his face after contact with Scott McTominay. "Another matchday and more abhorrent racial abuse suffered by one of our players," said a Spurs statement. — *AFP*

Darmian wins it for Inter Milan

Milan: Antonio Conte's Inter Milan tightened their grip on the Serie A title on Sunday with Matteo Darmian scoring the only goal in a 1-0 win over Cagliari to stretch their winning streak to 11 games. Champions Juventus consolidated third place with a 3-1 win over Genoa as Atalanta battled to a 3-2 victory over Fiorentina to stay fourth ahead of Napoli who won 2-0 at Sampdoria. "We're starting to see the finish line," said Conte after Inter restored their 11-point lead on second-placed AC Milan who won 3-1 at Parma on Saturday. Achraf Hakimi came off the bench and set up Darmian to grab the winner with 13 minutes to go at the San Siro. — *AFP*

Hideki goes green at Augusta Matsuyama holds off Schauffele to become first Japanese to win Masters



Hideki Matsuyama of Japan celebrates after being awarded the Green Jacket by 2020 Masters champion Dustin Johnson (left) of the United States after he won the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on Sunday. — *AP*

Tears, cheers and shares rise as Hideki win thrills Japan

Tokyo, April 12: Thrilled Japanese golf fans welcomed Hideki Matsuyama's historic Masters victory on Monday, with broadcasters close to tears and the prime minister hailing the win as a bright spot during the pandemic. "Matsuyama Masters" trended on Twitter and golf-related shares rose on the Tokyo stock market after the 29-year-old became the first Japanese man to capture a major golf title.

"Matsuyama opens the door of history," declared the Asahi Shimbun newspaper.

In Japan, the one-stroke victory was sealed just after 8.00 am Monday morning, with some broadcasters carrying live footage of his final-round 73 that saw him finish on

● **TV networks ran breaking news flashes announcing the victory and several newspapers published special editions online, usually reserved for major stories.**

10-under par.

On the TBS station, broadcasters and commentators choked up as Matsuyama sank the final putt to claim the green jacket symbolic of Masters supremacy. "Congratulations. Thank you," a presenter said as two golf commentators next to him struggled to hold back tears.

TV networks ran breaking news flashes announcing the victory and sever-

al newspapers published special editions online, usually reserved for major stories.

As Tokyo's stock market opened, shares in Value Golf, which provides services linked to the sport, jumped 14 percent, while golf club maker Graphite Design rose 16 percent.

Fans flooded to congratulate the country's new sporting hero as social media lit up.

"I can't see through my tears," one fan tweeted. Japan's prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, told reporters Matsuyama's performance had been "really wonderful".

"I think it encouraged and excited people across Japan at a time when the impact from coronavirus is lingering," he said.

"It is a great achievement." — *AFP*

HIDEKI FACTFILE

- **Age:** 29
- **Born:** February 25, 1992
- **Birthplace:** Ehime, Japan
- **Home:** Sendai, Japan
- **Height:** 5ft 11in/1.80m
- **Weight:** 200 pounds/90.7kg
- **Turned Professional:** 2013
- **Highest World ranking:** 2
- **Current World Ranking:** 25
- **Career US PGA Tour titles:** 6
- **Career major titles:** 1 (Masters: 2021)

I'm really happy. Hopefully I'll be a pioneer in this and many other Japanese will follow. I'm happy to open the floodgate and many more will follow me.

Maybe a lot of younger golfers thought, 'That's an impossibility,' but with me doing it they will realise it is possible and if they set their minds to it they can do it.

— **HIDEKI MATSUYAMA** after winning the 85th Masters crown

PAST FIVE WINNERS

- **2021 — Hideki Matsuyama (Japan)**
- **2020 — Dustin Johnson (USA)**
- **2019 — Tiger Woods (USA)**
- **2018 — Patrick Reed (USA)**
- **2017 — Sergio Garcia (Spain)**

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Dominant India crush Argentina

Buenos Aires, April 12:

The Indian men's hockey team registered a comprehensive 3-0 win over reigning Olympic champions Argentina in the second match of the FIH Pro League here to jump to the fourth spot in the points table.

Goals from Harmanpreet Singh (11th minute), Lalit Upadhyay (25th) and Mandeep Singh (58th) on Sunday gave the visitors a deserved triumph over Los Leones, adding three more points to the two they had claimed against the hosts in Saturday's shoot-out, which earned them a bonus point.

By virtue of this win, India, with 15 points from eight games, climbed up to fourth place in the FIH Hockey Pro League standings, moving one point

ahead of Australia having played the same number of games.

India, Argentina and Australia will play against each other at the forthcoming Olympic Games, where they have been drawn in Pool A alongside Spain, New Zealand and home favourites Japan.

Argentina sit sixth in the FIH Hockey Pro League standings, with 11 points from 12 games.

Argentina started brightly and would have been ahead had it not been for some excellent saves from India goalkeeper Krishan Bahadur Pathak, who twice denied Martin Ferreiro.

Harmanpreet then converted India's first penalty corner of the game in the 11th minute.

— *PTI*

CITY CLIPS

Cosmopolitan Club 'C' triumph

Cosmopolitan Club 'C' edged out Anna Nagar K Block 'C' 2-1 to emerge winners of the 'F' Zone in the 28th SANMAR – TNNTA Chennai city club league championship.

Results: Cosmopolitan Club 'C' bt Anna Nagar K Block 'C' 2-1 (Tommy John/Murugan Ramu bt V.T. Kumaran/Ramesh Venkataraman 6-1, 6-3; Viral Shah/Navin Rathore bt R. Krishnaswamy/K. Arvindakshan 6-2, 6-4; D. Manivannan/Karthik Murugesan 3-6, 5-7).

Santhosh's all-round effort in vain

A half-century and a fiver by T.S. Santhosh Kumar went in vain as Ebenezer CA lost to Wheels India RC in the second division of the TNCA's Thiruvallur DCA League Championship.

Brief scores: I-Division: Korattur CC 250/7 in 45 overs (R. Shrihari 65, R. Ram Kumar 52, P. Dinesh Kumar 42, M. Vedprakash Raja 28) bt Seshadri MCC 176 in 37 overs (B. Akshai 71 (not out), R.M. Seshan Muthu 36; S. Nitiish 4/33).

II-Division: Wheels India RC 185/8 in 30 overs (B. Madhan Kumar 60, C. Sathiya Kumar 36; T.S. Santhosh Kumar 5/63) bt Ebenezer CA 161/9 in 30 overs (T.S. Santhosh Kumar 58, S. Mohan Raj 37, Kumaresan 26; D. Alexander David Raj 3/42).

III-Division: SS CA 106 in 21.4 overs (S. Ravikumar 27; V. Hemanth Ram 6/31) lost to Parthasarathy MCC 109/1 in 15.5 overs (D. Abisheak 43 (not out), Mohammed Zaid 42 (not out)).

IV-Division: Lucas TVS RC 153 in 22.5 overs (M. Suriyah 27; K.V. Akhilesh Sabari 4/49, S. Siva Kumar 3/30) bt Frankworrell CC 150/6 in 30 overs (B. Karthik 48, S. Mahesh 46 (not out); D. Balaji 3/37).

