

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SATURDAY 17 | APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 25°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Chithirai 4
Tithi: Panchami
Star: Mirugasiridam
Rahukalam:
9 am to 10.30 am
Yamagandam:
1.30 pm to 3pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.45 am
Luhar: 12.14 pm
Asar: 3.19 pm
Maghrib: 6.22 pm
Isha: 7.34 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.22 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.55 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 9.30 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 11.36 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+2,08,675)	(+1,124)
1,44,96,601	1,75,459

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+8,449)
TN: 9,71,384 13,032

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

14,02,16,469

DEATHS

30,05,636

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

TMC wants all phases clubbed amid Covid surge

Kolkata: TMC leader Derek O'Brien on the EC's all party meeting regarding the Bengal polls the Covid surge. "TMC's position is clear, we want remaining elections to be held in one phase. I request BJP to make their position clear. Do they agree with us that politics is a second priority, first is handling the COVID19 pandemic?"

An all-party meeting called by Chief Electoral Officer, West Bengal over COVID19 norms, was held at Kolkata Circuit House. Bharatiya Janata Party delegation and the TMC delegation attended the meeting, among other parties. Reports say the next phases may go to the polls on one day due to the surge in Covid cases.

EC makes seizures worth ₹1,000 cr in 5-states

New Delhi: The seizure of illegal inducements to voters, such as liquor and cash, during the ongoing polls to five assemblies and by-polls to some seats has crossed the record value of Rs 1,000 crore, a whopping jump of over four times since the 2016 polls, the Election Commission said Friday.

— PTI



Don't vote for him, father... he is not wearing a mask!



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HC green signal to Thalaivi



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Pak suspends social media over protests

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Sunrisers to take on Mumbai today



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PM orders easy movement of oxygen cylinder carriers

Production of Covaxin to be doubled soon

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 16

As the daily fresh Covid-19 cases went over 2.17 lakhs and the death toll reached 1,185, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday chaired a comprehensive review meeting to ensure adequate medical grade oxygen supply in the country. The meeting took place a day after India decided to import 50,000 metric tonnes of medical oxygen to reduce the shortage of supplies.

During Friday's meeting, Mr Modi reviewed in detail the current oxygen supply situation and projected use in the coming 15 days across 12 high-burden states — Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

Mr Modi suggested an increase in the oxygen production capacity of each plant. The use of surplus stocks of oxygen in steel plants for medical use was also discussed.

Mr Modi urged officials to ensure seamless and free movement of tankers carrying oxygen throughout the country. The government has exempted all inter-state movement of oxygen tankers from registration of permits to enable easier movement.

The Centre has also decided to double the production of indigenously-made Covaxin by May-June and nearly 10 crore Covaxin doses will be produced per month by September. The Union ministry of science and technology said the capacities of Bharat Biotech Ltd in Hyderabad as well as other public sector units are being upgraded and financial aid is being provided as a grant to the tune of around ₹65 crores to Bharat Biotech's new Bengaluru facility, which is being repurposed to increase the capacity of vaccine production. Besides, three PSUs are also being supported to hike the capacity of vaccine production.



A crowd waits at Omandurar medical college and hospital, Chennai to receive their dose of vaccination on Friday.

— DC

Virus spreads via air: Lancet

New Delhi, April 16: There is consistent, strong evidence to prove that the SARS-CoV-2 virus, behind the Covid-19 pandemic, is predominantly transmitted through the air, according to a new assessment published on Friday in *The Lancet* journal.

The analysis by six experts from the UK, the US and Canada says public health measures that fail to treat the virus as predominantly airborne leave people unprotected and allow the virus to spread. Although some studies have suggested that Covid-19 may spread through air, overall scientific literature on the subject has been inconclusive.

In July last year, over 200 scientists from 32 nations wrote to the WHO, saying there is evidence that the coronavirus is airborne, and even smaller particles can infect people. "The evidence supporting airborne transmission is overwhelming, and evidence supporting large droplet transmission is almost non-existent," said Jose-Luis Jimenez, from the University of Colorado Boulder in the US.

PTI

CISCE puts off X, XII exams

New Delhi, April 16: The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) on Friday deferred the board exams for classes 10 and 12 in view of a rise in Covid-19 cases across the country.

In light of the nationwide surge in coronavirus cases, the class 10 and 12 exams which were to be held from May 4 have been deferred, CISCE's chief executive and secretary Gerry Arathoon said. "We will closely monitor the situation and review it in the first week of June to take a final decision on conduct of examination," he said.

"While class 12 exams will be conducted at a later stage, class 10 students will get an option to either appear in offline exams later or get evaluated on basis of fair and unbiased criteria to be developed by board," Mr Arathoon added.

Earlier this week, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) had cancelled its class 10 board exams and deferred the class 12 board exams. Several state boards have postponed or cancelled their exams too.

PTI

Yeddy tests positive second time

Bengaluru, April 16: Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Friday tested positive for Covid-19 for the second time in eight months and has been shifted to a private hospital.

The 78-year-old chief minister was hospitalised on August 2, 2020 after he tested positive for coronavirus. "Upon having mild fever, today I got tested for Covid-19 and my report has come out positive.

Although I am doing fine, I am being hospitalised based on the advise of doctors," he tweeted. Manipal Hospital, where he is admitted, said he is "cheerful" and "clinically in a stable condition".

— PTI

Chennai reign in clash of Kings



Pacer Deepak Chahar (right) scalped four wickets as Chennai Super Kings thrashed Punjab Kings by six wickets in Mumbai on Friday. The victory pushed CSK to second on the points table.

— IPL

Chennai on April 15, Mr Stalin said. They were removed only after the party representatives on the campuses protested, he said.

Attaching the photographs and video recording of the mysterious vehicles, he said that many wi-fi connections were live in the vehicles. Though the police claimed that they were mobile toilets meant for women, enquiries with the women police on duty revealed that they had not used the 'mobile toilets,' he said.

"It is relevant to mention here that every strong room is located only in reputed colleges, where adequate lavatory facilities are available. While so, it is not known as to why the so-called mobile toilets are brought inside the strong room, in utter violation of the instructions issued by the Election Commission," Mr Stalin said.

Apart from the unauthorised entry of prohibited vehicles, other incidents are also cited in the letter.

■P2

SOUTHWEST MONSOON WILL BE NORMAL THIS YEAR, SAYS IMD

New Delhi, April 16: The southwest monsoon, which brings more than 75 per cent of rainfall to the country, is expected to be normal this year, the India Meteorological Department said on Friday.

The long period average (LPA) rainfall will be 98 per cent with an error margin of plus and minus 5 per cent, said M. Rajeevan, secretary of the ministry of earth sciences.

He was releasing the first 'long range forecast' for the four-month rainfall period from June to September at a virtual press briefing.

"Monsoon will be 98 per cent of the LPA which is normal rainfall. It is really good news for the country and will help India have a good agriculture output," Mr Rajeevan said.

— PTI

WOMAN COP SLAPPED WITH UAPA IN J&K

Srinagar, April 16: A woman special police officer (SPO) from Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir has been arrested and terminated from the service for "glorifying terrorism" and "obstructing" government officials in the discharge of their duty, a police spokesman said on Friday.

Saima Akhter, a resident of Frisal area, has been arrested under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, he added. He said on Wednesday, security forces launched a search operation in Karewa Mohallah in Frisal village on a specific input regarding the presence of militants there.

During the operation, the search party was obstructed by Ms Akhter, the spokesman said. "The lady resisted the search party and turned violent and uttered statements glorifying violent actions of terrorists," he said. She captured a video on her phone and uploaded it on social media platforms "with the intent of disrupting the search operation", he said.

— PTI

British home secretary orders extradition of Nirav Modi

London, April 16: United Kingdom's home secretary Priti Patel has signed off on the order to extradite fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, wanted in India on fraud and money laundering charges related to the estimated \$2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, the UK home office said on Friday.

The decision follows a Westminster magistrates' court ruling by district

judge Sam Goozee in February, which concluded that Mr Modi has a case to answer before the Indian courts and that the bars to extradition under UK law do not apply in his case.

Nirav Modi, 50, who remains behind bars at Wandsworth Prison in south-west London since his arrest over two years ago on 19 March 2019, has 14 days to apply for permission to appeal against the

home secretary's order in the high court in London.

Mr Modi may now seek leave to appeal against both the decisions, that of the district judge and of the home secretary.

Mr Modi had allegedly perpetrated the fraud in the Punjab National Bank in collusion with his uncle Mehul Choksi.

Judge Goozee ruled a prima facie case has been established on all counts of



charges brought by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) — money laundering,

intimidation of witnesses and disappearance of evidence.

Mr Modi is the subject of two sets of criminal proceedings, with the CBI case relating to a large-scale fraud upon PNB through the fraudulent obtaining of letters of undertaking (LoUs) or loan agreements, and the ED case relating to the laundering of the proceeds of that fraud.

He also faces two addition-

al charges of "causing the disappearance of evidence" and intimidating witnesses or "criminal intimidation to cause death", which were added on to the CBI case.

"I do not accept the submissions that NDM (Nirav Dipak Modi) was involved in legitimate business and using the LoUs in a permissible fashion," notes the court judgement forwarded to the home secretary.

India is a designated Part

2 country by virtue of the Extradition Act 2003, which means it is the Cabinet minister who has the authority to order a requested person's extradition after considering a number of further issues.

The home secretary's order rarely goes against the court's conclusions, as she has to consider only very narrow bars to extradition which did not apply in Mr Modi's case.

— PTI

OTHER STORIES

Woman dies after being hit by lorry; public stage protest

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 16

A 40-year-old woman died in a road mishap on East Coast Road after being hit by a speeding lorry on Friday. Onlookers said that the driver's rash driving led to the mishap who rammed the speeding lorry into the two-wheeler.

According to police, the deceased woman has been identified as Lakshmi (40), a resident of Cheyyur on ECR. Lakshmi was pillion riding with his son, Suman (19) on the two-wheeler when the mishap happened.

Police sources said that Lakshmi was unwell and his son was taking her to the hospital on Friday morning. The duo was travelling on the East Coast road, when a speeding sand-laden lorry coming from Periya Venmani allegedly hit the bike from behind when it attempted to overtake it.

In the impact, the duo was thrown off the vehicle. While Lakshmi died on the spot, Suman escaped with minor injuries. The lorry driver tried to escape from the spot, however, the public nabbed and trashed him. The driver identified as Manikandan (28) was later handed over to the Cheyyur police who came to the spot on information.

Meanwhile, demanding justice for the deceased woman, the public staged a protest on the East Coast Road refusing to remove the body from the road. The protesters alleged that these kinds of accidents happen often on ECR. Senior officials from Madurantakam and Chengalpet police stations came to the spot. After two hours-long talks, the public dispersed.

The Cheyyur police sent the body to Madurantakam government hospital for post-mortem. A case has been registered and a probe is on.

31 persons enter campus storing EVMs

From P1

One of them in Ramana-thapuram relates to 31 persons entering the campus with two laptops, claiming to have gone there to operate some computers which were available in the same floor where EVMs are stored.

In the other on the Neyveli Anna University Campus, three computer-experts were allowed to enter the premises, with pass issued by the officials, for unknown reasons and in Tiruvallur many unauthorised persons claimed to be computer instructors were allowed inside the premises for undisclosed reasons when CCTV cameras did not work for around 30 minutes.

Slum-dwellers shudder as Covid second wave spreads

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 16

The slum-dwellers in the city, who were affected badly by the lockdowns during the first wave of Covid-19, now remember the grim days with a shudder at a time when coronavirus, in its second wave, is spreading its tentacles in the state, forcing the government to introduce a slew of restrictions.

For the last one year, since the Covid-19 outbreak was reported in the city in March 2020, the slum-dwellers, who are largely daily wage workers, have been struggling to make ends meet as many of them lost their livelihood due to the lockdown. With the second wave of the pandemic spreading at an alarming pace in the city, a pall of fear started to set in.

Y. Manikandan of K.M.

For the last one year, since the Covid-19 outbreak was reported in the city in March 2020, the slum-dwellers, who are largely daily wage workers, have been struggling to make ends meet as many of them lost their livelihood due to the lockdown.

Garden near Perambur, one of the largest slums in the city having 1,500 tenants, says the spread of coronavirus would make their life difficult. "The impact of the first wave is still evident in this settlement. Many elders, who were working as domestic helps, sanitation workers and watchmen, lost their job post lockdown. Their jobs never returned though the lockdown was withdrawn. My wife lost her job as a domestic help after lockdown. A couple of weeks ago, she was able

to find a job. This new spread comes as a real shocker for us," he said.

