

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 20 | APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Max: 37°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Chithirai 7
Tithi: Ashtami
Star: Pusam
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
Yamagandam: 9 am to 10.30 am

PRAYERS

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

SUNSET TODAY 6.34 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.08 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 12.22 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 2.15 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+2,37,232)	(+1,529)
1,52,95,118	1,80,322

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+10,941)
TN: 10,02,392 13,157

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

14,25,03,077

DEATHS

30,38,792

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

Navy seizes ₹3000 crore narcotics in midsea

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 19

Indian Navy on Monday said that it has seized narcotics of Rs 3,000 crore in Arabian Sea. Indian Naval Ship Suvarna, whilst on surveillance patrol in the Arabian Sea, encountered a fishing vessel with suspicious movements. To investigate the vessel, the ship's team conducted a board and search operation, which led to the seizure of more than 300 kilograms of narcotics substances. The boat with its crew has been escorted to the nearest Indian Port of Kochi, Kerala for further investigation. "The approximate cost of the catch in the international market is estimated to be Rs 3,000 crore," said Indian Navy. This is a major catch not only in terms of the quantity and cost but also from the perspective of disruption of the illegal narcotics smuggling routes, which emanate from the Makran coast and flow towards the Indian, Maldivian and Sri Lankan destinations. Apart from the human costs from drug addiction, the spoils of narcotics trade feed syndicates involved in terrorism.

COUNTER

POINT



It is running late by 12 hours, doctor!



CITY | 2
Pondy LG: Nothing lacking to curb spread of pandemic



NATION | 4
MP HC pulls up Shivraj govt

SPORT | 8

Muralitharan discharged from hospital



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Vol. 11 No. 113 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | ₹4.00

Vaccination thrown open to all adults from May 1

Delhi goes for strict lockdown for six days

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 19

Under pressure to open up vaccines for all age groups as Covid-19 cases surge in India, the Centre on Monday announced that vaccinations will be available to all above the age of 18 from May 1. In another major shift in vaccine policy, the Centre also allowed states to directly procure vaccine doses from manufacturers. Vaccine manufacturers have been asked to supply 50 per cent of their stock to the Centre, and split the rest 50 per cent between state governments and the open market.

The decision for "liberalised and accelerated" Phase 3 Covid-19 vaccination drive from May 1 was announced after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a series of meetings over India's response to record daily surges in Covid cases.

With Covid-19 cases rising at an alarming speed and hospital beds, oxygen supply and medicines in short supply, the government was under tremendous pressure to open up vaccination and allow states access to medical essentials.

India on Monday reported 2.74 lakh cases and 1,619 deaths.

As per the decisions, taken after Mr Modi held a series of meetings with doctors and leaders of the pharmaceutical industry, pricing, procurement, eligibility and administration of vaccines have been made flexible in Phase 3 and all stakeholders have been given flexibility to customise to local needs. However, vaccines in the govern-

Everyone above the age of 18 would be eligible for Covid-19 vaccination from May 1

Procurement, eligibility, and administration of vaccines made flexible in Phase 3. Manufacturers incentivised to further scale up production. Manufacturers empowered to release up to 50% of their supply to State governments and in the open market at pre-declared prices. States can procure additional vaccine doses directly from manufacturers.



Delhi under six-day 'total curfew' up to 5 am on April 26.

Construction of the new Parliament building under the Central Vista redevelopment project would continue during the lockdown announced by the Delhi government on Monday with those workers who are staying on site, government sources have confirmed.

As on April 19,
12,38,52,566
doses of vaccines administered in India

► Crowds at the ghats of Ganga in Haridwar have thinned down drastically after the key 'akhadas' of seers began pulling out of the Maha Kumbh, citing the surge in coronavirus numbers.

AIIMS-Delhi OPD to be shut from April 22

Night curfew imposed in Kerala from Tuesday

DELHI GOES INTO STRICT LOCKDOWN FOR SIX DAYS

New Delhi, Apr 19: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced a six-day lockdown in the national capital from 10 pm on Monday till 5 am on April 26 and said it was necessary to deal with the rising number of COVID-19 cases as the city's health system was stretched to its limit. The announcement, which came at the end of a weekend curfew, bought back the memories of last year's lockdown and triggered usual responses from people -- migrant workers rushing to railway stations and bus terminals in a bid to return home, residents flocking to markets to stock up on essentials, and tippers joining in long, serpentine queues outside liquor stores. Thousands of migrant workers gathered at the city's inter-state bus terminals and railway stations to return home. —PTI

BRITISH PM CANCELS TRIP TO INDIA

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 19

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday cancelled his visit to India scheduled for April 26 due to the ferocious second wave of the Covid pandemic that is currently battering India. This is the second time in three months that the British PM is cancelling his visit. He was originally scheduled to be the chief guest at India's Republic Day on January 26 this year but cancelled his visit in early-January due to the raging pandemic then in Britain. New Delhi confirmed the "mutually agreed" cancellation "in view of the prevailing Covid situation" and said a "virtual meeting" would be held "in the coming days to launch plans for a transformed India-U.K. relationship".

Chennai Super Kings put Royals in the shade



Chennai Super Kings' Ravindra Jadeja celebrates a Rajasthan Royals wicket during an IPL game in Mumbai on Monday. Jadeja's impressive spell (2/28) and his brilliant fielding performance helped CSK drub Royals by 45 runs. — IPL



Migrant workers gather outside MGR Central Station to try and take trains to their home States in north India. — Sampath N

Migrant workers begin TN exodus

G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR/DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

A fear of the government clamping a total lockdown in the State gripped many sections of people, prompting thousands of migrant workers to pack their bags and leave for their hometowns in other States on Monday.

The announcement of a night curfew every day from Tuesday and lockdowns on Sundays was seen as a measure to slow down the second wave of the Coronavirus that has started taking a heavy toll, but it rang the alarm bells for migrant workers, particularly from Bihar and West Bengal.

With memories of the problems migrant workers and their families faced in 2020 when the Centre announced a lockdown without any prior warning still fresh in their mind, the migrant workers did not want a recurrence of the same situation as they saw the new set of restrictions as a harbinger to a total lockdown.

In fact, even the owners of the MSMEs and other companies that employ these workers in large numbers feared the same and allowed their workers to leave. Since the workers were given small amounts to undertake the journey back home they started booking tickets in trains.

Hundreds of migrants landed in Chennai from places like Coimbatore, Tirupur and Tiruchy to catch trains that would take them home. But since the Southern Railways, under the new regulations, would allow only passengers with reserved seats in trains to enter the station, those on the waiting list and those without a reservation were not let in.

Desperate to find some space in a train compartment, some of those with unreserved tickets sneaked into the platforms by buying platform tickets and started occupying the aisles and empty spaces in the compartments, prompting the Railway Protection Force to rush in and clear them.

The Railways, under the post Covid-19 rules, would not allow extra passengers to travel. Even the general compartments had been converted into reserved compartments and only a limited number of people are allowed in the coaches. So, all those who did not possess reserved tickets had to leave the station.

As far as the crowd in the bus stand was concerned, it was not much since most of those from out of the city who went home for the weekend did not return for work on Monday after the night curfew was announced as they too may have expected a total lockdown soon. ■P2

CM is fine after surgery for hernia in city hospital

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami underwent a hernia operation at a private hospital in Chennai on Tuesday and is expected to return home in three days.

Palaniswami was first tested for Coronavirus at the MGM Healthcare hospital where he got admitted on Tuesday morning. After the test results were negative, his surgery was planned and he was wheeled into the operation theatre. He has been advised total rest at the hospital for three days and would be discharged only



after doctors certify him to be okay.

Palaniswamy, who had been staying in his hometown in Salem district after the conclusion of the

State Assembly elections on April 6, came to Chennai on Sunday as he had to attend a discussion held online on the Coronavirus crisis. He took part in the meeting from his official residence in Chennai and then went to hospital on Monday morning for the surgery.