Manikandan, a sanitation worker, says nobody had called him for a job post-lockdown. "My mother, brothers and sister were income earners. They lost their job due to lockdown. Even after one year, they are still jobless," he said.

Sethunath, a slum-dweller at Choolaimedu, said the slum-dwellers cannot afford another round of Covid-19 crisis because they have already lost their savings and livelihood. "We survived back-to-back complete lockdowns only because of the free ration provided by the government. We heard that authorities would set up containment zones in the areas where active cases are reported. All slum settlements are congested with high popula-

tion and no proper toilet facilities. So we are scared that Covid-19 cases would spread faster," he said.

"Ever since the news reports of the positive cases spread, many of my neighbours are very nervous and are staying indoors. They are getting out of their homes only to use public toilets. All of them say it is very difficult to escape the infection in such congested slums. The fear has already begun to spread in the slums as the city reports a high number of cases daily. Ninety percent of the residents here do not have private toilets and they use public toilets. One seat of a public toilet is used by 70 or 80 people daily. So there is a very high possibility of coronavirus infection through these public toilets," says Senthil, a slum-dweller at Pulianthope.

No entry



Vellore Fort closed to stop spreading of coronavirus. (Inset) Jalakandeswarar temple also closed for devotees, but poojas take place as usual. — Senthil Nathan

TN crosses 8K mark in daily coronavirus tally

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 16

The state on Friday registered another single-day jump crossing the 8,000 mark with 8,449 new Covid-19 cases and 33 deaths. This is a jump from 7,987 cases on Thursday.

As per the data provided by the state health department, the total positive cases in the state have reached 9,71,384 while death toll is 13,032 including 4,364 in Chennai.

Chennai contributed 2,636 new cases, a rise from 2,558 Thursday. The district recorded a total 2,77,300 cases so far. The district also recorded 11 death cases, a rise from 8 on Thursday.

Chengalpattu district, the second main contributor, reported 795 new cases with two deaths. The total cases in the district now stand at 64,617. Meanwhile, the number of daily cases in Coimbatore district is 583, a slight increase from 534 on Thursday. One death case was also reported in the district.

While Chennai, Coimbatore and Chengalpattu continue to add over 500 cases every day, districts including Vellore, Tiruvallur, Thoothukudi, Tiruchirappur, Madurai, Selam and Kancheepuram reported 200 plus cases each. Apart from this, 12 districts crossed the 100 mark.

Chennai and surrounding districts including

ASI orders closure of two temples

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, APRIL 16

With Corona cases increasing, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has ordered closure of two of its monuments — Big temple at Thanjavur and Iravatheswaraswamy temple at Darasuram near Kumbakonam, in Thanjavur district.

Collector M. Govinda Rao said on Friday that the two temples had been closed following the order. Chithirai festival is going on in the Big temple here, but people's entry have been banned. The temple car festival has already been cancelled for the second year this year.

Rao inspected Vallam town panchayat near here to ensure compliance of Corona preventive meas-

ures by people. He inspected whether passengers in buses and advised conductors to permit only passengers wearing masks to travel.

Stating that there is no dearth of vaccine doses in the district, Rao said more than one lakh people have been vaccinated in the district so far. Vaccination is being done in the Thanjavur medical college hospital, government hospitals, primary health centres and Amma clinics. We received 10,000 doses of vaccine on Friday for the district," added the collector.

He appealed to the people to cooperate with the district administration as they did during the first wave, to prevent its spread this time also.

Thiruvallur and Chengalpattu added 3,884 cases, a surge from 3,716 cases on Thursday.

Active cases, meanwhile, have touched 61,593 registering an increase from 58,097 on Thursday. The total active cases in the Chennai district, which is the worst hit, have now crossed 22,420, a rise from 21,391 on Thursday.

Three people succumbed to Covid-19 in Thiruvallur and Selam districts each

while Nagapattinam and Kancheepuram reported two death cases each. Cuddalore, Dharmapuri, Kanyakumari, Krishnagiri, Madurai, Sivagangai, Theni, Vellore and Virudhunagar districts also reported deaths.

A total of 95,561 persons took RTPCR tests on Friday, a rise from 93,995 on Thursday. A total of 2,06,40,110 individuals have tested so far in the state.

SR's Golden Rock Workshop bags award

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 16

The Southern Railway's Golden Rock Workshop (GOC), Ponnmalai, Tiruchirappalli, has bagged the first prize jointly with Northeast Railway for best innovation in the Indian Railways. GOC got the award for developing and implementing an IoT-based smart energy management & condition monitoring system for energy intensive machines and substa-

tion low tension panels.

Organised annually by the Efficiency and Research Directorate of Railway Board, the best Innovation award carries a cash prize of ₹1.50 lakh.

The advantages of the energy management and condition monitoring system include elimination of restriction of number of meters and length of communication cables, elimination of dependency on suppliers for software and customization since soft-

ware is developed in-house, huge reduction in cost of project since it can be developed and installed at an expenditure of ₹25,000 and monitoring of utilisation and energy consumption pattern of each M&P.

The technicians involved in the project development are T.John Arul Doss, deputy chief electrical engineer, (now retired), L. Balaji, senior section engineer (trainee), S. Ganesan, senior section engineer, J. Ravikumar, senior se-

ction engineer (now retired), M.P. Karthikeyan and P. Sekar, technicians.

GOC workshop is an energy management system (EnMS) & GreenCo (Gold rated) certified workshop. This necessitates monitoring of electrical energy consumption up to micro level. Around 300 smart energy meters have been provided in substation feeders & around 150 energy intensive machines deployed for micro-level energy monitoring.



Archaeological monuments in Mamallapuram closed to tourists. DC

HC seeks TN response on forming panel to restore water channels

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 16

Observing that in view of the shrinking of water channels, cultivation cannot be made effectively by the agriculturists and many water channels have been completely blocked by encroachments by the neighbouring land owners, the Madras high court has sought the response of the state government with regard to forming a committee to inspect the water channels in the state and restore the same.

A division bench comprising Justices N.Kirubakaran and T.V.Thamilselvi made the observations while dealing with a case relating to several persons encroached upon a water channel and cultivated paddy in a village.

The bench said taking into consideration of the standing crops which would be about ready for harvest in three to four weeks, this court adjourns the matter to June 2, 2021, so that in the



meanwhile, the encroachers could harvest and thereafter they shall surrender the encroached portion and authorities shall take over the possession.

The bench said it was not only in the petitioner's village but also throughout the State, choking and shrinking of water channels due to encroachment was taking place throughout the State. Therefore, this court suo motu impleads, "The government of Tamil Nadu represented by its secretary,

public works department, the government of Tamil Nadu represented by its secretary, municipal administration and water supply department, the director, rural development and panchayat raj department", the bench added.

The bench said in view of the shrinking of water channels, cultivation cannot be made effectively by the agriculturists and many water channels have been completely blocked by encroachments by the neighbouring land owners. Therefore, water channels have to be restored. Hence, a committee has to be formed by the newly impleaded respondents at every panchayat union level so that the said committee shall inspect the water channels and restore the same as per the revenue records following the due process of law. In this regard, the newly impleaded respondents shall give their response on the next hearing, the bench added and posted the matter to June 2, 2021.

The Madras high court has upheld an order of a single judge, which declined to restrain director A.L.Vijay and producer Vishnu Vardhan Induri, and director Gowtham Vasudev Menon, from producing the Tamil film *Thalaivi* and the web series *Queen* respectively in respect of life of former Chief Minister J.Jayalalithaa.

A division bench comprising Justices R.Subbiah and Sathi Kumar Kumara Kurup dismissed the appeal filed by J.Deepa, niece of former Chief Minister late J.Jayalalithaa, challenging the order of a single judge dated December 12, 2019.

Concurring with the submissions of senior counsel

HC green signal to Thalaivi

Hearing of cases to be only on virtual mode in HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 16

The Madras high court has directed all the principal district judges/principal judge in the state of Tamil Nadu and the Chief judge, Puducherry, to ensure that access to the court buildings in the subordinate courts shall be restricted, unless the presence of the parties/litigants are called for by the courts.

In another official memo-

randum, P.Dhanabal, Registrar General of the Madras high court, said all lawyers' chambers in the subordinate courts shall be closed from April 17, 2021 until further orders. The libraries in all the Bar Associations shall remain closed until further orders. All district courts should scale down functioning till April 30, 2021.

The situation will be reviewed on April 22, for further directions, he added.

Vardhan Induri and senior counsel Satish Parasaran, appearing for Gowtham Vasudev Menon and citing a judgment of this court, the bench said the "right of privacy of an individual", cannot be inherited after his or her death by his/her legal heirs.

It was the specific contention of Vijay and Vishnu Vardhan Induri that they were producing the movie in question, based on the contents of the book *Thalaivi*, but the appellant has not taken any action as against the publication of the above mentioned book, especially, when the book was in the public domain for more than three years.

They also contended that "right of privacy of an individual" extinguishes with the human being, the bench added.

HC flays posting of bureaucrats to tribunals

Chennai, April 16: Playing the appointment of bureaucrats to various tribunals in the country, the Madras High Court on Friday wondered how such officials could be chosen for the same when the law requires experts to be appointed to these posts.

"The Union government has been creating the Tribunals on tax, banking, environment and other important issues because the judges of the High Courts or the Supreme Court are not experts in the respective field."

"When the law requires experts to be appointed to such tribunals, how can you appoint the bureaucrats?" the first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy asked.

The bench was hearing a PIL petition from Sundararajan of 'Poovulagin Nanbargal', a non-governmental environment protection organisation, which challenged the appointment of former Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary Girija Vaidyanathan as an expert member of the Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) by the Centre.

The NGO has contended she did not possess the required qualification. The bench had stayed the operation of the appointment order last week.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Governor greeted by leaders

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 16

Governor Banwarilal Purohit, who turned 81 on Friday, was greeted by the top political leaders of the state, including Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

Palaniswami sent a bouquet to the Governor and conveyed his greeting to him and the Governor, too, thanked him for that, a press release said. "Your rich experience and wisdom is invaluable to the State," said Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam in his message, wishing him happiness, strength and many more years of public life.

DMK president M. K. Stalin too wished the Governor health for many more years in public life, acknowledging his love for Tamil Nadu and Tamil people. The Prince of Arcot, Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, wished the Governor and said, "May Allah grant you health, happiness and long life to continue to serve the nation and humanity for many, many years to come, with success and prosperity in your endeavors."

VIT School of Law students win contest

Chennai, April 16: The team from VIT School of Law, VIT Chennai, has won the 2nd Surana and Surana and Army Institute of Law, Mohali, Family Law National Moot Court Competition held virtually between April 9 and 11 2021.

In all, 37 law schools from all over the country participated in the competition and the team comprising N. Asmitha (3rd Year B.B.A., LLB.), Nivedita Muchilote (3rd Year B.B.A. LLB.) and Aarcha Sasikumar (2nd Year B.A., LLB.) from VIT School of Law, VIT Chennai, emerged as the winners and won a cash prize of Rs.20,000. N. Asmitha also shared the Best Student Advocate award with Chaturya Srinivasan, student of NLU Jodhpur. Nivedita has been declared as the Best Speaker for the final round.

₹64 L turnover made by tribal women

Coimbatore, April 16: Tribal community women from Thanikandi village in the foothills of Velliangiri have achieved a record of turnover of ₹64 lakh through self-employment with the help of Isha. They have earned a profit of ₹23 lakh, according to a Isha press release. 'Chellamariamman Tribal Women Self Help Group' was started in 2018 by uniting 11 tribal women from Thanikandi hill village near Isha.

A few shops near Adiyogi and a battery cart were provided free of charge. They started their own business with an investment of a few hundred rupees and have achieved a record turnover of ₹64 lakh in just three years. They also made a profit of ₹23 lakh. With their own investment of ₹6 lakhs they have also bought a new battery car. They use this car to take the public from Adiyogi to Sarpavasal. They charge ₹10 per person to travel in the 10-seater.

Man held for sexual abuse

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 16

Chengalpet all women police here on Thursday arrested a 22-year-old man on charges of sexually abusing a 16-year-old girl.

Police said the accused has been identified as M. Rabin (22) of Thirumani Indira Nagar in Chengalpet. Sources said that he runs a milk shop in the area and also a member of DMK's youth wing. He was booked under relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act.

The police said that the incident related to the case took place on Thursday, when the victim, a class 12 student, was alone at her house. According to the complaint, the accused allegedly sexually abused her. On hearing the victim's cries, neighbours rushed to help her; howev-

● According to the complaint, the accused allegedly sexually abused her. On hearing the victim's cries, neighbours rushed to help her, however, the accused threatened them of dire consequences and fled the place

er, the accused threatened them of dire consequences and gave a slip. Meanwhile, the girl's family approached the Chengalpet All Women police station and lodged a complaint against Rabin.

The accused was arrested by the police team from a hideout on Thursday night. He was booked under Pocso Act and remanded to judicial custody.

Man gets 10 years of RI in sex abuse case

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, APRIL 16

The district fast track Mahila Court on Friday sentenced and convicted a middle-aged man to undergo 10 years rigorous imprisonment for sexually assaulting a four-year-old-girl here in 2019.

According to the prosecution, the accused M. Balamurugan alias Balu of Neduvasal near Alangudi in the district, sexually assaulted the girl in 2019. Based on a complaint from the victim's parents, all-women police, Alangudi, arrested the accused and filed a case against him before the Mahila court.

Judge Dr. R. Sathya, sentenced and convicted the accused to undergo 10 years of rigorous imprisonment, and besides slapping a fine of ₹25,000 on the accused, also directed the government to pay ₹2.6 lakh as compensation to the victim, in addition to the already sanctioned compensation of ₹ 2.5 lakh.



Cops and paramilitary force deployed near Velachery polling booth, where re-polling will be held on Saturday. —DC

HC upholds govt Chitirai festival ban

DC CORRESPONDENT
MADURAI, APRIL 16

The Madurai high court bench on Friday dismissed a public interest litigation (PIL) upholding the state government's order of prohibiting participation of devotees at the Chithirai festival in Madurai.

Taking up the PIL filed by a Karaikudi advocate, G.D. Manikandan, seeking

quashing of the Tamil Nadu government's order prohibiting devotees participating in the Chithirai festival that started on April 15, the high court division bench comprising Justice T. S. Sivagnanam and Justice S. Ananthi, refused to issue a stay on the government order, stating that the order was aimed at preventing people get crowded in thousands,

when the second phase of Corona is fast spreading.

The government advocate however told the court that devotees who are not allowed to participate in the festival, would be able to make darshan inside the temple at scheduled timing slots in the mornings and evenings, through the east and south towers, till the final day of the festival on April 25.

5-year RI to head constable under Pocso Act

Erode, April 16: A Mahila court here on Friday sentenced a head constable to five years rigorous imprisonment (RI) and fined him ₹50,000 in a sexual harassment case involving a minor girl.

The prosecution case was that the nine-year-old girl of Sular, Coimbatore district, was sleeping in a moving train when the policeman sexually harassed her.

The girl raised an alarm and her parents, along with co-passengers, got up and caught the head constable. The incident happened on the night of September 1, 2018.

A case was registered against the policeman under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act and the trial was on in the Mahila court.

Beside imposing the fine, the court instructed the Tamil Nadu government to grant another ₹50,000 to the girl as compensation. —PTI

Global honour for Chennai eye doctor

Chennai, April 16: Chennai-based ophthalmologist, Dr Soosan Jacob, Director and Chief, Refractive and Cornea Foundation, and Senior Consultant, Cataract and Glaucoma Services at Dr Agarwal's Group of Eye Hospitals has entered the international Power List - 2021, a list of Top 100 most influential women ophthalmologists in the world. The prestigious Power List is compiled every year by 'The Ophthalmologist', a premier international publication.

Soosan Jacob, who has over 21 years of experience, deserved the honour, said Prof Amar Agarwal, Chairman, Dr Agarwal's Group of Eye Hospital.

A noted speaker and author, Soosan Jacob has been invited to teach her techniques at many international institutes.

Her surgical teaching YouTube channel has more than 10,000 subscribers.



Plus-2 students of Government girls higher secondary school in Ashok Nagar attend their practical examinations on Friday. They underwent thermal screening and were asked not to remove their masks. Students who tested positive for Covid will be allowed to take the examinations later. —N. Sampath

3 DMK MPs call on CS

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 16

Three DMK MPs R. S. Bharthi, P. Wilson and N. R. Ilango called on Chief Secretary Rajeev Ranjan on Thursday and urged him to restore the name 'Periyar E V R High Road' to the road that links Chennai with Poonamallee and was recently described as 'Grand Western Trunk Road' by the highway department in its newly

erected signage across the city.

Similarly, the names of two other roads, Anna Salai and Kamarajar Salai, were also referred to as Grand Southern Trunk and Grand Northern Trunk Road in the website of the highways department. The DMK MPs also referred to the names of those two roads and urged the Chief Secretary to ensure that the old names were retained for the arterial roads of Chennai.

Leaders wish Vivek quick recovery

From P1

Since the news of his hospitalisation came in hours after he was seen taking the vaccine in the presence of health secretary J. Radhakrishnan and other officials, those who had been skeptical about the vaccine started reacting in social media adversely.

The hospital later organised a press conference on its premises to clear the doubts of the media on Vivek's condition and also to explain how that was not linked to the vaccine.

Even Mr Radhakrishnan was present at the press meet to take questions.

The sudden hospitalisation of the 59-year-old comedian, who is still active in his career, created a flutter in the film industry.

In the political world, too, many leaders wished him a speedy recovery. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam, AMMK general secretary T.T.V. Dhinakaran were among them.

In a career spanning more

than three decades, Vivek has acted in more than 220 films and endeared himself to the masses as a comedian who laced his jokes with politics.

Many of his spoofs on the political realities had been legendary.

Besides, he had also been part of many public interest awareness campaigns, appearing in many videos. It was on those lines the video of his taking the vaccine at the government hospital was also seen.

Support our income, say folk artistes

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, APRIL 16

Members of the Tiruchy district rural folk artiste welfare association (Nattupura Kalaignargal) led by association honorary president, Alex Raja, staged a novel agitation by performing rural folk dances at the collectorate here on Friday, to draw the attention of the state government on their present plight, as their livelihood was totally affected due to Covid -19, and also demanded adequate compensation for them.



Folk artistes in Madurai submit a representation at the collectorate on Friday. —K.Manikandan

Later, a team led by Alex Raja met Collector S. Divyadarshini and presented a memorandum in this regard. They submitted that over 10,000 rural artists are there in Tiruchy district, and all of them along with their families fully depend on their

stage performances for their livelihood. But due to Covid-19, their life was thrown out of gear for the last one year, without getting chances for any performances.

They also wanted that they should be permitted to perform stage dance and other programmes during temple festivals, and to stage street plays for creating awareness on Corona among the rural people, and to disburse ₹2,000 corona assistance to all the 2,000 unregistered rural folk artistes. The collector assured to look into their demands.

Thrill in Nilgiris over 'bamboo rice'

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, APRIL 15

The Nilgiris is very recently witnessing the blooming of bamboo in many areas, and people especially the tribals, are showing keen interest in collecting bamboo rice has created a sort of excitement.

Perhaps for the first time in decades, one could see, besides the tribes, even the common men were seen visiting the jungles fringes like Thorappallai limits in Nilgiris to collect bamboo rice which is found in copious quantities strewn around bamboo groves. Why do people show keen interest in collecting the bamboo rice?

V. Sivadass, managing trustee, Nilgiris Environment and Socio-cultural Trust, said that it is a fact that different bamboo species bloom and produce seeds in their dying hours of their life. The blooming periodicity differs for different species, which is usual-



Bamboo rice. (Right) A villager collecting bamboo rice in jungle fringes.



— DC

ly from once in 10 years to once in 60 years. It is the dying shoots of the bamboo which blooms and eventually produces seeds, which is otherwise known as 'bamboo rice', which gets spilled on the ground.

"In a spurt of energy that

produces the seeds at the end of their life span, a bamboo shoot is said to be the reason for gregarious blooming and production of large quantities of bamboo rice. Of course, it is nature's choice to ensure that new shoots sprout from

the seeds or rice that fall on the ground, which will help the species to thrive," he added.

Usually, the tribes collect the bamboo rice and store them in their barns for consumption, as it is considered to be very healthy in

SHORT TAKES

KERALA HC
QUASHES CASES
AGAINST EDDC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
APRIL 16

In a major setback to the CPM-led-LDF government in Kerala, the Kerala High Court on Friday quashed the cases filed by the crime branch against the officials of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the allegations levelled by the prime accused in the gold smuggling case.

The HC annulled the FIRs filed by the Crime Branch pertaining to the claims made by key accused Swapna Suresh and Sandeep Nair that the ED officials had forced them to give statements against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Both the accused had earlier alleged that the ED officials had applied pressure on them to name top CPM leaders including the Chief Minister in the gold smuggling and money laundering cases.

The HC directed the crime branch to hand over the details of the probe carried out so far, in a sealed envelope. It directed that any further action would be taken by the trial court in the case only after the examination of the documents.

Keralite nun found
dead inside well

Kollam: A 42-year-old Catholic nun was found dead inside the well of the St Joseph convent at Kurepuzha in this south Kerala district on Friday, police said. The other inmates noticed the body of Mable Joseph, a native of Karunagappally here, inside the well of the sprawling convent campus in the morning. They carried out a search after she failed to turn up for the usual morning prayers. Police said prima facie it was a suspected case of suicide.

— PTI

15-day-old infant succumbs
to Covid-19 at Surat hospital

Infant was born with the disease, her mother had contracted Covid-19

Ahmedabad / Surat, April 16: A 15-day-old baby girl, who was born to a Covid-19 patient, succumbed to the infection at a hospital in Gujarat's Surat city, an official said on Friday. The infant was born with the infection on April 1, as her mother had also contracted the disease, said Dinesh Navadiya, the trustee of Diamond Hospital said.

While the child's mother was shifted to another hospital, the newborn was under intensive treatment and was also administered remdesivir injection when her condition started deteriorating, he said.

The baby, who was on ventilator support, breathed her last on Thursday night, Navadiya said.

Former mayor of Surat Dr Jagdish Patel, who had recently recovered from Covid-19, donated his blood plasma for the infant's treatment, it was stated. "Our doctors tried their best to save the newborn. As per our knowledge, she was one of the youngest victims of coronavirus in Gujarat," Navadiya said.

On Wednesday, a 14-day-old boy from adjoining Tapi district, who had contracted the infection, died at Surat's new civil hospital. As per doctors, unlike the first wave witnessed last year, more children are getting infected with coronavirus this time around.

"The infection rate of the new strain is higher than the previous strain. Hence, even children are contracting the disease this time, as the earning members of a household get infected first and then

Now, UP plans lockdown
on Sundays till May 15

Lucknow, April 16: Amid a surge in Covid-19 cases, the Uttar Pradesh government has announced a lockdown across the state on all Sundays till May 15 and also said those caught for the second time not wearing a mask will be fined ₹10,000.

The first time fine for not wearing a mask has been doubled to ₹1,000 and officials have been directed to run a special campaign for sanitisation across the state, according to a statement.

"There will be a weekly closure in all rural and urban areas of the state on Sunday. Only sanitation, sanitisation and emergency services will operate during this period," the statement quoted Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath as saying.

He also directed officials

to run awareness campaigns in this regard.

Another statement said that "all markets, commercial institutions, offices etc will remain closed on Sundays till May 15 for proper implementation of this campaign. It (the closure) will start from Saturday 8 pm till Monday 7 am. However medical and health-related emergencies will remain open."

This is a "weekly closure", it said, adding that chief minister has directed officials to run the "special campaign" for cleanliness, sanitisation and fogging across the state.

"A fine of ₹1,000 will be imposed if someone is caught without a mask for the first time. If caught for the second time, ₹10,000 fine amount will be imposed," the state-

ment said.

The state on Thursday reported 104 deaths and 22,439 fresh cases, pushing the fatality count to 9,480 and the total infection number to 7,66,360.

The chief minister said that last year, the MLA development fund proved useful in the work related to prevent the spread of the virus.

This year also, according to rules, ₹1 crore from funds of legislators can be used in Covid-19 management on their recommendation, Adityanath said.

The Chief Minister said that the first phase of panchayat elections was completed in a very peaceful manner and strict legal action should be taken against those involved in breaching peace at some places.

— PTI

BE CAREFUL:
OFFICER TO
FRIENDS BEFORE
DYING OF COVID

Bahraich (UP), April 16: Don't be careless about Covid, a forest officer wrote to his friends in a poignant farewell message before leaving the lap of Mother Earth from a Lucknow hospital.

Yashwant Singh, the divisional forest officer (DFO) at Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, tested positive for coronavirus on April 2 and was admitted at a private hospital in the state capital.

He died there Thursday, Bahraich Divisional Forest Officer Manish Singh said.

The officer sent a WhatsApp message to his friends from his hospital bed, telling them about his imminent death which took place three days later.