For more than a month, Palaniswami had undertaken a hectic election campaign as the AIADMK's chief ministerial candidate and also the most prominent star campaigner. He crisscrossed the entire State during the course of the electioneering, often addressing more than four meetings a day.

Were corona deaths in Vellore GH due to lack of oxygen ?

DC CORRESPONDENT
VELLORE, APRIL 19

The successive death of three persons in a single day on Monday allegedly due to shortage of oxygen at the Vellore government hospital, sent shock waves among residents here. But the district administration has denied the allegation and said that there is no shortage of oxygen for treatment of Corona patients.

Monday's deaths are said to have been caused by a block in the oxygen supply system to the Corona special ward. Complaints have also been raised that the bodies of patients who died due to suffocation were being handed over to relatives in an urgent manner. Two of Monday's dead were males and a female.

Rumours are rife that there were many other deaths in the hospital which

the authorities were trying to conceal, and that officials were referring patients to other hospitals like the government Pentland hospital and Walajapet government hospital. In Vellore district, the impact of Corona spread is severe. The district administration is taking full-scale action to control the epidemic.

As on Saturday (April 17) since the beginning of last year's Corona spread... ■P4

Ingenuity flies on Mars to make history

Cape Canaveral, Fla., April 19 : NASA's experimental helicopter Ingenuity rose into the thin air above the dusty red surface of Mars on Monday, achieving the first powered flight by an aircraft on another planet. The triumph was hailed as a Wright brothers moment. The mini 4-pound (1.8-kilogram) copter even carried a bit of wing fabric from the Wright Flyer that made similar history at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in

1903. It was a brief hop — just 39 seconds and 10 feet (3 meters) — but accomplished all the major milestones.

"We've been talking so long about our Wright brothers moment, and here it is," said project manager MiMi Aung, offering a virtual hug to her socially distanced colleagues in the control room as well as those at home because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Flight controllers at NASA's Jet Propulsion

Laboratory in California declared success after receiving the data and images via the Perseverance rover. Ingenuity hitched a ride to Mars on Perseverance, clinging to the rover's belly when it touched down in an ancient river delta in February.

The \$85 million helicopter demo was considered high risk, yet high reward. Scientists cheered the news from around the world and even from space. — AP



NASA's experimental Mars helicopter Ingenuity hovers above the surface of Mars Monday. — AP

OTHER STORY

Tests, vaccination likely for counting agents

ARULOLI M | DC
TIRUNELVELI, APRIL 19

Corona tests are likely to be made compulsory for counting booth agents appointed by political parties at the vote counting centres.

As the number of new Corona cases is on the rise, the election commission has been reportedly thinking of exploring the possibilities of making Corona test certificates mandatory for agents of political parties for them to be permitted into the counting centres on May 2.

Stating this, a senior IAS officer seeking anonymity added that the condition if made mandatory, would also be extended to media persons who were already issued admit cards to enter counting centres on May 2.

To a question, Collector-cum-district election officer K. Senthil Raj, told media persons that no such instruction from either the state chief election officer or from the Election Commission of India (ECI) has been issued to the district election officers.

"However, it would be better if the agents of political parties were tested and vaccinated if they are above 45 years of age," said the collector.

Metro rail services rescheduled from today

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

Metro Rail Limited has decided to reschedule the services from Tuesday until further orders as follows: The services will be available from 5:30 am till 9:00 pm instead of 11:00 pm on all working days from Monday to Saturday with the same peak & non-peak headway currently followed (5 minutes and 10 minutes). The last trip will commence from all terminals (Puratchi Thalaivar Dr. M. G. Ramachandran Central Metro, Airport Metro, St. Thomas Mount Metro and Wimco Nagar Metro stations) between 8:55 pm to 9:05 pm and will reach the terminals by 9:50 pm. Passengers are requested to maintain social distancing while waiting in the metro stations and during their travelling in metro trains and request all passengers to co-operate in the fight against the spread of Covid, according to a press release from the joint director / public relations officer CMRL, Chennai, on Monday.

TN registers nearly 11,000 new cases

DC CORRESPONDENT,
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

State has recorded 10,940 new cases with 44 deaths on Monday, rising from 10,724 cases on Sunday. This takes the total Covid-19 tally in the state to 10,02,392 with death toll 13157 including 4415 in Chennai.

Chennai registered 3,347 cases and 15 deaths. The new cases surged from 3,304 new cases on Sunday. With this, the district recorded a total of 286569 cases so far. Chengalpattu district, which has a total of 67480 positive cases, reported 970 cases and 6 deaths. The Sunday tally in the district was 954 and 6 deaths.

Meanwhile, the number

of daily cases in Coimbatore continues to rise touching 735 rising from 727 new cases on Sunday.

Chennai, Coimbatore, and Chengalpattu, and Thiruvallur districts continue to record 500plus. Madurai, Selam and Trichy registered 300 plus cases while Kancheepuram, Cuddalore, Erode, Thanjavur, Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli and Tirupur districts registered 200 plus cases. Apart from this, at least 12 other districts in the state registered 100 plus cases.

The contribution of Chennai and surrounding districts including Thiruvallur and Chengalpattu touched 485 taking a rise from 4,761 on Sunday.

Active cases in the state

reached a new peak on Monday as well with 75,116 that is a jump from 70,391 on Sunday. The total active cases in the Chennai district now stands at 26,194 surging from 23,625 on Sunday.

While three people died at each Cuddalore and Kancheepuram districts, Kanyakumari, Madurai, Selam, Thanjavur, Thiruvannamalai, and Tirunelveli district registered two deaths each. Besides, Coimbatore, Tenkasi, Thirupathur, Thiruvallur and Trichy reported deaths.

A total of 1,09,533 persons were subjected to RTPCR tests that is a rise from 1,08,155 on Sunday. At least 2,09,56,848 individuals tested so far in the state.

Engineer held for not wearing mask on plane

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

A software engineer from Kerala was arrested by the Chennai airport police after he refused to wear a mask on a Chennai-bound flight on Sunday night.

According to sources, the passenger identified as Pradeep Kumar (46), a resident of Kannur in

Kerala, boarded an Indigo flight heading for Chennai.

After take-off, the flight attendants asked him to put on a mask because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but he refused. Despite several warnings, the man refused to wear a mask and argued that he would not cover his face.

The captain alerted the security personnel at the Chennai airport. On landing, Pradeep was questioned by the officials and later handed over to the Chennai airport police.

He was booked by the airport police. During police investigation he said he did not wear his mask because it was torn. He was asked to pay a fine of ₹500 and let off.



Chennai Police Commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal inaugurates awareness campaign and vaccine camp at Sembiam police quarters on Monday. —DC

Pondy LG: Nothing lacking to curb spread of pandemic

STRICT RESTRICTIONS | IN PLACE

● Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry said she has chaired earlier a high-level meeting of the Covid-19 management committee at her office. It was decided that the beach road would be open to the public for 12 hours from 5 am every day and dining in the hotels and restaurants would be permitted till 8 pm. The night curfew will continue to be in force from 10 pm to 5 am. Strict restrictions would be enforced with immediate effect in markets and other places where public gather in large numbers.

Puducherry, April 19: Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry Tamilisai Soundararajan on Monday said nothing was left wanting in controlling the spread of the pandemic here though, she said, the second wave of the infection was more intense from the earlier occurrence.

Talking to reporters after visiting a Covid care centre here, she said there would be no compromise on safety norms, particularly, in wearing masks by the public.

She said the government has equipped the health facilities with adequate beds and emergency medicines. Of the total 2,425 beds in all the hospitals, 1,398 beds were vacant now, she pointed out. Similarly, 625 oxygen beds out of the total 970 beds were available, she said.

People need have no apprehension as care has been taken and facilities have been created to ensure that none goes without medical care, she further said.

Calling upon the people to cooperate with the government to carry out its measures and safety protocols,

the Lieutenant Governor said, "Mask-wearing is mandatory and there will be zero tolerance. Besides, all guidelines of the Union health ministry and the ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) are being implemented in letter and spirit in the Union Territory."