"After spending 55 and a half years in the lap of Mother Earth, I am leaving for my last journey. Don't be careless about Covid. My blessings remain with everyone. Yashwant, he wrote. Singh was cremated in Lucknow, where his family lives, amid the Covid protocol that restricts the number of people at the funeral. He had taken provisional charge of his new post six months back.

The officer is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter who is an MBBS intern, according to Dabeer Hasan, a project officer with wildlife NGO WWR.

— PTI

200 prisoners in
47 jails in Maha
test Covid+veSHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 16

Taking cognisance of news reports about sudden spike in Covid cases in Maharashtra jails, the Bombay High Court on Friday took suo motu public interest litigation and sought information on current status of Covid infected inmates, jail staff and also steps proposed to decongest jails.

The Nagpur bench of the HC also took suo motu cognisance of the PIL and directed laboratories not to keep on hold RT-PCR reports for uploading them on the portal of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

The court directed that reports should be made available first on WhatsApp, hard copies should also be provided and later it should be uploaded on the portal.

A division bench of Justice Nitin Jamadar and Justice Chandrakant Bhadrag directed the state government to not only provide details of current status of jail inmates who are infected with the Coronavirus, but also ordered the state to inform court about the steps it proposes to curb further spread of the infection in jails.

According to reports, till April 14, almost 200 prisoners in 47 jails in the state have tested positive.

The number of infected inmates in the prisons was 42 a month ago and it touched the mark of 200 within a month. Six staff members in different jails have also tested positive.

The bench has kept this

matter for hearing on April 20.

On the other hand, a division bench of Justice Z.A. Haq and Justice Amit Borkar at Nagpur also took suo motu cognisance of the complaints about difficulties faced by patients in getting the reports of RT-PCR test.

According to Dr Mukesh Chandan, one of the intervenors, the reason for this delay is that the laboratories are not giving the reports before they are uploaded on the ICMR portal and sometimes the server is slow, which results in delay in uploading of reports.

Advocate S.P. Bhandarkar, who has been appointed as amicus curiae to assist the court in this matter, said that the reports should be given to patients immediately on whatsapp and also as hard copy. "However, as far as uploading reports on the ICMR portal is concerned, of course it should be done as the data is of utmost importance for the concerned government and authorities to take appropriate decisions and action in the matter," he said.

After hearing arguments the bench said, "We direct that after making the report available to patients on Whatsapp, the reports of those persons who test positive shall be uploaded on the ICMR portal within 24 hours and the reports of those who test negative should be uploaded on the ICMR portal within seven days. The authorities would be free to take appropriate action against laboratories violating this directive."

COFFEE-BREAK

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



Aries: Old habits die hard, so be a bit more forgiving of someone close. Be careful not to discuss property matters in front of those you don't know well.



Taurus: You may not see eye to eye with a parent or a family member. Travelling in over crowded vehicle is not advisable. Spend time with family.



Gemini: You will have to postpone buying a luxury item to a later date. An excellent day for cracking new deals. Students will succeed in cracking a tough competition.



Cancer: Professionally, it will be a completely satisfying day. Your financial well being is assured. Regular exercises will help you in maintaining good health.



Leo: You may not see eye to eye with a family member today and this may lead to tensions. Don't pay heed to negativity. Travelling is on the cards.



Virgo: Some of you may get busy organising a party or picnic. Romantic thoughts may dominate your mind today. You will miss your partner. Finances look good, but spend wisely.

You share your b'day with

Jennifer Garner, American actress. She is best known for her roles in Peppermint, Love, Simon, Daredevil, Elektra, Valentine's Day, The Odd Life of Timothy Green, Dallas Buyers Club, Miracles from Heaven and 13 Going on 30 amongst others.



Libra: Your relationship may go through rough patch. Talk and resolve the issue amicably. Financial agreements and a spiritual sojourn will give you satisfaction.



Scorpio: Money will flow from a close business associate. But handle your finances well before starting out to avert any misunderstandings.



Sagittarius: You may wonder if you'll ever be in a relationship of your choice. The day will be full of adventure and excitement. You are likely to be in a joyful mood.



Capricorn: A family issue might be troublesome. Carefully go through the details of new projects before you make any commitments. You will be focused and thoughtful at work.

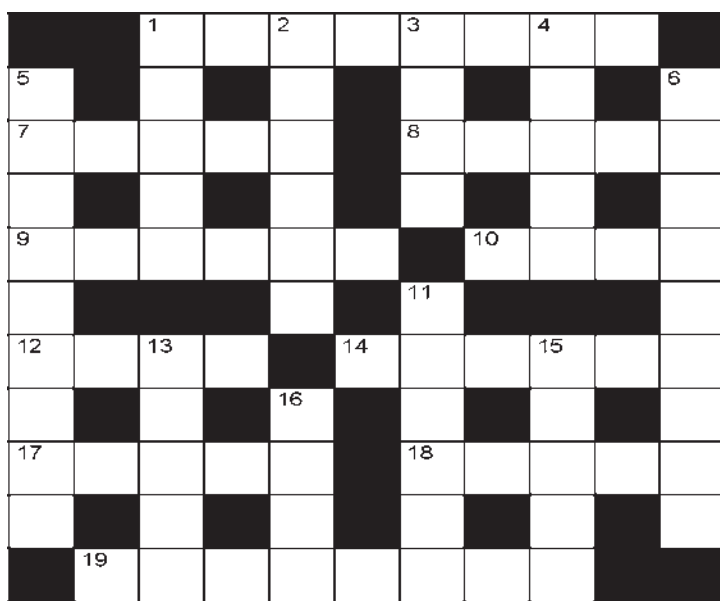


Aquarius: You are brimming with energy and are in the mood to take the initiative. Your colleagues will be supportive of your ideas. Don't let any distractions hamper your progress at work.



Pisces: Successful initiatives will draw the attention of seniors. Losing temper at domestic front will not only prevent you from solving family problems but could also take the situation out of control.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

1. Anxious expectation (8)
7. Senior to (5)
8. Rebuke (5)
9. Natural ability (6)
10. Supplication (4)
12. God of thunder (4)
14. Oesophagus (6)
17. Yellow-green colour (5)
18. Jargon (5)
19. Drainage (8)

Down

1. Large group of fish (5)
2. Perceiving (6)
3. Effortless (4)
4. Ruin (5)
5. Room divider (9)
6. Edge (9)
11. New York river (6)
13. Seance board (5)
15. South American cudchewer (5)
16. Bitter quarrel (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Cowardly, 6. Afar, 7. Towing, 9. Infer, 11. Disco, 12. Ideal, 13. Agile, 16. Notice, 18. Agar, 19. Eclectic.

Down: 1. Coalition, 2. Wharf, 3. Duty, 4. Yawning, 5. Fun, 8. Geometric, 10. Evasive, 14. Ingot, 15. Peel, 17. Oil.

Word Mine

G
A
L
L
E
D
L
Y
E

TODAY'S RATINGS: 16 AVERAGE; 18 GOOD; 20 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.

Across: 1. Gall, 2. Lyle, 3. Gall, 4. Lyle, 5. Gall, 6. Lyle, 7. Gall, 8. Lyle, 9. Gall, 10. Lyle, 11. Gall, 12. Lyle, 13. Gall, 14. Lyle, 15. Gall, 16. Lyle, 17. Gall, 18. Lyle, 19. Gall, 20. Lyle, 21. Gall, 22. Lyle, 23. Gall, 24. Lyle, 25. Gall, 26. Lyle, 27. Gall, 28. Lyle, 29. Gall, 30. Lyle, 31. Gall, 32. Lyle, 33. Gall, 34. Lyle, 35. Gall, 36. Lyle, 37. Gall, 38. Lyle, 39. Gall, 40. Lyle, 41. Gall, 42. Lyle, 43. Gall, 44. Lyle, 45. Gall, 46. Lyle, 47. Gall, 48. Lyle, 49. Gall, 50. Lyle, 51. Gall, 52. Lyle, 53. Gall, 54. Lyle, 55. Gall, 56. Lyle, 57. Gall, 58. Lyle, 59. Gall, 60. Lyle, 61. Gall, 62. Lyle, 63. Gall, 64. Lyle, 65. Gall, 66. Lyle, 67. Gall, 68. Lyle, 69. Gall, 70. Lyle, 71. Gall, 72. Lyle, 73. Gall, 74. Lyle, 75. Gall, 76. Lyle, 77. Gall, 78. Lyle, 79. Gall, 80. Lyle, 81. Gall, 82. Lyle, 83. Gall, 84. Lyle, 85. Gall, 86. Lyle, 87. Gall, 88. Lyle, 89. Gall, 90. Lyle, 91. Gall, 92. Lyle, 93. Gall, 94. Lyle, 95. Gall, 96. Lyle, 97. Gall, 98. Lyle, 99. Gall, 100. Lyle.

jumble

FCLOA
GDUNE
LAFTUN
TRYIGT

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print the answer here: _____

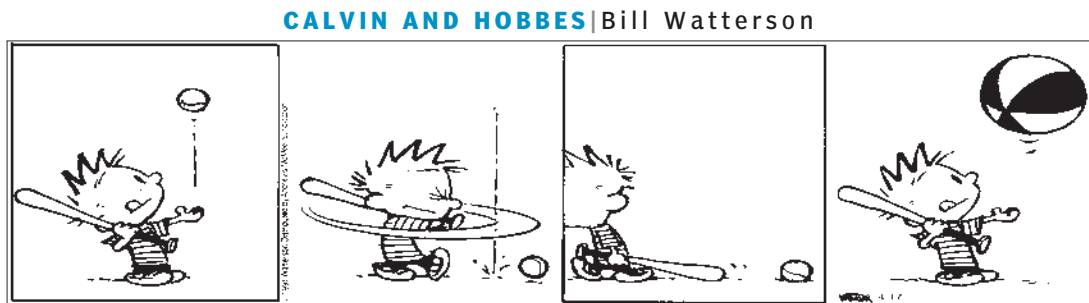
(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's | Jumbles: RAYOU, RUDDY, NINETY, NFAHY

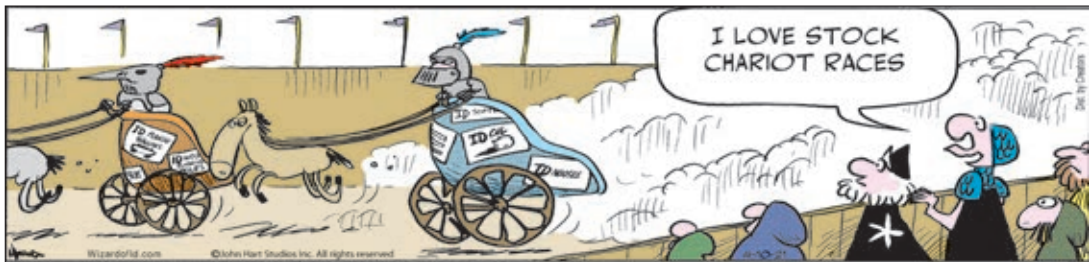
Answer: After the rock group trashed their hotel suite, the hotel manager - BANNED THE BAND

double, South won the club lead with his ace and played a low spade to dummy's 10. When the finesse worked, South ruffed a club in hand, ran the spade queen, led the spade jack to dummy's ace, ruffed a second club, returned to dummy with a heart, trumped a third club and cashed the heart ace.

That was nine tricks in, and East still held his four trumps. When South continued with dummy's last



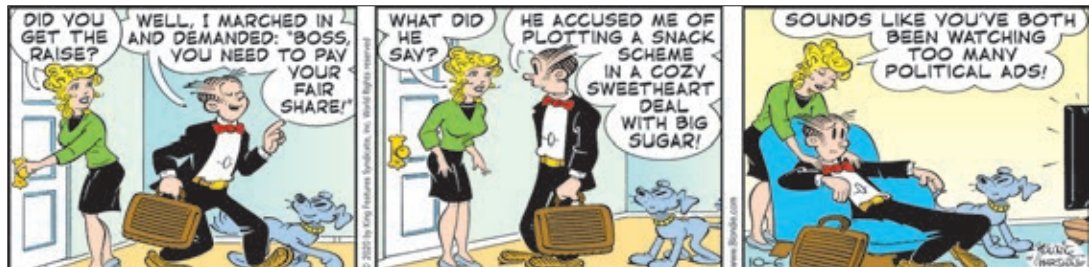
THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



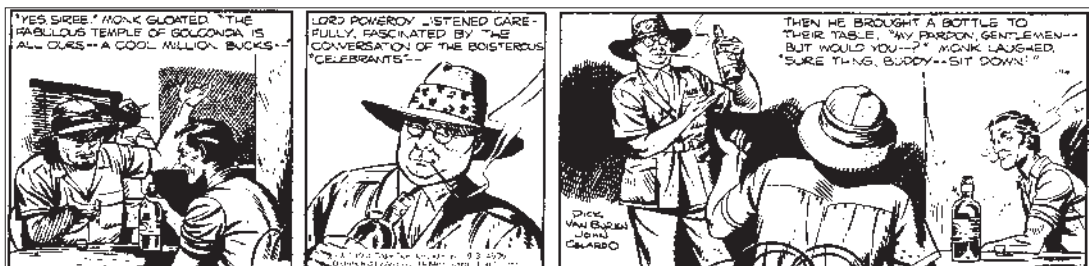
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs

bridge
PHILLIP
ALDERA KING
PLAYS
A LEADING
ROLE

In 1950, King Farouk I of Egypt said, "In a few years there will be only five kings in the world — the King of England and the four kings in a pack of cards."

Another great prediction! Within two years, there was no King of England. Elizabeth II has been on the throne since February 6, 1952. Yet there are still more than 40 reigning monarchs around the globe.

In this deal, taken from

"Right Through the Pack" by Robert Darvas and Norman de Villiers Hart, one king can play a key role — what is it? (This entertaining book contains 52 stories, each featuring a different card.)

The reader is told only that South reached five diamonds and was doubled by East. In my auction, South's two-diamond rebid guaranteed at least a six-card suit.

Warned about the bad trump split by East's unwise

North
♦ A 4
♥ K 10 7
♦ K 10 7
♠ A 4
♣ K 10 7
South
♦ A 4
♥ K 10 7
♦ K 10 7
♠ A 4
♣ K 10 7
Declarer: South
Vulnerability: North-South
South
West North East
Pass Pass Pass
Pass Pass Pass
Pass Pass Pass
Pass Pass Pass
Opening lead: ♦ Q

double, South won the club lead with his ace and played a low spade to dummy's 10. When the finesse worked, South ruffed a club in hand, ran the spade queen, led the spade jack to dummy's ace, ruffed a second club, returned to dummy with a heart, trumped a third club and cashed the heart ace.

That was nine tricks in, and East still held his four trumps. When South continued with dummy's last

heart, South was back to ruff and was declarer, unable to stop declarer from scoring both dummy's diamond king and his diamond queen.

The contract would have been defeated if West had inserted the spade king at trick two, which would have cost South a vital dummy entry. Another easy play for a king missed!

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IN BRIEF

Iran enriches uranium to 60%

Dubai: Iran began enriching uranium on Friday to its highest level ever, edging closer to weapons-grade levels to pressure talks in Vienna aimed at restoring its nuclear deal with world powers after an attack on its main atomic site. A top official said only a few grams an hour of uranium gas would be enriched up to 60 per cent purity — triple the level it once did but at a rate far slower than what Tehran could produce. International inspectors already said Iran planned to do so above-ground at its Natanz nuclear site, not deep within its underground halls hardened to withstand airstrikes.

Hackers held over Covid-19 scam

Surabaya, Indonesia: Two Indonesian hackers have been arrested over an international scam in which \$60 million was stolen from a Covid-19 aid programme helping Americans left jobless by the pandemic, authorities said. Text messages were sent to 20 million Americans directing them to more than a dozen fake US government websites, police in the Southeast Asian nation said late Thursday. Thousands of victims supplied personal information, including social security numbers, to the fake sites in the hopes of securing \$2,000 offered under a real assistance programme for the unemployed, authorities said.

French mosque subsidy dropped

Strasbourg, France: A controversial plan to use public money for building a mosque in Strasbourg stalled on Friday after the Turkish backers of the project dropped their request for a subsidy. The pullback came after Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin accused the eastern French city, led by Green mayor Jeanne Barseghian, of supporting “foreign meddling” on French soil with a planned subsidy for the mosque. The public money, 2.5 million euros (nearly \$3 million), was to go to the Milli Gorus Islamic Confederation (CMIG), a pan-European movement for the Turkish diaspora.

Indian's body found in NY river

New York: The body of a 31-year-old Indian-origin mathematician working with cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence was found floating in the Hudson River here, according to a media report which said he was battling apparent mental illness. Shuvro Biswas' body was found floating in the Hudson River on Monday, the New York Post reported. Police sources said that there were no immediate apparent signs of foul play. Shuvro's brother said that he and his family were gutted by the news, noting that they had tried in vain to help Shuvro as he battled apparent mental illness. “We're all extremely devastated,” Bipirojit Biswas, 34, was quoted by the newspaper as saying. “He's a really good guy. He's brilliant,” he said.

PAK SUSPENDS SOCIAL MEDIA OVER PROTESTS

Islamabad, April 16: Pakistan on Friday temporarily suspended the services of social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp to stop their use to organise demonstrations following violent protests by a radical religious group that has now been banned by the government. The government banned Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) on Thursday following three days of violent protest by it to force the government to expel the French ambassador over a blasphemous caricature published in France last year. The TLP had launched the country-wide protest on Monday after the arrest of its chief Saad Hussain Rizvi. The TLP supporters clashed with the law enforcement agencies in several towns and cities earlier this week, leaving seven persons dead and over 300 policemen injured. To stop the protests after Friday prayers, the Interior Ministry directed the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to suspend social media services for four hours from 11 am to 3 pm.

WHO worried as Covid cases double in just two months

Global health authority finds countries that avoid first outbreak are vulnerable

Geneva, April 16: The head of the World Health Organisation said Coronavirus cases are continuing to rise globally at worrying rates and noted that the number of new cases confirmed per week has nearly doubled during the past two months.

At a press briefing on Friday, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the number of new cases is approaching the highest rate of infection that we have seen so far in the pandemic.

Tedros said some countries that had been able to avoid widespread Covid-19 outbreaks are now seeing steep increases, citing Papua New Guinea as an example.

Until the beginning of this year, Papua New Guinea had reported less than 900 cases and nine

● **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** is a perfect example of why vaccine equity is so important, Tedros said.

deaths, Tedros said.

The country has now identified more than 9,000 cases and 83 deaths, half of which were reported in the last month.

Papua New Guinea is a perfect example of why vaccine equity is so important, Tedros said, adding that the Pacific island nation has relied on vaccine donations from Australia and the UN-backed Covax initiative.

To date, Covax has shipped about 40 million vaccines to more than 100 countries, or enough to protect about 0.25 per cent of the world's population. — AP

Pfizer plans third jab in 6-12 months

Washington, April 16: The head of Pfizer said in an interview aired on Thursday that people will “likely” need a third dose of his company's Covid-19 shot within six to 12 months of vaccination, while elsewhere defending the relatively higher cost of the jab.

CEO Albert Bourla also said annual vaccinations against the Coronavirus may well be required.

“We need to see what would be the sequence, and for how often we need to do that, that remains to be seen,” Bourla said in an interview recorded on April 1.

“A likely scenario is that there will be likely a need

for a third dose, somewhere between six and 12 months and then from there, there will be an annual revaccination, but all of that needs to be confirmed,” he said, adding that variants will play a “key role.” It is extremely important to suppress the pool of people that can be susceptible to the virus,” he said.

Researchers currently don't know how long vaccines provide protection against the Coronavirus.

Pfizer published a study earlier this month that said its jab is more than 91 per cent effective at protecting against the Coronavirus. — AFP

EU UNLIKELY TO RENEW ASTRA ORDERS: FRANCE

Paris, April 16: The European Union is very unlikely to renew its Covid-19 vaccine contracts with pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, a French minister said on Friday.

Denmark this week banned the use of AstraZeneca jabs over blood clot concerns, just as the EU said it was expecting 50 million Pfizer vaccine doses earlier than expected.

No final EU decision had been taken, French Industry Minister Agnes Pannier-Rumacher told RMC radio, but “it is highly probable” that no further AstraZeneca doses would be ordered. — AFP



Police and crime scene investigators work at the site of a mass shooting at a FedEx facility in Indianapolis, Indiana on Friday. — AFP

8 dead at FedEx facility, gunman shoots himself

Indianapolis, April 16:

A gunman killed eight people and wounded several others before apparently taking his own life in a late-night attack at a FedEx facility near the Indianapolis airport, police said, in the latest in a s-pate of mass shootings in the United States after a relative lull during the pandemic.

Five people were hospitalised after the Thursday night shooting, according to police. One of them had critical injuries, police spokesperson Genae Cook said. Another two people were treated and released at the scene.

FedEx said people who worked for the company were among the dead. A witness said that he was working inside the building when he heard several gunshots in rapid succession. “I see a man come out with a rifle in his hand and he starts firing and he starts yelling stuff that I could not understand,” Levi Miller told WTHR-TV. “What I ended up doing was ducking down to make sure he did not see me because I thought he would see me and he would shoot me.”

It was the latest in a recent string of mass shootings across the US. Last

INDIAN AMONG THOSE INJURED IN SHOOTING

New York, April 16: An Indian-origin man has said his niece was among those who were injured in a mass shooting incident at the FedEx facility in the US city of Indianapolis that left 8 people dead, according to a media report.

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) said at least eight people died and several others were wounded during the shooting on Thursday night. The girl, who was not named, was sitting in her car in the driver's seat when the gunfire erupted, her uncle Parminder Singh told local WTTV. “She called as I was asleep at home. She said there was a shooting in the FedEx. So we just drove from Brownsburg,” said Singh. She was wounded, he said. — PTI

month, eight people were fatally shot at massage businesses across the Atlanta area, and 10 died in gunfire at a supermarket in Boulder, Colorado. — AP

First friday of Ramzan



Palestinians take part in the first Friday prayers of Ramzan at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, Islam's third holiest site, in Old City of Jerusalem, on Friday. — AFP

Ousted Myanmar MPs to form shadow government

● **BESIDES ETHNIC** Karen and Kachin leaders, the CRPH's list of appointed ministers also included prominent politicians from the Chin, Shanni, Mon, Karenni and Ta'ang minority groups.

Yangon, April 16: A “parliament” working in hiding to oust Myanmar's junta from power announced a new shadow government on Friday, with deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi at its helm alongside ethnic minority politicians.

The country has been in turmoil since the military detained Suu Kyi and seized power, triggering a massive uprising that the junta has sought to quell with lethal force. Besides demanding a return to democracy, protesters are also increasingly calling for more of a governing role for the country's minority groups — which have long seen their voices marginalised by the ethnic Bamar majority.

The Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) — a group of lawmakers mostly from Suu Kyi's party attempting to govern underground via a shadow parliament — on Friday

more than 130 official ethnic minority groups, the country's political fate has long been tightly controlled by the Bamar majority — first under a nearly five-decade junta regime — which forced a so-called “Bamarisation” on minorities; and then under Suu Kyi's administration.

Besides ethnic Karen and Kachin leaders, the CRPH's list of appointed ministers also included prominent politicians from the Chin, Shanni, Mon, Karenni and Ta'ang minority groups.

They were chosen based on results from the 2020 election, input from a nationwide anti-coup protest movement, and ethnic minority groups — including armed rebels in the country's border territories, said Min Ko Naing.

“We have to pull it from the root... we must try to eradicate it,” he said, referring to the junta as he raised a three-finger salute — the symbol of resistance. — AFP

AUSSIE JUDGE RULES GOOGLE MISLED USERS

Canberra, April 16: Google broke Australian law by misleading users about personal location data collected through Android mobile devices, a judge found on Friday.

The Federal Court decision was a partial win for the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the nation's fair trade watchdog, which has been prosecuting Google for broader alleged breaches of consumer law since October 2019.

Justice Thomas Thawley found that Google misled Android mobile device users about personal location data collected between January 2017 and December 2018.

This is an important victory for consumers, especially anyone concerned about their privacy online, as the court's decision sends a strong message to Google and others that big businesses must not mislead their customers, Commission Chair Rod Sims said in a statement. — PTI

ROYAL | FUNERAL

Congregation at Prince Philip's funeral to wear masks

Cousin to walk between William, Harry

London, April 16: The much-talked-about feud between the brothers, Princes William and Harry, was thrown into focus again as the running order for their grandfather Prince Philip's funeral on Saturday confirmed that they would not be walking side by side in the procession.

The cousin of the royals, Peter Phillips the son of Queen Elizabeth II's daughter Princess Anne, will walk in between as they follow the specially-designed Land Rover which will carry the coffin of Prince Philip the Duke

of Edinburgh through Windsor Castle.

There have been widespread reports of an estrangement between 38-year-old William, the second in line to the British throne, and his younger brother Harry, 36, ever since he stepped back from frontline royal duties and relocated to the US with wife Meghan Markle.