She said the Cooperative Milk Producers Federation, popularly known as Ponlait, selling milk sachets through retail outlets would sell masks at subsidised rate and sanitisers would also be sold through the fed-

eration to the people later.

A control room with toll-free phone facility (104) was in place which would be expanded to enable the public get the necessary guidance to combat the pandemic. Special vaccination camps were also being held in fish markets, Central prison and also in other places where there was a minimum of 100 workers. The camps would carry out testing of swabs and also vaccinate the people aged above 45 free of cost, she said. —PTI

Narayanasamy writes to PM seeking adequate vaccines and funds

Puducherry, April 19: Former chief minister of Puducherry and senior Congress leader V. Narayanasamy on Monday wrote to Prime Minister seeking increased allocation of medicines and funds to combat the pandemic here. Puducherry is now under President's rule and the official machinery should be geared up to intensify the monitoring of steps taken to fight the contagion, the former Chief Minister told reporters here. He said high-ranking officials should be drafted for field visits. The Congress leader further said the health authorities should ensure availability of swab test results in 24 hours instead of three days as was the case now. Congress Member of Parliament V. Vaithilingam said medical facilities in rural areas were not adequate. He said the infrastructure in hospitals should also be ramped up in rural areas. PCC president A. V. Subramanian said the government hospital in Karaikal lacked adequate beds particularly oxygen facilities. —PTI

No buses during nights hrs from today

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

The State Transport Corporation on Monday rescheduled its services according to the new norms coming into force from Tuesday. No buses would be operated in the night hours, be it to the districts or the other states and those who had already reserved seats in the buses would be allowed to reschedule their journeys as per their wish or get a refund.

However more buses would be operated between 4 am and 10 pm and all coronavirus related protocols like checking body temperature, compulsory facemask and social distancing would be strictly followed.

As far as long distance trains are concerned they would run even at night hours and no rescheduling of services has been announced by the Southern Railway.

Koyambedu traders pessimistic

From P1

Apart from ruing the night lockdown that would throw their operations out of gear, traders at the Koyambedu market, where the goods arrive at night and trading starts early in the morning, were pessimistic of a curfew in the offing.

The fear had gripped people in all industries, be it MSMEs or entertainment or hospitality or service, that they have all begun preparing for such an eventuality by laying off employees, who are forced to leave the city fearing starvation and the pandemic.

With reports of hospital beds in government facilities getting filled up and the authorities seeking the help of private hospitals to allocate some beds for Coronavirus patients as they did last year, most of the people are in the grip of panic.

Adding fuel to the fire was the images beamed through news channels of people waiting for beds or dying due to lack of oxygen cylinders or the dead being burnt in heaps in States like Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat, which had made many feel that such a situation might visit the State too.

Army recruiting rally postponed

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

In view of surging Covid-19 cases, the common entrance examination for successful candidates of Thiruvannamalai Army Recruiting Rally scheduled on April 25, 2021, at Presidency College, Chennai has been postponed.

Fresh dates will be intimated through 'Join Indian Army' website (<http://www.joinindianarmy.nic.in>). Candidates will have to physically come to the office of Army Recruiting Office, Chennai

and take fresh admit cards once dates are finalized. Candidates will have to physically come to the office of Army Recruiting Office, Chennai and take fresh admit cards once dates are finalised.

The Indian Army Recruitment Rally was held from February 10, 2021, to February 26, 2021 at Arunai Engineering College Stadium, Thiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu to enroll candidates into the Army from 11 districts of Tamil Nadu under the Army Recruitment Office (Headquarter), Chennai at Cuddalore, Vellore, Tirupathur,

Ranipet, Chennai, Thiruvannamalai, Thiruvallur, Villupuram, Kallakurichi, Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu and Puducherry District of Puducherry (UT) for various categories that include Soldier Technical, Soldier Nursing Assistant/Soldier Nursing Assistant Veterinary, Soldier Clerk / Store Keeper Technical, Soldier General Duty and Soldier Tradesman. Successful candidates in the Rally were called to attend the common entrance exam, which is now postponed due to increasing Covid cases.

Traders protest closure of Ooty tourist spots

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, APRIL 19

Voices of discontent and revolt against the closure of tourist spots have started here, as small time traders and roadside vendors staged a sudden road-roko here on Monday, urging the government to reconsider its decision to close down tourist spots.

The protesters who walked up to the busy Charring Cross area here shortly after

noon, staged a road-roko on the Ooty NH along the Gandhi statue in Charring Cross.

Top revenue officials and police rushed to the spot to hold talks with the agitating traders who were in no mood to give up. Though officials tried to pacify them by stating that the order to close down tourist spots was done by the state government and not by the district administration, the crowd wanted the district administration to inter-

vene in this issue, and ask the government to revert its order on closure of tourist spots from today (Tuesday).

The traders said that summer tourist season in Ooty is the most popular season in the hills which brings thousands and lakhs of tourists to the hills, helping small time traders and road side vendors earn a good livelihood.

"Since there was a lock-down last summer, these traders and vendors could not earn any-

thing at all. Though tourist patronage had been satisfactory this year all these months, the closure of tourist spots means that the lives of these small time traders and roadside vendors, whose lifeline solely depends on the tourists, will be doomed," the protesting traders said.

"We would continue their stir in the days to come to urge the government to allow tourism with SOP norms during the summer in the hills," they added.

Off centre

Tomatoes for ₹1/kg

Banking on the farm-to-fork concept, Thirumal is a farmer from Vellore who sells freshly-harvested organic tomatoes online. A native of Balur in Gudiyatham of Vellore district, Thirumal's love for agriculture blossomed after he realised the satisfaction of using natural methods and letting plants grow on their own with minimal external assistance. Such methods proved successful for his crops. Thirumal has been involved in organic farming after he quit his IT job in Bengaluru sometime back. He sells organically-grown tomatoes for ₹1/ kilogram in an app called 'Vivasayi mandy' created by him. He sells 500 kilograms of tomatoes per day. His success has also resulted in some local farmers offering their produce to him for sale.

Thirumal now serves as an ideal exemplar for organic farmers in his surroundings and has inspired many to adopt the method in the most scientific manner which is also profitable.

Sindhya Samuel



People without masks take a pledge and hold placards to create awareness on Covid protocols near the airport in the city on Monday. —DC

Vaccination drive in Ooty: Two sides of a coin

The latest Covid-19 vaccination drive here witnessed a paradoxical situation here last Friday as the eastern part of Ooty ran short of vaccines, while the western part witnessed shortage of people.

Though the vaccination drive started as usual, signs of vaccine shortage emerged shortly after noon, as both government hospitals and private clinics in the eastern part of town like Charing Cross and Stone Hill area reported shortage of vaccine, due to delay in supply. Hence, those who went to the vaccination centres in this part of the town, had to come back the next day to get vaccinated.

But the story in the western part of the town like Kandal was different with a shortage of people. In fact, the staff were waiting for at least 10 persons to come at a time, to proceed with the vaccination drive. While they could get nine people by 4:30 pm, they were still waiting for one more person which consists of 10 vials. At last, they found one person willing to take the vaccine by around 5 pm and completed the vaccination drive that day. —B. Ravichandran

Social media: Share and help

With the second wave hitting the country hard and fast and reports on oxygen shortage in hospitals triggering fear, it is back to turmeric, cumin, coriander,

clove, ajwain and even camphor. Immunity-boosting recipes made from commonly found plants and home remedies, especially to improve one's lung capacity, are widely shared on social media

now. While some WhatsApp forwards on such remedies quote the name of doctors and even the places where they are used, others simply say 'share and help'.