Details of the ceremonial funeral released by Buckingham Palace on Thursday confirmed the others in the procession to St George's Chapel as all four children of the late royal: Prince Charles the Prince

● **THE FUNERAL** Service will be conducted by the Dean of Windsor.

of Wales, Princess Anne the Princess Royal, Prince Andrew the Duke of York, and Prince Edward the Earl of Wessex and Forfar. The congregation will wear masks for the Service and members of the Royal Family will wear Day Dress or Morning Coat with medals, the palace statement said, in reference to the scaled-back arrangements in keeping with the Covid-19

lockdown restrictions.

During the Service, a small choir of four will sing pieces of music chosen by the Duke of Edinburgh. The choir will be located in the Nave, away from the seated congregation, and in line with public health guidelines there will be no congregational singing.

The Funeral Service will be conducted by the Dean of Windsor, and is expected to last for approximately 50 minutes, it said. The Queen will travel in the State Bentley in the procession, behind the family members on foot,

before entering by a side door to the chapel. Inside, she will be seated by herself under the social distancing guidelines.

The ceremony, which was originally designed for a gathering of 800, will have just 30 guests comprising close family and the other guests on the limited guest list include Prince Charles' wife Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, Prince William's wife Kate Middleton, all of Prince Philip's grandchildren and their spouses, and the children of the Queen's sister Princess Margaret. — PTI

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM to
E-Tender Notice No. 22 UBL 2020-21
Date: 18-03-2021
The above mentioned Tender Notice, the work mentioned in the SI. No. 8 is cancelled on administrative grounds. All other terms and conditions will remain the same.
For details log on: www.reps.gov.in
Divisional Railway Manager (Works)
PUB/16/AS/PRB/SWR/2021-22 Hubballi

NORTHERN RAILWAY
1st corrigendum to Tender notice
No. 349-A-W/Const-I/CDG/1/2021-22 dated 13.04.2021
Name of work: Construction of foundations, substructure and superstructure of Road over bridges in lieu of level crossing No. Special 1-A on Rajpura-Patiala section, level crossing No. 154-C & 167-C on Ambala-Ludhiana section and Road over bridge cum Road under bridge in lieu of level crossing No.151-C on Ambala-Ludhiana section including miscellaneous and allied works. The tenders for the above said work scheduled to be opened on 07.05.2021 at 11.30 hrs now has since been cancelled.
No. 349-A-W/Const-I/CDG/1/2021-22 1st Corr date: 15.04.2021 862/21
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NOTICE BEFORE THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW TRIBUNAL BENCH, AT CHENNAI
Miscellaneous Application No. 242 of 2020
In
Company Application No. 1431 of 2019
In the matter of Section 252(1) of the Companies Act, 2013 read with Rules 11 & 87A of National Company Law Tribunal Rules, 2016
And
EXCEED TECHNOLOGIES PRIVATE LIMITED,
Sai Square, 12, Arcot Road, Valasaravakkam, Chennai-600087.
In The Matter Of
Income Tax Officer,
Corporate Ward 2(1), 5th Floor, Wanaparthy Block, Room No.515, 121, M.G.Road, Chennai-600034.
Vs
The Registrar of Companies
Block No.6, B-Wing, II Floor, Shastr Bhawan, 26, Haddows Road, Chennai - 600 034.
...Respondent
An Application CA No.1431 of 2019 under Section 252 of the Companies Act, 2013, for revival of the Company Exceed Technologies Private Limited was filed by the Income Tax Officer, Corporate Ward-2(1), and an Application [MA No.252 of 2020] to Implead the Company and its Directors was filed pursuant to Directions issued by the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal. Pursuant to the order dated 23.03.2021, the present notice is being issued to the following Respondents
• Respondent No.2: Exceed Technologies Private Limited represented by its Authorised Representative, having its registered office Sai Square, 12, Arcot Road, Valasaravakkam, Chennai-600087.
• Respondent No.3: Mr.Charles Valerian Miles, Director, Exceed Technologies Private Limited residing at 2420, Inspired CT Henderson, NV 89052, United States; and
• Respondent No.4: Mr.Udaya shankar Yegneshwaran, Director, Exceed Technologies Private Limited, residing at No.H28/G2, TNHB Flats, 1st Seaward Road Valmiki Nagar, Thiruvananthapuram, Chennai-600041.
Please note that the said Application is fixed for hearing before Bench 1 of the National Company Law Tribunal, Chennai on 30th April, 2021 and a final call for effecting appearance is given vide this Notice to the said Respondents. In the event the abovementioned persons fail to effect appearance before the said forum, the Applications will be decided ex-parte.
Dated: 13.04.2021 S. SAMPOORNAM
Income Tax Officer
Corporate Ward 2(1), 5th Floor, Wanaparthy Block, Room No.515, 121, M.G.Road, Chennai-600034

DECCAN Chronicle

17 APRIL 2021

Bengal: EC misses chance to curb Covid during vote

Evidently, bureaucratic woodenness has triumphed over plain common sense. It is open to question, however, whether the victory has not been that of politics in dismissing the plea of West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee for collapsing the remaining four phases of the Assembly election into one. The CM's urging came in the wake of the surging Covid-19 cases in the country.

As much as the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar, which the chief minister of Uttarakhand shows no inclination to cancel as he aspires to religious merit and evidently also political dividends that may flow from it, the Election Commission of India appears in no mood to cancel polling schedules more appropriate for normal times.

It is another matter that eight phases of polling in a not very large state wasn't exactly normal to start with, and has been a matter of criticism by all parties in the fray other than the BJP. The dissenters see in the eight-phase polling programme the hand of political considerations writ large.

Ms Banerjee tweeted her pleading. The EC has not deigned to reply because the suggestion was not made on official paper. It must look deep within itself and reflect if officially turning a deaf ear would have been its way if the prod had come from those on high in New Delhi. No prizes for guessing the right answer. The record of the EC in recent years has been a subject of adverse comment.

In a fiercely noisy election campaign in which bad language and worse sentiments have won the day so far, Ms Banerjee's suggestion was frankly a breath of fresh air. It was out of the box. It was genuinely constructive. It would have cut the time and scope for any potential violence. More importantly, it would have helped cut the transmissibility of the new mutants of the Covid-19 virus by checkmating poll-time crowds.

In fact, it is reasonable to wonder why the EC itself did not initiate such a splendid idea, find ways to overcome legal hurdles, if any, and help all parties reach a consensus on practicalities, urging them not to be politically short-sighted or naïve but look for what's good for the general public.

It is a pity that the Commission chose not to offer to reply. It gave out snippets of its thinking through the media. One, it was said that the proposal was made on social media, as though that makes it irrelevant. Two, it was explained by "sources" that there were legal difficulties since nominations were over. This hardly seems tenable since the issue at stake was polling, not nominations or withdrawals. Three, the point was also made that 150 companies of central paramilitary forces — or 15,000 soldiers — would be hard to find suddenly.

This does appear lame — even tawdry. Those numbers can be got together with the snapping of the finger if there is political will. The real point, however, is that the country is not at war with one half of the state of West Bengal where polling (for 159 seats) are due to be held by the end of the month. Remember, for comparison, that the US has only 3,000 soldiers in war-ravaged Afghanistan for counter-terrorism duties, and this has been the case for nearly a year.

The EC could have done better. It has missed the chance to reach for higher goals and distinguish itself.

Recovery vs inflation

Even though the year 2020 was lost because of the once-in-hundred years pandemic, people had harboured a glimmer of hope that 2021 would be better. While January and February did seem so, people's complacency brought back the coronavirus in full strength. As if the Covid-19 pandemic were not enough, economic data suggests a difficult time ahead. Wholesale Price Index (WPI) numbers that were released on Thursday showed that the rise in wholesale prices has touched an eight-year high at 7.39 per cent in March.

While it is true that WPI or wholesale inflation numbers are no longer used by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to determine lending rates, the retail inflation is better at 5.52 per cent. Though it is still within the inflation mandate of four per cent (plus or minus two per cent) given to the RBI, it could shoot up if supply constraints emerge because of local lockdowns.

The rising inflation and contracting industrial production present the most difficult conundrum for the Narendra Modi government. Since May 2014, the government has been careful not to stoke inflationary pressures in any manner, even if it meant sacrificing economic growth for some time. In its first term, it stopped raising the minimum support price for farmers, which was one of the key reasons for higher inflation during the UPA-2 government. Even during the lockdown, the government let most people fend for themselves without opting for unorthodox policies.

One of the tools that RBI employs to tame inflation is the higher interest rate. However, it cannot drop its accommodative monetary policy, if it has to spur economic growth at least back to the pre-Covid levels. The government and RBI have a difficult choice to make between taming inflation and boosting economic growth. Good luck, finance minister and RBI governor!

KAUSHIK MITTER

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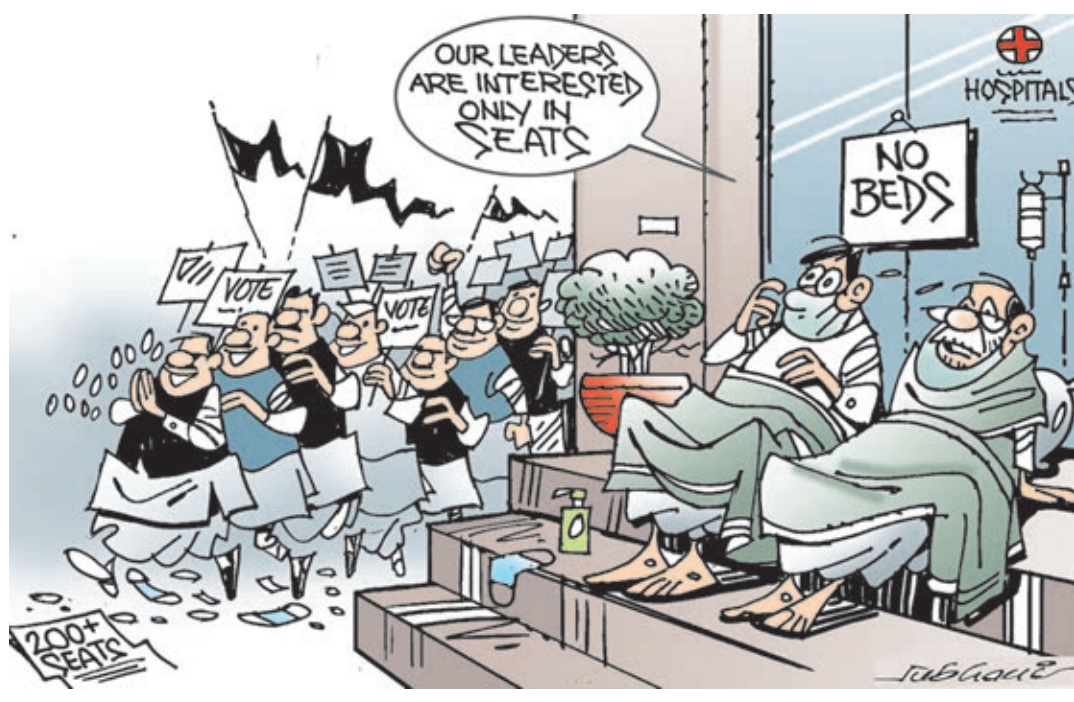
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Subhani



Kal Ho Na Ho: Inept govt messes up war on Covid



Shobhaa's Take

I read an interesting article in an American magazine, which talked about a Covid-19 condition known as "Mental Mist" — it sounds dreamy and poetic but in reality it's a lot harsher. Almost everyone in my immediate circle has been infected by the virus now. All of us know at least five others who are coping the best that they can, and perhaps only "mental mist" will see through this terrible second surge. Scientists and researchers aren't making things any better by warning us there are likely to be many more waves: the third one is already upon us! Here in Mumbai, we are dealing with CM Uddhav Thackeray's version of the latest lockdown, euphemistically called a "*janata curfew*" (borrowed from the PM's description last year). It's the same old lockdown with a more "user friendly" tag. We need all the "mental mist" we can get to help us cope once again with what is already a monumental tragedy. He has shrugged off all responsibility for the alarming numbers, declaring: "Now preventing the infection is very difficult, therefore strict enforcement is very important." No kidding, Sirji... You can happily police citizens but not admit and take responsibility for administrative failures earlier! Where were you for three critical weeks?

The second surge across Mumbai and Maharashtra is a different beast. We still don't know how different. Is it a mutant? If so, which strain? Will those of us who have taken the job be protected against this new strain? I think not! I know two people who contracted the virus nearly a month after their first jab — so much for "protection".

Seventeen lakh Mumbai-kars got the vaccine over a six-week period, if one accepts these numbers. There's now a severe shortage of just about everything, vaccines included. Senior citizens trudged miles to get their jabs only to come home disappointed. Two of my girlfriends are recovering in a South Mumbai hospital. A third is critical in a suburban hospital. We don't have enough oxygen and patients are dying, literally gasping for breath. The numbers trotted out by the authorities are grossly understated, and the reason is trite: "We don't want mass panic." But the dead are piling up, and how long can the awful truth be buried or burnt?

While the second wave was creeping up on Mumbai, our *netas* were busy with just one thing: dealing with a corrupt cop! All energy invested in "fixing" Sachin Waze and Anil Deshmukh (NCP home minister, who quit). Devendra Fadnavis' relentless pressure on Uddhav Thackeray's rickety alliance to come clean (ha!) on the "Antilia" bomb scare ensured very little other work got done at the BMC and Mantralaya. Even those efficient bureaucrats who had done such a hands-on job to contain Covid last year sat tight for the past month, unable to act, since the CM was only worried about hanging on to his job. Without authorisation, with nobody to sign files, even the municipal commissioner (I.S. Chahal) had no choice but to wait it out, till we hit the emergency button! Our hearts go out to dedicated BMC staffers soldiering on regardless: thank you for your selfless service!

The migrant exodus has started, with no "rules" in place. Hardly anyone has

People who track government mess-ups blame the bureaucrats, specially the three musketeers who advise the PM

the all-important Covid-negative certificate, while bus operators are offering a package deal that comes with a fake cert (300 bucks). Frankly, irate citizens are asking: "Why the hell should we abide by lockdown rules when even the PM isn't bothering? Look at those mammoth-sized political rallies!" And look at the sadhus taking a holy dip at the Kumbh: 40 lakhs jumping into the river in the first *snan*. Read the asinine remarks of Uttarakhand's CM (Tirath Singh Rawat), who defended the complete flouting of Covid protocols at Haridwar: "The devotees have Ma Ganga's blessings." The videos of deliriously high Naga sadhus in their birthday suits dancing and singing their way to the ghats went viral, perhaps for the wrong reasons, even as news of Yogi Adityanath testing positive made the news. Rawat Saab nonchalantly claimed: "All Central government guidelines are followed at Kumbh, be it social distancing or other norms, everything is in place." The numbers of those who tested positive shot up from 1,863 to 10,770 at last count; one shudders to think what will follow when the sadhus and pilgrims go back where they came from. I am sending an SOS to Ma Ganga: Extra blessings desperately needed!

When citizens see the rule of law being selectively implemented, they lose all respect for authority. That's what's happening now in Mumbai, where a group of cops celebrate a colleague's birthday in style, lockdown be damned. A police van was used to transport *khaana peena* to the thana, where the happy bunch let their hair down and some took their shirts off! Alcohol was retrieved from the

celebration site, but so far no action has been taken against those naughty chaps: *theek hai "pawri ho rahi hai"*, boss!

People who track government mess-ups blame the bureaucrats, specially the three musketeers who advise the PM. While he was busy investing all his time and energy in the West Bengal elections, our bright chaps goofed up with the entire vaccine rollout plan: the complicated international contracts and the crucial numbers involved. By trying to drive a hard bargain, we actually lost out! Apparently, when things started to slide in the second surge, the bureaucrats panicked and did what babus always do: opted for the CYA approach. Right now, chaos reigns and nobody knows where the buck stops. How on earth are we going to contain the second wave, when we do not have enough vaccines for our people? So much money and prestige lost why? Because those "babu bullies" got the maths wrong, leading to a cancellation of major contracts and embarrassment in the international media. Several scathing articles have appeared since the debacle, mocking our earlier boasts of "Bending it like Beckham" (in the context of the economy). Too bad the Sensex tanked, based on the disastrous Covid forecasts.

No, we are not prepared to fight this war, regardless of what the government is claiming. Lies and more lies are being thrown at us daily. Like that fake video showing a deserted Haridwar and asking: What crowds? Where crowds? This clumsy attempt at shielding the government's monumental failure at tackling a national crisis is being seen as a crime against humanity. Such negligence! Such heartlessness!

Dealing with Covid is a lot easier than dealing with our callous *netas*.

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.blogspot.com

LETTERS

HYPOCRITE TURNCOATS

Apropos report M. Chinnasamy: Stalin lacks leadership qualities. "The ex-DMK member Mr Chinnasamy's statement that 'Mr Stalin does not have leadership qualities' is preposterous. He should know that Mr Stalin had proved his mettle, held many responsible positions in the party as well as in the government and indisputably contributed a lot to Tamil Nadu. Even after his father's death he could hold the party intact without a split in the rank and file unlike the AIADMK which broke into two after its supremo madam Jaya's demise. It is nothing but rank abrasiveness of leaders like Mr Chinnasamy who praise their party leadership while inside but lambast it once they quit. Such turncoats are not uncommon in TN politics but we have to wait and watch what Mr Chinnasamy does after the elections if the DMK, as the pollsters predicted, wins the polls and Mr Stalin becomes CM. After all the earth is round.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

MIGRANT LABOURERS PLIGHT

Little over a year has passed since the migrant workers slogged it on foot to their native places in the aftermath of the Covid-19 outbreak, with many of them losing their livelihoods in the process. The transition to an informal economy must be seen in the context of India's deep-rooted social inequality, resulting in widespread indigence. In the havoc the pandemic created, politics and governance have further distorted the already highly skewed balance between capital and labour. Why did the country's top leadership not realise the impact of the sudden announcement of lockdown would have on these workers far from home who were robbed overnight of the meagre fruits of their labour? The instant loss of income not only added to their despair, but the migrants faced strong suspicion that they might be carrying the malignant virus on their eventual return. The swollen feet of these migrant workers who trudged miles and miles had left strong imprints that can never be erased from the pages of Indian history.

R. Sivakumar, Chennai

FUNNY ACTIONS OF BCCI

It is really heartening to know that the BCCI has included promising youngsters like Shubman Gill, Axar Patel and Mohd. Siraj in its Central "C" contract. However, it is a surprise that T. Natarajan, who excelled during our tour Down Under, has not found a place even in "C" category. At the same time, Hardik Pandya, who has failed to live up to his all-rounder tag recently, has been promoted to Grade "A", which is a real surprise. Anyway, that's Indian Cricket Board. Capt. N. Viswanathan, Coimbatore

Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



"The day dawns
Your Yoni yawns
The lingam says 'good morning';
The night has gone
But the game's still on —
That apple came with no warning."

— From *The Pirhana Purana* by Bachchoo

Racism exists in Britain, but it's not always 'institutional'

There were two "incidents" in my years at Cambridge University which I could possibly label "racist". On my first day, in conversation with my tutor, Meredith Dewey, he used an unfamiliar word. He said it was my room was comfortable and asked: "The New Block has central heating, so we put all the wogs there."

I hadn't heard the "W" word before. I later asked my neighbour, Beresford, what it meant, and he said it was the abbreviation for "Worthy Oriental Gentleman". The insult, I realised was in the implicit patronisation. I am certain Dewey meant no offence. He was not a racist, but it was an imperial term he'd been brought up with and hadn't thought about. Not very many people, 40 or more years on, dare publicly pro-

nounce the word. Like the "N" word or the "P" word (used for all Asians), it's taboo.

That was verbal. The real incident of race discrimination I faced at university was in my second year when we had to live out of college in "digs". I applied for several and was turned away from many because the landladies didn't accept any "wogs" in their rooms.

One got over it. London was another fettle of kitsch. Yes, there were the same elements of race-based abusive words and the refusal by landlords to rent out their bed-sitters and bartenders refusing to serve you in pubs. There were assaults, certainly through racist motives, some serious, as the time in 1973 when a petrol bomb was thrown into the ground floor of the building where I had a flat on the second and had to leap out of the window of a burning building.

Even so, these may have been racist, but couldn't be strictly classed as "institutional racism". My first experience of the meaning of that phrase was when I got a teaching job at a school which had been established as an amalgamation of three schools — Henry

Thornton, which was a grammar school, all white except for two Indian doctors' sons, Tennyson and Aristotle. The Tennysonians and Aristotelians were 90 per cent black with 10 per cent of white working-class boys. The amalgamated school was graded into 10 levels in each academic year. The division seemed institutionally pernicious as the top two grades were exclusively white and the bottom four almost uniformly black with the middle grades layered in a climbing graph of racial composition. There were no declared or transparent criteria for the classification. Of course, the school protested that the divisions were based on academic tests. After six months in the school, I was convinced they were not. It was an institutionally race-biased division.

Living and working in London and being a member of a radical political group, I was soon made aware that the police in every major city systematically picked on West Indians walking the streets and searched them, or invaded their gatherings, calling them drug raids.

It was not till the 1980s when, after the riots of black youngsters in Brixton in

London, in Liverpool and Birmingham and the murder of a teenager called Stephen Lawrence by racist thugs, that Westminster set up independent enquiries into the causes and possible remedies of what was clearly an urban war between the police and blacks.

One of the enquiries by an impartial member of the judiciary, characterised the police forces as "institutionally racist". Since that term entered the public vocabulary, it has been used to characterise very many institutions of Britain.

In the long shadow of the Back Lives Matter movement, BoJo's government recruited a Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities. The commissioners were eleven people. Ten of them from Asian and black communities and were representatives of several professions. They produced a 258-page report which, when it was published on April Fool's day brought a tsunami of criticism. Not from the right-leaning press in Britain, which accepted and boasted about the report's contention that Britain had no institutions which could be, on statistical evidence, condemned as "institutionally racist".

The report was cautious in several ways but raised a storm of protest from black academics, writers, activists and liberal newspapers, some of whom questioned the "findings" and others who condemned it as a Tory government whitewash. I was made aware, gentle reader, of several of these objections. They were in the main not backed by statistical counter arguments to the report's findings, but assessments of the "mood" and the feelings of those who would speak for the black communities — if there is indeed still such a single entity.

Some of the negative reaction to the report, which said for instance that the Chinese, Asian and female black students excelled in schools and left white and black working-class boys scoring the worst in exams and meritocratic progress. The report concluded that this was not endemic institutional racism in the educational system but was attributable to vast social factors.

I admit I haven't read the report but will do. The fact that I know two of the commissioners and respect the acumen, honesty and view of at least one of them, inclines me at this point to sit on the fence. Ouch!

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,832.03	0.06
Nifty 50	14,617.90	0.25
S&P 500*	4,180.11	0.23
Dollar (₹)	74.35	0.76
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.46	0.85
Euro (₹)	89.06	0.77
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,431.9	0.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.82	0.18
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.088	-0.02
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.578	0.048

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Mindtree Q4 net profit climbs 54% to ₹317 cr

IT firm Mindtree said its consolidated net profit rose by 53.9 per cent to Rs 317.3 crore in the March quarter, against Rs 206.2 crore in the year-ago quarter, on the back of strong operational efficiency, and it expressed confidence in logging double-digit growth in FY22. Its revenue grew 2.9 per cent to Rs 2,109.3 crore from Rs 2,050.5 crore. In dollar terms, the net profit was up 53.4 per cent at \$43.3 million, while revenue was up by 3.5 per cent at \$288.2 million.

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■ Little gain seen to elders from the move Plan to open NPS to 65+ gets split views

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, APRIL 16

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) is contemplating hiking the maximum age of entry for the National Pension System (NPS) from 65 years to 70 years.

The Pension fund regulator is also thinking of allowing NPS subscribers who join after the age of 60 years to continue their NPS accounts till the age of 75. However, for others, the age of maturity will remain 70 years.

Financial planners are, however, divided over the benefits of people entering NPS at the fag end of their life, as they would have a limited time-frame to accumulate a decent corpus through this investment. Moreover, with 40 per cent of the total corpus mandatorily going towards buying annuities, their overall returns would be limited.

According to some experts, senior citizens would be better off investing their surplus in a mix of debt instruments, such as Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana, post office Senior Citizen Savings Scheme, fixed deposits, debentures, bonds and debt mutual funds.

Says Arnav Pandya, a certified financial planner: "It would have been positive if existing subscribers were given the option to contribute in NPS for a longer time. But the accumulation period is being increased for new sub-



scribers. Senior citizens who can invest in NPS for around 15-20 years can look at subscribing in NPS but those who have a lesser time horizon should refrain from NPS.

"This is because under NPS, 40 per cent of the corpus needs to be converted into annuity, which reduces the rate of return that a person would earn on their corpus, as you are forced to go to an insurance company and buy annuities. Also, if you are a senior citizen, you will invest only in debt, which would limit the scope of appreciation as compared to when you invest in equities. You are better off on your own investing in a range of debt instruments that give you a higher rate of return."