—B. Vijayalakshmi

People in Kaspia area in Ambur were amused when they saw a white crow on Monday. Small kids to elders enjoyed the sight and clicked pictures before the bird flew away. —K.Senthil Nathan



SHORT TAKES

Nayak period epigraph found

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, APRIL 19

A Nayak period epigraph was unearthed when an old building was renovated in north street here. According to Dr. Mani Maran, Tamil pandit and archaeologist, Saraswathi Mahal library, the epigraph contained 15 lines about the donations given to Singaperumal temple near Singaperumal tank in Melaveli panchayat near Srinivasapuram here. The epigraph which is 3.5 ft high and 1.25 ft wide, belongs to the Nayak period which continued for 140 years in Thanjavur from 1535 A.D to 1675 A.D, said Mani Maran.

Farmers bid to stage rail roko foiled

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, APRIL 19

A section of farmers belonging to the Desiya Then Indiya Nathigal Inaippu Vivasayigal Sangam including state president P. Ayyakannu, were kept under house arrest by police here on Monday as they attempted to go to the railway junction to stage an agitation there to draw the Central government's attention to their demands.

Ayyakannu later told newsmen that they wanted to go to Delhi to stage an agitation there, demanding rollback of fertilizer prices and a double-fold increase in agricultural produce, but the district administration prevented them saying it was not advisable to go to the capital since the second wave of Covid-19 was spreading fast.

Following this, they once again approached the collector and police to permit them to undertake continuous agitation for 10 days at Tiruchy, but that was also denied.

At the private marriage hall where the agitators are lodged, they had an argument with the police and refused to leave the hall urging them to either arrest them or allow them to proceed to Delhi.

Dry day on Mahavir Jayanthi, May 1

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, APRIL 19

Collector S. Divyadarshini ordered the closure of all retail units of TASMAL and its attached bars and the hotel bars on April 25 (Mahavir Jayanthi) and on May 1 (May day), across the district. In a release here on Monday, the collector warned that violations would be punished severely. Similar orders have been passed by Prashant M. Wadhwa, P. Sri Venkateswari, T. Rathina, B. Umamaheswari, V. Shantha, and Praveen P. Nair, collectors of Karur, Perambalur, Pudukkottai, Tiruvallur, and Nagapattinam districts respectively.

'All arrangements made for counting to start'

From P1

On the entry of vehicles into the premises of the counting centres, he said mobile toilets for the use of women security personnel posted at the centres were being transported through the container carriers to the venues.

Since the toilets were huge in size, the container carriers were used and that created suspicions of attempts to tamper the EVMs, he said.

He said all arrangements had been made for the counting to start as per schedule on May 2 and requested all candidates to submit the election accounts in one month's time.

As part of the preparation for the counting, the Chief Election Commissioner, Sushil Chandra, held a meeting with the Chief Electoral Officer and the District Election Officers of the State and discussed the arrangements that had been made.

Meanwhile, the DMK is providing training to its counting agents who would be sitting at the various counting tables in all the centres. The training would help the agents to understand the rules and regulations relating to the counting process and the procedures they had to follow.

DMK MP and leading lawyer N R Elango would be the resource person for the training, in which the party district secretaries and other local functionaries would also attend, apart from the counting agents.

Since the number of agents and party functionaries is high – at least five agents would be on a table – the online training programme would be conducted in batches from April 20 to 24 at 5 pm on all days.

The counting of votes is the most anticipated event in the State now though it was feared that the restrictions brought in due to the spread of Covid-19 might hamper the process.

NGT sets up a panel to inspect 'illegal quarrying'

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

The southern regional bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has constituted a panel to inspect a quarry site, allegedly conducting illegal operations near Vandalur zoo and submit a report.

The bench passed the order when a petition filed by C R Vijaykumar of Unamancheri in Chengalpet district came up for hearing before the

tribunal comprising judicial member Justice K. Ramakrishnan and expert member K. Sathyagopal recently.

According to the applicant, the environmental clearance was granted by the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) to Aravind of Unamancheri village on July 18, 2013, for five years. Aravind obtained the clearance hiding the fact that the quarry was within 2.5 km from the

Vandaloor Zoological Park and very close to the reserved forest area. Aravind is continuing with the quarrying, even after the expiry of the clearance period and conducted mining in areas other than the place permitted under the lease.

As a result, ecological damage had been caused and a huge amount lost to the exchequer, he said.

The tribunal said that in order to ascertain the genuineness of the allegations and violations, it is

appropriate to appoint a committee comprising the district collector or a senior officer not below the rank of assistant collector/sub divisional magistrate as deputed by him, a senior officer each from the SEIAA, Directorate of Geology and Mining and the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board to inspect the area and submit a report on any violation. It should also assess the environmental compensation to be recovered from him.

Professor crushed to death in road accident

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

A 37-year-old man was crushed to death under the wheels of a lorry on the GST Road near Guduvancheri on Monday.

The deceased is Dr. M. Ashok Kumar, associate professor and head of the department of pharmacy practice at Vels Institute of Science and Technology in Pallavaram.

According to the police, the incident happened when the professor was heading towards Tambaram from Chengalpattu on his two-

wheeler. On the GST Road, near Guduvancheri, he reportedly applied a sudden brake to avoid hitting a woman who was crossing the road.

However, he lost control of the vehicle and fell on the road. Before he could get up, a speeding lorry coming from behind hit him. Police said Ashok was crushed to death on the spot.

The Guduvancheri police rushed to the spot and sent the body for post-mortem. The police registered a case and began searching for the lorry driver who absconded with his vehicle.

Two youths drown in farm well

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

Two youths drowned in a farm well in Chengalpattu on Sunday. The deceased are Jithu alias Jithendran (19), son of Sivaraj, and Akash (19), son of Rajan, residents of Rajapalayam.

Jithu was a third year BBA student of Chengalpattu Government Arts College, while Akash studied for BCom at a private college in Coimbatore.

The youths jumped into the well at Nermelli. But after a few minutes, Akash began to drown. Jithu rushed to his rescue. Akash held Jithu as he was afraid that prevented Jithu from swimming. Within no time, both drowned.

Police said as the youths did not return to their houses for a long time, their families launched a search when they found their belongings near the well and alerted the local police.

The police and the fire and rescue services personnel from Chengalpattu rushed to the spot and swung into action. The bodies were retrieved and post-mortems conducted at Chengalpattu district government hospital. The bodies were handed over to the family members. The police have registered a case.

● The deceased were identified as Jithu alias Jithendran (19), son of Sivaraj, and Akash (19), son of Rajan, residents of Rajapalayam.

Three masked men rob two houses in Villupuram

DC CORRESPONDENT
VILLUPURAM, APRIL 19

Three masked men robbed two houses in different places at gunpoint in Villupuram on Sunday midnight. They abandoned their Mahindra XUV and escaped when the alert residents noticed their second move and chased them.

According to police, Belavendran, 53, of Kamaraj Nagar, Marakkanam Road, Tindivanam was sleeping along with his family members in his house last night. In the small hours, three youths entered the

house after breaking open the gate. They carried pistols, deadly weapons and iron rods.

Belavendran woke up following the noise and noticed three youths covered with masks standing in the house. They attacked him with a knife and took a two sovereign gold chain from his son Arunkumar. After the assault and robbery, they escaped on a white Mahindra XUV 500, which had no number plate. On information, police rushed to the place and rushed Belavendran to the hospital.

After this, the same gang

descended at the house of one Gnanasekaran, an AIADMK office-bearer, of Mariamman Koil Street, Kannikapuram near Mailam. The youths with masks entered the house with deadly weapons. Hearing the noise, the family members woke up and raised an alarm. Hearing the scream, local residents assembled at the place.

The robbers abandoned the vehicle and escaped from the place. The cops have seized the van. The Villupuram district SP conducted an investigation and formed special teams to nab the gang.

Corporation officials collect fine from people not wearing masks at Central railway station on Monday.



SHRC asks retired woman SI to pay ₹5L as damages

A ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed a retired woman SI in Guduvanchery to pay a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to a woman for harassing and arresting her and her son in false cases three years ago.

In the complaint, S. Thamaraiselvi, who was working as a special grade typist, submitted that her husband was working in the Madras Port Trust as an advocate. He did not take sufficient care of his family members. A woman, Anusuya, allegedly cheated him and he lost a huge sum of money. He died in 2016.