"So, for older people starting NPS just because the investment age is raised would not be the right strategy, as you need to give time for the corpus to accumulate. Such investors can look at a mixture of debt mutual funds, debentures, bonds, special deposits of banks and

financial institutions."

But Supratim Bandyopadhyay, chairman, PFRDA, says around 15,000 people above the age of 60 joined the NPS since the entry age limit was raised from 60 to 65 three years ago.

According to the chief executive officer of a pension fund house, "Senior citizens can earn decent returns, avail tax benefits and protect their capital by investing in NPS."

Sachin Shetty, a mutual fund and insurance distributor, said, "Life expectancy is rising and so are expenses. So far NPS has performed well. If a person is 60 years or more but is ready to hold money for the long term i.e. 10 years or more, then he should definitely invest in NPS to create a good corpus to meet rising expenses. However, since NPS is prone to market fluctuations, those with high investible surplus could diversify by investing a part of their surplus in Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana which is fetching over 7 per cent return."

Catch-22: More customers mean less revenue for e-pharmacies

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, APRIL 16

Similar to other online services, e-pharmacies too have seen increased customer acceptance during the pandemic but their revenues have declined during the period. This, despite a four-to-five-fold growth in traffic witnessed by them.

E-pharmacies became more popular during the lockdown as many first-time buyers used them for buying both prescription and OTC drugs. These customers are sticking to e-pharmacy purchases even after the pandemic.

The average traffic per day had surged four-five times during the lockdown period, according to brokerage Motilal Oswal. In addition, customer conversion went up from 12-15 per cent pre-lockdown to 20-22 per cent after lockdown. But the average



order value came down drastically from Rs 3,500 to Rs 800 post-lockdown. As a result, average revenues of e-pharmacy players declined during the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, 70 per cent of e-pharmacy business used to come from chronic therapies, such as diabetes, blood pressure and cholesterol. That trend shifted heavily towards Covid essentials post-lockdown and simultaneously chronic therapies' contribution came down to 40-45 per cent of

total online revenues. This led to a decline in average revenues. While private label and substitution can improve profitability, substitution of prescribed brand for private label is a costly affair with slim chances of success.

"Currently all e-pharmacy players are burning cash and to breakeven at the Ebitda level, they need to have an average order value of Rs 3,000-3,500 and cut operational costs drastically, which is possible only with an omni-channel model," says Kartik Anantharaman, director of e-pharmacy and private label business at Medlife. According to him, the omni-channel model involves online players working with offline players, eliminating competition between the two and enabling collaboration by complementing each other's strengths. The omni-channel format also provides operating leverage, as e-pharmacy players can easily service more orders per day. Further, profitability is also dependent on the mix of bulk purchases and just-in-time purchases. To become profitable, the bulk purchases have to be at least 70 per cent and for this, companies need better clarity on demand and the prescription patterns of doctors.

The road to profitability looks quite long for e-pharmacies now.

CHINA'S Q1 GDP SURGES TO 18.3%

K.J.M. VARMA BEIJING, APRIL 16

China's economy grew a record 18.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2021, riding on strong domestic and foreign demand and aided by recovery from a low base in early 2020, statistics released on Friday showed. The gross domestic product (GDP) reached 24.93 trillion yuan (about \$3.82 trillion) in Q1. This is the highest quarterly growth rate since China first began publishing GDP data in 1993. —PTI

Honda Cars recalls 78,000 units of select models

New Delhi, April 16: Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) on Friday announced the recall of 77,954 units of select models to replace faulty fuel pumps in an exercise it started last year. The fuel pumps, it said, may contain defective impellers that could over time result in engine stopping or not starting.

The recall impacts the Amaze, 4th generation City, WR-V, Jazz, Civic, BR-V, and CRV, manufactured between January 2019 and September 2020. HCIL said 36,086 units of

MARUTI HIKES PRICES BY UP TO ₹22,500

New Delhi, April 16: Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Friday said it has hiked prices of most of its models by up to Rs 22,500 with immediate effect to partially offset

the impact of the rise in input costs. Barring Celerio and Swift, all the models will be covered under the price increase exercise, MSI said in a regulatory filing. —PTI

Amaze made during Jan.-Aug. 2019 and 20,248 units of the 4th Gen City produced during Jan.-Sept. 2019 have been recalled. Similarly, 7,871 units of WR-V and 6,235 units of Jazz made during Jan.-

Aug. 2019; 5,170 units of Civic made in Jan.-Sept. 2019; 1,737 units of BR-V made in Jan.-Oct. 2019, and 607 units of CRV made during Jan. 2019 and Sept. 2020 are part of the recall. —PTI

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Vihari out on duck in county debut

Nottingham: India's Test specialist Hanuma Vihari had a forgettable English county debut for Warwickshire, failing to trouble the scorers against Nottinghamshire here. Vihari, who is set to play a minimum three games for the Birmingham-based county, struggled a lot while facing England international Stuart Broad during his agonising 40-minute stay in the middle. Vihari came in to bat in the second over of the Warwickshire first innings after Notts were bowled out for 273 in 88 overs. During fielding, Vihari bowled an over for 11 runs and also took a catch off his skipper Will Rhodes' bowling to dismiss Steven Mullaney. —PTI

Harman recovers from Coronavirus

New Delhi: Indian women's T20 captain Harmanpreet Kaur on Friday announced that she has recovered from Covid-19. Harmanpreet had tested positive and made it public on March 30. After more than two weeks, her RT-PCR report has come negative.

"Happy to inform you all that I have tested -ve & I'm feeling better. My only message to y'all is to take care & be extra careful. The virus is real & it's dangerous. Follow all the protocols set up by the authorities. Wishing strength to the ones who are in the middle of the fight," Harmanpreet tweeted. —PTI

Coleman to miss Oly despite ban cut

Geneva: World 100 metres champion Christian Coleman's two-year ban for missing three doping tests has been reduced by six months to 18 months, the Court of Arbitration for Sport said on Friday. The 25-year-old American will still miss the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics this year as his ban runs until November 14. Coleman will, however, be eligible to defend his world indoor and outdoor titles next year. CAS "partially upheld" the Athletics Integrity Unit's ruling but found Coleman's "degree of negligence to be lower". —AFP

Roma, Man U in Europa last four

Paris, April 16: Roma lined up a blockbuster Europa League semifinal clash with Manchester United on Thursday after holding Ajax to a 1-1 draw to go through to the Last Four 3-2 on aggregate.

Edin Dzeko's strike 18 minutes from time ensured the draw and passage for Paulo Fonseca's side, who were on the back foot for most of the match, and a showdown with United who strolled into the semis 4-0 after a 2-0 win over Granada at Old Trafford. The other semifinal will see Arsenal face Villarreal, coached by former Gunners boss Unai Emery.

Italy's only remaining representative in Europe came into the clash at the Stadio Olimpico with a slender lead but two away goals from last week's first leg in Amsterdam.

Their European campaign looked in danger when Ajax teen Brian Brobbey was introduced for Antony at the break and the striker made an instant impact, racing onto Perr Schuurs pass three minutes after the restart and nipped the ball

past an onrushing Pau Lopez.

However after Dusan Tadic's strike for the away side six minutes later was ruled out for a foul on Henrikh Mkhitaryan in the build up, Dzeko tipped the tie in Roma's favour.

Meanwhile, United had few problems against Granada, who had a mountain to climb after losing the first leg 2-0 in Spain.

Edinson Cavani opened the scoring after just five minutes to put United ahead but Jesus Vallejo's last-minute own goal sealed the win for United, who could yet have an all-English final with Arsenal.

The Gunners will face Villarreal in a fortnight after thumping Slavia Prague 4-0 to go through 5-1 on aggregate.

Behind on away goals thanks to Tomas Holes' stoppage-time leveller at the Emirates Stadium last week, Arsenal ended Slavia's 23-match unbeaten run thanks to a six-minute blitz from Nicolas Pepe, Alexandre Lacazette and Bukayo Saka in the first half. —AFP



Manchester United's Alex Telles looks on as his teammate Paul Pogba (right) vies with Granada's Kenedy (left) during their UEFA Europa League quarterfinal second leg match at Old Trafford stadium in Manchester on Thursday. —AFP

Tsitsipas strolls into semifinals

Monaco, April 16: Stefanos Tsitsipas advanced to the semifinals of the Monte Carlo Masters on Friday when his quarterfinal opponent Alejandro Davidovich Fokina withdrew after losing the first set 7-5.

Tsitsipas, the World No.5, will play his sixth Masters 1000 semifinal on Saturday, and his first in the principality, against Belgian David Goffin or Englishman Dan Evans, the conqueror of Novak Djokovic.

Struggling with an injury to his left thigh, Spaniard Davidovich tried an underarm serve when facing set point. Tsitsipas pounced to hit a winning backhand return.

Until he was hurt, Davidovich gave his Greek opponent problems.



Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece plays a return during his quarterfinal match against Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina on Day Seven of the Monte-Carlo ATP Masters Series tournament in Monaco on Friday. —AFP

But at 3-3, Davidovich called for the doctor to treat his left thigh. He immediately managed the first break of the match, as

Tsitsipas immediately broke back and as Davidovich struggled, broke again to end the set and the match.

Earlier, Novak Djokovic crashed out of the Monte Carlo Masters on Thursday following an "awful performance" in a 6-4, 7-5 defeat by Dan Evans, while 11-time champion Rafael Nadal powered into the quarterfinals.

Nadal required just 55 minutes to demolish Bulgarian 14th seed Grigor Dimitrov 6-1, 6-1.

The third-ranked Spaniard is the highest seed left in the draw following Djokovic's loss and the withdrawal of Daniil Medvedev after he tested positive for Covid-19.

Rafael Nadal will meet Russian sixth seed Andrey Rublev. —AFP

VALTERRI, HAMILTON RUBBER IN IMOLA PRACTICE

Imola (Italy), April 16: Mercedes drivers Valtteri Bottas and Lewis Hamilton steered their way through two red flags on Friday to the best times of the first practice session for the Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix.

Bottas was quickest round the legendary Imola circuit but was less than one-tenth of a second faster than his teammate.

Similarly there was a cigarette paper between Hamilton, who won the opening race in Bahrain, and Red Bull's Max Verstappen, the young pretender to the Briton's world crown.

Verstappen was second in Bahrain and Bottas third. —AFP

Tokyo head says Olympics are on

Tokyo, April 16: The head of the Tokyo Olympics on Friday was again forced to assure the world that the postponed Games will open in just over three months and not be canceled despite surging Covid-19 cases in Japan.

Organising committee president Seiko Hashimoto was asked at a news conference if there were any conditions under which the Olympics would be cancelled.

The question comes as the general secretary of ruling LDP political party, Yoshihiro Nishiyama, raised the possibility the day before.

"There are a variety of concerns but as the Tokyo 2020 organising committee we are not thinking about canceling the games," Hashimoto said.

Nikai, the No. 2 person in the LDP party, was asked on Thursday in an interview if cancellation was still an option.

"Of course," he replied adding that if the Tokyo Games caused a surge in infections there would be no meaning to having the Olympics.

Nikai tried to backtrack later, and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga issued a statement Thursday saying there is no change to the govern-

ment position to do everything to achieve safe and secure Olympics. Hashimoto acknowledged Nikai's concern and suggested it was probably shared by the Japanese public. Polls show as many as 80 per cent in Japan oppose holding the Olympics during the pandemic.

"The fact that he (Nikai) is concerned is a point that we need to take seriously as Tokyo 2020," she said.

"His comment has reminded us of how tedious it was for us to feel confident or be fully prepared for delivering the games," she added.

In an editorial this week, the British Medical Journal questioned Japan and the IOC going ahead with the Olympics. Organisers have said the Olympics will be safe and secure, which the editorial challenged. —AP

MAIDEN GOLD MEDALS FOR VINESH AND ANSHU

Almaty (Kazakhstan), April 16: Dominating the proceedings in a depleted field, Olympic-bound wrestlers Vinesh Phogat and Anshu Malik won their maiden Asian Championship titles after comfortable triumphs in their respective summit clashes here on Friday.

There was no stopping Vinesh in the absence of the Chinese and Japanese rivals as she cruised to the title without losing a point in the 53kg category.

Vinesh has notched up seven podium finishes at the Asian meet over the years, including three silver medals before this edition.

Also standing on top of the podium was Divya Kakran (72kg) while Sakshi Malik (65kg) settled for a silver medal.

India has a rich haul of seven medals from the women's event as the country won four gold, a silver and two bronze medals in this edition. Sarita Mor (59kg) had won gold while Seema Bisla (50kg) and Pooja (76kg) settled for bronze medals. —PTI