Thamaraiselvi lodged a com-

plaint of cheating against Anusuya with the superintendent of police, Kancheepuram, which was forwarded to the Guduvanchery police station. Thamaraiselvi came in contact with one Kiruba and her husband, who promised to recover the money. They duped Thamaraiselvi and took substantial sums of money from her. Meanwhile, the couple absconded. With the help of others, she caught Kiruba and her husband. She took them to the Guduvanchery police station. However, the police registered a case against them and the couple escaped.

Meanwhile, Kiruba lodged a complaint with the SI, Makkitha Annie Christy, falsely accusing Thamaraiselvi of having sent

her two sons and three rowdies to threaten her. She lodged another complaint at the Perungalathur police station, alleging that they were breaking into their house. The police picked up her son and three others. They handed them over to the Guduvanchery police. Learning this she rushed to the police station. The SI started beating Thamaraiselvi, her son and his friends. They were assaulted and remanded to Puzhal prison on December 21, 2018.

Christy terrorised her tenants and asked them to vacate the premises. Thamaraiselvi was in prison for about eight days and was given medical treatment. Due to harassment, Thamaraiselvi took voluntary retire-

ment from service. Christy did not file any counter before the commission.

SHRC member Dr. A. Chittaranjan Mohandoss said, "it is highly condemnable that a responsible police person has scant regard for this forum and had not taken the effort to file her counter or her proof affidavit or her written arguments, despite being granted several opportunities. The commission views this apathy and irresponsible attitude of Christy very seriously."

The commission directed Christy to pay a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to Thamaraiselvi for harassing and arresting her on false charges. The commission also recommended the government to initiate disciplinary action against Christy.

Gold worth ₹33.40 lakh seized at Chennai airport

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19:

Air customs at the Chennai airport on Monday seized gold worth ₹33.40 lakh.

Customs said, based on

intelligence, Sagubhar Sadiq (30) and Mohamed Abbas Masamil (20) both from Ramnathapuram, who arrived from Dubai by Emirates flight EK-544 were intercepted at exit. On their personal search,

four bundles of gold paste were recovered from rectum.

Further, a bundle of gold paste was found in the sewage dumping area of Emirate flight. Total five bundles of gold paste

weighing 783 grams were recovered which on extraction yielded 687 grams of gold valued at ₹33.40 lakh and same were seized under Customs Act. Further investigation is under progress.

Stop use of e-devices in counting centres, says DMK

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, APRIL 19

The district unit of the DMK here has raised doubts as to why air conditioners and computer servers were functioning even during holidays like that of Sunday night (April 18) at a counting centre located at a private engineering college near Karur, where EVMs of all four assembly segments of the district are kept for counting.

Karur district DMK party-in-charge and Karur assembly candidate V. Senthil Balaji and party's Aravakkurichi candidate Monjanur Elango told newsmen at the counting centre premises soon after inspecting the counting centre, that the DMK agents who are watching the centre on a round-the-clock basis, had complained that the air conditioner and computer servers at the centre were functioning as usual on Sunday, which was a holiday, and appealed to the Collector-cum-district election officer to ban the use of all electronic accessories like computer servers, wi-fi, etc inside the counting centre, till the completion of the vote counting.

CCTV not working, DMK tells collector

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, APRIL 19

DMK candidates T.K.G. Neelamegam (Thanjavur constituency), Durai Chandrasekaran (Thiruvaiyaru) and M. Ramachandran (Orathanadu) have complained to Collector-cum-district election officer M. Govinda Rao, that CCTV cameras fitted at the entrance of Kundavai Nachiyar Government Arts College for Women here, where polled ballot units for the three constituencies have been kept, were not working, and asked him to fit a 360 degree rotative CCTV camera.

The three candidates visited the college on Monday and checked the CCTV. They told the tahsildars Balasubramanian (Thanjavur), Nedunchezhiyan

(Thiruvaiyaru) and Arunagiri (Orathanadu), who accompanied them to fit a 360-degree camera. They later spoke to the Collector over the phone and placed their demand before him.

Durai Chandrasekaran later told newsmen that the college is placed under the control of the Election Commission of India (ECI), but there is movement of college staff and some unidentified persons in the college campus, which should be stopped.

Thanjavur collector said that their grievances have been redressed. A better view of the camera has been ensured and there is no movement of unidentified persons inside the college, as only persons holding authorised identity cards are permitted.

They said earlier that the district administration fitted CCTV cameras at the backyard of the counting centre, following their representation. They also appealed to the elec-

tion commission of India (ECI) as well as state Chief electoral officer of Tamil Nadu to ensure adequate security at this particular counting centre, to avoid any mala fide attempts.

Rollback fertilizer price hike: Farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, APRIL 19

Members of the Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangam led by their state secretary R. Rajachidambaram and Sangam's Tiruchy district president M.P. Chinnadurai, secretary N. Ganesan staged a demonstration near the collectorate here on Monday, urging the Centre to prevent the hike in fertilizer prices.

Rajachidambaram told newsmen that after April 1, 2010, the Centre has changed its fertilizer policy and allowed fertilizer companies to hike fertilizers price on their own, which severely affects the farming community.

He further said, on April 1 this year, the Centre hiked fertilizer price for the year 2021-2022 and this was announced through IFFCO. But, following continuous protests by farmers, the Centre temporarily stopped hiking the prices of fertilizers, he added. He wanted the government to permanently withdraw the hike in fertilizer prices and also urged the government to fix MRP on the sale of fertilizers.

Later, a delegation consisting of R. Rajachidambaram, M.P. Chinnadurai and N. Ganesan met the collector and submitted a memorandum in this regard.

SHORT TAKES

EX-MINISTER
SUCCUMBS TO
COVID IN BIHARNAYYAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, APRIL 19

Former Bihar education minister and JD(U) MLA Mewalal Chaudhary passed away on Monday due to Covid-19 complications. Party sources said Chaudhary had tested positive for Covid-19 a week earlier and was being treated at a private hospital in Patna where he succumbed to the viral infection.

Mewalal Chaudhary was the sitting JD(U) MLA from Tarapur constituency. He was among the 14 ministers who were sworn in on November 16, 2020, as part of Nitish Kumar cabinet. He was allocated education portfolio.

However, he had to resign from the post three days after his oath following allegations from the RJD-led opposition over corruption charges against him. Describing the deceased legislator as a "distinguished educationist, politician and social worker" Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in a statement said "his death was an irreparable loss for the education sector and politics. His last rites will be performed with full state honours".

Leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav, HAM Chief Jitan Ram Manjhi and several other NDA leaders were among those who also condoled Chaudhary's demise on Monday.

Concerned over the unprecedented rise in Covid cases in the last few days, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday had announced night curfew and other restrictions in the state to control the surge in infection.

MANTRI FEARS
COMMUNITY
SPREAD IN C'GARHRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, APRIL 19

Chhattisgarh health minister T.S. Singhdeo on Monday indicated that the state may have entered the phase of community spread of the virus.

Singhdeo told reporters here that in some Coronavirus positive cases, sources of infections could not be found; indicating that community spread of the virus may have begun in the state.

Source of infection is tapped through contact tracing. He said the threat of community spread of the virus usually increased when the rate of infection grew by five per cent. "But, in some districts the rate of infection has been found to be more than 30 per cent, while in some other districts it was even more than 50 per cent. Hence, the chances of community spreading appeared real in these districts," he added.

Singhdeo predicted that the active cases in the state may increase to 1.5 lakh to two lakhs from the current 1,28,019 by the end of this month.

"We need to be more careful", he added.

WEARING TWO
TIGHT-FIT MASKS
IS SAFER: STUDY

New Delhi, April 19: Wearing two tightly-fitted face masks can nearly double the effectiveness of filtering out SARS-CoV-2-sized particles, preventing them from reaching the wearer's nose and mouth and causing Covid-19, according to a study.

The research, published in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine, shows that the reason for the enhanced filtration is not so much adding layers of cloth, but eliminating any gaps or poor-fitting areas of a mask.

"The medical procedure masks are designed to have very good filtration potential based on their material, but the way they fit our faces isn't perfect," said Emily Sickbert-Bennett, an associate professor at the University of North Carolina (UNC) in the US, and lead author of the study.

To test the fitted filtration efficiency (FFE) of a range of masks, the team filled a 10-foot by 10-foot stainless-steel exposure chamber with small salt particle aerosols.

The researchers wore a combination of masks to test how effective they were at keeping particles out of their breathing space.

Each individual mask or layered mask combination was fitted with a metal sample port attached to tubing in the exposure chamber that measured the concentration of particles entering the breathing space underneath the researcher's mask.



Family members mourn the death of Covid-19 victim at a mortuary, amid rise in Covid cases across the country, in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

Govt responds sharply to former
PM's suggestions on vaccine

Centre has been scrambling to deal with the second wave

FROM PG 1

Incidentally, this move comes a day after former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh wrote a letter to PM Modi urging him to ramp up vaccination efforts and let states decide priorities for age groups. Dr Singh was himself admitted in New Delhi AIIMS on Monday after testing positive for Covid-19. However, the letter written by Dr Singh was not received by the government in the same spirit of "constructive cooperation".

In a rather terse reply, Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan replied to the former Prime Minister and gave a political spin to his suggestions, saying the Congress leader should first advise his junior party leaders who have been critical of the Centre's vaccine programme.

"History shall be kinder to you Dr Manmohan Singh ji if your offer of 'constructive cooperation' and valuable advice was followed by your @INCIndia leaders as well in such extraordinary times!" Dr Harsh Vardhan said while attaching his reply to the mild-mannered Dr Singh on Twitter only to face criticism on social media with netizens accusing him of playing

Meghalaya bans entry of
tourists to curb spreadMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, APRIL 19

In view of the growing number of Covid-19 cases across the country, the north-eastern states have started taking steps restricting movement of people from outside the region as Meghalaya on Monday imposed a ban on entry of tourists into the state while Manipur has imposed night curfew.

Assam, which is also the gateway of northeast, has already announced that Covid-negative certificates from other states will not be valid to enter the state and people will have to undergo tests upon arrival at airports and

railway stations.

Informing that there will be no restriction on local tourism, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said that restrictions on entry of tourists from outside Meghalaya will come into force from April 23. The state has also decided to shut down tourist spots, which witnesses high tourists foot fall. "We have decided to close down tourist destinations which usually have very high tourist turn out," Sangma said.

Meanwhile Assam's Covid-19 tally mounted to 2,24,455 as 639 more people tested positive for the infection, while six fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 1,135.

politics at this time of pandemic instead of taking suggestions.

The government has been scrambling for a response as the second wave has exposed the country's weak and uncaring health care system more than the first wave. With Covid-19 cases shoot-

ing, and the situation getting worse each day, harrowing stories have been emerging of hospitals overflowing with patients, patients suffering and dying due to shortage of medicines, oxygen and hospital beds.

Facing severe criticism for its poor handling of

the Covid-19 pandemic, and for preferring elections and Kumbh Mela to public health, the Union government on Monday went into a huddle to find ways to wriggle out of this politically volatile situation.

Miffed with the handling of the situation on

ground, Allahabad high court on Monday stepped in and ordered lockdown in five prominent cities of Uttar Pradesh - Lucknow, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Kanpur and Gorakhpur - till April 26 to contain the virus spread. "If popular government has its own political compulsions in not checking public movements during a pandemic, we cannot remain mere passive spectators," it said.

"In any civilized society if the public health system is unable to meet the challenges and people die for want of proper medication, it means there has been no proper development. Health and education go side-by-side. Those in the helm of affairs of governance are to be blamed for the present chaotic health problems and more so when there is democracy which means a government of the people, by the people and for the people," the Allahabad HC observed while adding: "If people die of pandemic in a large number due to paucity of sufficient medical aid it would be the governments to blame which failed to counter the pandemic even after one long year of experience and learning. One would only laugh at us that we have enough to spend on elections and very little to spend on public health."

A high level meeting of the core committee held in Thiruvananthapuram, decided to impose night curfew from 9 pm to 5 am for next two weeks. All shops and business establishments barring essential services will have to shut shop by 9 pm daily.

The meeting decided to intensify checking by police at main junctions, market places, commercial centres, city centres and major roads to enforce the restriction strictly and take action against the violators.

The cinema theatres will wind up shows by 7 pm, strict restrictions

HC orders
lockdown in
five UP cities

Allahabad, April 19: Amid a surge in Coronavirus cases, the Allahabad High Court on Monday directed the Uttar Pradesh government to impose a week-long lockdown in Lucknow, Allahabad, Kanpur Nagar, Varanasi and Gorakhpur.

Reacting to the order, the UP government, however, said there will be no "complete lockdown" in the cities for now.

A two-judge bench comprising justices Siddhartha Varma and Ajit Kumar passed the lockdown order on a Public Interest Litigation on the condition of quarantine centres in the state and treatment of Coronavirus patients.

"We are of the considered view that in given scenario of present time if people are restrained from going outside their homes for a week in the first instance, the current chain of spread of Covid infection can be broken and this will also give some respite to the frontline medical and health workers," the bench observed.

Accordingly, we are passing the directions in respect of cities of Prayagraj (Allahabad), Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur Nagar and

Gorakhpur and we direct the government to strictly enforce them forthwith," it said.

"All establishments be it government or private, except financial institutions and financial departments, medical and health services, industrial and scientific establishments, essential services including municipal functions, and public transport, shall remain closed till 26th April, 2021. The judiciary will, however, function on its own discretion," the bench said. The state has witnessed a spurt in Coronavirus cases over the past few weeks.

Responding to the order, Uttar Pradesh Additional Chief Secretary, Information, Navneet Sehgal said strict curbs are necessary to control the spread of the virus and that the government has taken several steps in that direction.

However, he said, alongside saving lives, protecting livelihoods is also important. "Therefore, there will be no complete lockdown in the cities for now. People are automatically closing many places," he said. He did not say whether the government intends to move the Supreme Court against the HC order. — PTI

Kerala imposes
night curfewDC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
APRIL 19

With Kerala reporting 31,901 cases in the last two days and the second wave posing serious challenge to the health care system, the state government on Monday decided to enforce stringent measures including night curfew from April 20.

A high level meeting of the core committee held in Thiruvananthapuram, decided to impose night curfew from 9 pm to 5 am for next two weeks.

All shops and business establishments barring essential services will have to shut shop by 9 pm daily.

The meeting decided to intensify checking by police at main junctions, market places, commercial centres, city centres and major roads to enforce the restriction strictly and take action against the violators.

The cinema theatres will wind up shows by 7 pm, strict restrictions

have been imposed on shopping malls and the entry of people would be restricted, all private tuition centres have been directed to close down their establishments and conduct online tuition classes. The government offices and private establishments have been directed to put in place "work from home arrangement" till the situation comes under control.

Though the public and private transportation have not been taken off the roads, they will have to strictly comply with the Covid safety norms while operating services.

The government decided to allow the cultural extravaganza Thrissur pooram without the usual pump and show.

It will be a low key affair this time with the main pooram venue being kept out of bounds for the masses that normally throng the Swaraj round and

Vadakkumathan temple premises to take part in the cultural festivities.

WERE CORONA DEATHS IN VELLORE
GH DUE TO LACK OF OXYGEN ?

FROM PG1

As many as 22,961 patients have been tested positive, and of them, 361 had died, said Collector Dr. Shanmuga Sundaram.

Commenting on the situation, Collector Dr. Shanmuga Sundaram said, "The news that Corona patients died due to lack of oxygen is completely false. No patient was transferred from the government medical college hospital to any other

hospital. Two of the deaths on Monday are not corona patients. The oxygen pipeline maintenance work was carried out as usual." Deputy director, District health department, Manivannan said, "The information that six persons had died is false. Three persons had died, but not due to lack of oxygen supply. They could have died of complications including heart disease."

CORONAVIRUS | SCARE

Prevalence of shortness of breath is slightly higher in the second wave of Covid-19

Over 70 pc of Covid patients above 40 yrs in both waves

New Delhi, April 19: More than 70 per cent of Covid-19 patients over 40 years of age in both the waves and older population continues to be more vulnerable to the infection, the Centre said on Monday.

Addressing media, ICMR Director General Balram Bhargava said there is no difference in deaths between first and second wave among hospitalised patients, while the oxygen requirement is higher in second wave and ventilator requirement is not higher in the second wave.

Prevalence of shortness

● **ICMR DIRECTOR** General said there is no difference in deaths between first and second wave among hospitalised patients, while the oxygen requirement is higher in second wave and ventilator requirement is not higher in the second wave.

● **NITI AAYOG Member** (Health) said in the first wave 31 per cent patients were aged less than 30 years, this time it is up to 32 per cent.

of breath is slightly higher in the second wave of Covid-19 but sore throat and dry cough and other symptoms were higher in the first wave, the Centre said on Monday.

"No difference in deaths between first and second wave among hospitalised patients. About 54.5 per cent patients require oxy-

gen in second wave against 41.5 per cent in the first wave," he said.

"More than 70 per cent patients in both waves are more than 40 years old, only marginally higher proportion of younger patients. Higher proportion of asymptomatic patients in the second wave," he said, based on

the study of 1,885 patients in second wave and 7,600 patients in the first wave.

NITI Aayog Member (Health) V.K. Paul said in the first wave 31 per cent patients were aged less than 30 years, this time it is up to 32 per cent. "Essentially there is no difference," Paul said.

Bhargava appealed that wastage of oxygen must not happen and it should be rationalised.

Paul added that remdesivir must be used on hospitalised patients in moderate stages of illness on oxygen and it is not to be used in home settings.

— PTI



A man wearing PPE performs last rites of his mother who died of Coronavirus at the Ghaziabad Cremation Ground in Ghaziabad district on Monday. — PTI

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today

By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: Advance preparations will save you from the prevalent mental stress. Your outgoing nature will help you build good contacts. Peace of mind should be given top priority.



Taurus: Pending works may get completed leading to mental peace. You must realise the importance of love. You'll make contacts with influential personalities.



Gemini: It is high time for you to realise your ambitions and make serious efforts to achieve them. Accept new responsibilities with a positive outlook.



Cancer: Indulging in useless activities will divert your attention from work. Adapting to new technology will be important to keep pace with the changing times.



Leo: It is the right time to change your rigid attitude for the sake of your career. Otherwise it may mar your future prospects. Many things may seem good, but only from a distance.



Virgo: You succeed in reassessing your strengths and weaknesses. Love life will give you freedom to grow as an individual. Major government contracts are likely to come your way today.

You share your b'day with

Nara Chandrababu Naidu is an Indian politician and current leader of opposition in the AP Legislative Assembly. He is a former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, serving from 2014 to 2019. He was the first CM of the state after it was divided.



Libra: Parents would enjoy a decision-making power over their offspring. Financial opportunity is likely to knock at your doors today.



Scorpio: A flourish in business brings rich dividends. Your luck will immensely help you professionally. Parental guidance will help you achieve personal milestones.



Sagittarius: You will need to pay a little more attention towards the development of kids. You are likely to realise the benefits of keeping a sound health.



Capricorn: Lending a loan to someone would be in your interest today. You fail to make desired efforts to give love a place in your life. Keep an eye on individuals trying to mislead for personal gains.

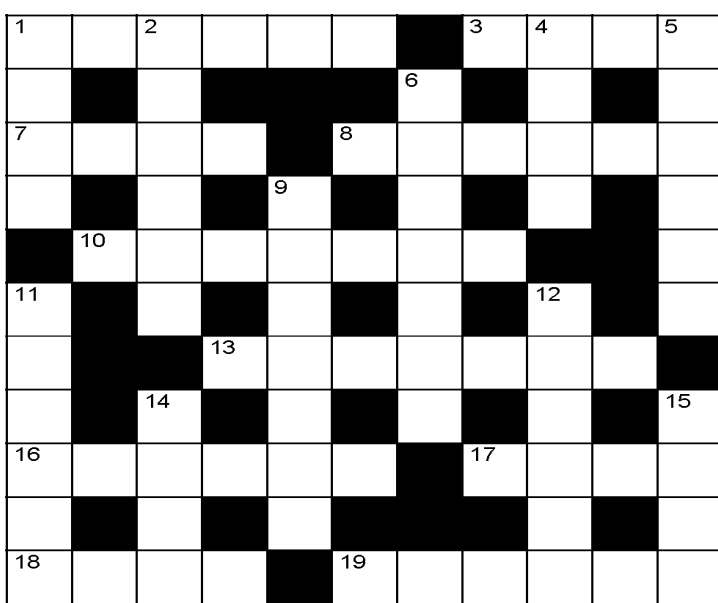


Aquarius: The burden of children's education might pressurise you. An investment in a growth-oriented firm is on the card. You need to pay special attention to make life joyous & happy.



Pisces: An expert's opinion would enable you to choose the best scheme for investing money. You need to keep a firm control over lust to save a love affair. Family atmosphere will bring you happiness.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Moral principles (6)
- Mimicked (4)
- Golf club (4)
- Portion of time (6)
- Caustic remark (7)
- Bridgellike structure (7)
- Swot up on (6)
- Annul (4)
- Neat (4)
- Inventor's protection (6)

Down

- Go (4)
- Oriental smoking pipe (6)
- Affectedly proper (4)
- Fairground bumper car (6)
- Disease (anag) (7)
- Celestial obscuration (7)
- Undercover (6)
- Bracket candlestick (6)
- Very keen (4)
- Hawker (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Insinuate, 6. Panic, 7. Crumb, 9. Onyx, 10. Jigsaw, 12. Lifted, 14. Moot, 17. Mauls, 18. Weigh, 19. Offspring.

Down: 2. Nanny, 3. Inca, 4. Urchin, 5. Truss, 6. Problem, 8. Bewitch, 11. Versus, 13. Fluff, 15. Onion, 16. Ewer.

Word Mine

P
E
E
A
R
C
D
E
T

TODAY'S RATINGS: 40 AVERAGE: 44
GOOD: 48 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 once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

Word Mine
P
E
E
A
R
C
D
E
T
Today's Ratings: 40 Average: 44
Good: 48 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 once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

Jumble

VINGE
GEEMR
EFYLER
SBDIEE
Jumbles: WHOSE FLIRT MARLIN GOBLET
Answer: After the hunting dog wandered into the bog in search of birds, he was — SMELLING "FOWL".

hearts and either minor. Three clubs was an inquiry. North's first double indicated clubs; his second, extra values. South ran to four spades, but when doubled, retreated to the better fit. A diamond lead would have been lethal, but West chose a heart. Schapiro ruffed on the board and played a trump to his queen and West's ace. Again, a diamond shift would have been effective, but West thought from the bidding

that South had four spades (so no discards) and was worried that he had the diamond jack. So West switched to a spade. South won, drew the missing trump and ran the spades, discarding a diamond loser. Schapiro lost only one trick in each minor.

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CALVIN AND HOBBES | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



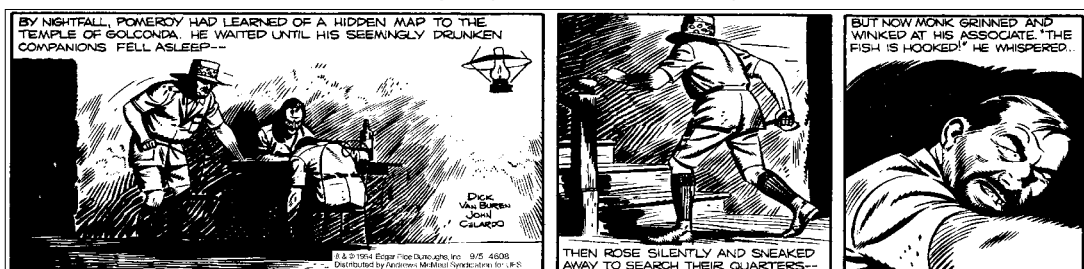
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



Oz-NZ travel bubble opens, high emotion as kin reunite

Passengers can fly across Tasman Sea without undergoing quarantine

Sydney, April 19: Emotions ran high Monday as excited passengers set off on the first flights to take advantage of a quarantine-free travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand, allowing families split by the pandemic to finally reunite.

"(I'll) yell, scream cry, hug, kiss, (feel) happy — all of these emotions at once," Denise O'Donoghue, 63, told AFP at Sydney airport as she prepared to board her flight.

The arrangement means that for the first time in almost 400 days passengers can fly across the Tasman Sea without undergoing mandatory Covid-19 quarantine when they arrive.

"It's a very big day and exciting for families and friends," said New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who hailed the success of both countries in containing the virus as a key factor in allowing the travel corridor.

Australia was New Zealand's largest source of international tourists before

Canada to send support to virus-hit province

Ottawa, April 19: Canada is expected to channel funds into childcare, wage subsidies and other pandemic recovery measures as the government presents its new budget Monday ahead of possible snap elections.

The 2021 budget is the first full fiscal plan from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's administration since the

the pandemic, accounting for about 1.5 million arrivals or 40 percent of total visitors in 2019.

The bubble's opening received saturation coverage from media in both countries, with live television reporting from airports providing regular updates on the progress of flights.

On a grass embankment at the foot of Wellington Airport's runway, the words

start of the Covid-19 pandemic and is expected to outline Canada's recovery as virus infections surge.

Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland has promised Ottawa "will continue to do whatever it takes" to fight the spread of the Coronavirus and support the economy as it emerges from a recession.

"WELCOME WHANAU" (family) were spelled out in giant letters.

Lorraine Wratt, a New Zealander stranded by the pandemic while visiting family in Australia, told AFP it was "wonderful" to be able to travel again.

"We're very excited to be heading back home but we're gonna miss our family (in Australia) big time," she said.

"We have a plan for jobs and robust growth," she told parliament last month. Canada entered the pandemic in a strong fiscal position relative to other G7 nations after decades of belt-tightening, she said, allowing it to dole out hundreds of billions of dollars in Covid-19 emergency aid.

— AFP

"We came to Australia on December 11 to spend Christmas with our children... planning to go back in February, it's been a bit of a nightmare."

Australia is home to hundreds of thousands of expatriate New Zealanders and before Coronavirus many regularly shuttled back and forth across the Tasman on three-hour flights.

— AFP

Banned party releases 11 Pak police hostages

Lahore, April 19: The banned radical Islamist party Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan on Monday released 11 police hostages after the first round of talks with the Imran Khan government, which buckled under the pressure of the terror outfit over its demand to expel the French ambassador over a blasphemous caricature published in France last year.

After declaring TLP a proscribed outfit under terrorism laws and freezing its leadership's bank accounts last week, the Imran Khan

led Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government had announced that there would be no talks with the terror outfit as the state would not allow it to challenge its writ. However, after Sunday's clash between the law enforcement agencies and the TLP workers in Lahore in which 11 policemen and Rangers were taken hostage by the radicals, the government held talks with the outfit leadership on Monday.

Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed in a video message said: Talks have started with the TLP. The

TLP has released 11 policemen who were taken hostage by it and kept at its headquarters in Lahore. The first round of talks with the TLP went well and the second will take place in the evening. The minister hoped that the rest of the matters would be resolved with the TLP in the second round of talks.

Meanwhile, business centres, markets and public transport in Lahore, Karachi and some other parts of the country remained closed on Monday on the call of senior cleric Mufti Muneeb-

ur-Rehman to condemn the "brutal" police action at the TLP headquarters in Lahore on Sunday that left three Islamists dead and dozens injured.

The TLP has announced a protest march to Islamabad on Tuesday if the government does not expel the French envoy.

In Monday's talks with the government, the TLP leaders presented four demands — expel the French ambassador; release its party chief Saad Rizvi; revoke the ban on TLP; and release all its activists (over 3,000). — PTI

Release journo, Myanmar told

Tokyo, April 19: Japan's government said Monday it is asking Myanmar to release a Japanese journalist who was arrested by security forces in its largest city of Yangon the previous day.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters that his government is asking Myanmar authorities to explain the arrest and release him as soon as possible.

STATE BANK OF INDIA
STRESSED ASSETS MANAGEMENT BRANCH
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COIMBATORE 641 037
e-mail: sbi.16454@sbi.co.in

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property/ies mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of State Bank of India being the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis on 20.05.2021, for recovery of below mentioned amount with future interest and costs due to the State Bank of India from the borrower/s and guarantor/s as below mentioned.

Name & Address of the Borrower : VijaiMahalaxmi Spinning Mills India Private Limited (under liquidation) having its registered office at 15, K.R.R. Layout 2nd Street, Mangalam Road, Tirupur-641604, represented by Liquidator Shri.V.Seshadri Sowrirajan, appointed by NCLT, Chennai and its guarantors 1) Shri C.Dhandapani, S/o.Mr.Chokkalingam Chettiar, 2) Smt.D.Prema, W/o.Mr.C.Dhandapani, 3) Smt.K.Padmavathi, 4) Shri.K.Murugushankar, S/o.Late.V.Kuppusamy & 5) Shri.D.Sri Sudharshan, S/o.Mr.C.Dhandapani. Amount outstanding as on 31.03.2021: **Rs.63.84.09,847/- (Rupees Sixty Three Crores Eighty Four Lakhs Nine Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty Seven Only)** plus further interest, costs and charges thereon.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY/IES:
Property No.1 Item No. 1 Property including 7 Acres land & building (Plinth Area of 1.51lakh sq.ft) situated in Re.SF No.728/3 (Old SF No.171 & 171/A), Kongoor Village, DharapuramTk, belonging to M/s.VijaiMahalaxmi Spinning Mills India Private Ltd (Covered under Document No.7764/2010 dated 15.07.2010, Dharapuram, SRO)
Item No.2 Vacant land measuring 0.50 Acre situated in Re.SF No.728/4 (Old SF No.171 & 173/A), Kongoor Village, Dharapuram, belonging to Smt.D.Prema (Covered under Document No.7657/2010 dated 14.07.2010, Dharapuram, SRO)
Item No.3 Vacant Land measuring 3 Acres situated in Re.SF No.728 (Old SF No.171 & 173/A), Kongoor Village, Dharapuram, belonging to Smt.D.Prema Covered under Document No. 809/2010 dated 04.02.2010, Dharapuram, SRO)
Item No.4 Vacant land measuring 10.52 Acres in Re.SF No.725 (Old SF No.172 & patta No.426) Kongoor Village, Dharapuram, belonging to Shri.C.Dhandapani (Covered under Document No.8749 /2010 dated 19.08.2010, Dharapuram, SRO)
Item No.5 Vacant land measuring 10 Acres situated in Re.SF No.728 (Old SF No.171 & 173/A) Kongoor Village, Dharapuram, belonging to Shri.C.Dhandapani. (Covered under Document No.808/2010 dated 04.02.2010, Dharapuram, SRO)
Total extent is 31.02 Acres
Reserve Price of the entire 5 items of properties mentioned as Property No.1 (Item No.1-5) herein :

Reserve Price : Rs.15,15,00,000/- EMD Amount : Rs.1,51,50,000/- Bid Multiplier : Rs.10,00,000/-

Encumbrances known to the Bank if any: NIL

Date and time of e- Auction : 20.05.2021 (Thursday); 1.00 P.M. to 4.00 P.M. (with unlimited extension of 5 minutes if bidding continues till sale is concluded)
Inspection of properties : 30.04.2021 (Friday) (From 11.00 a.m to 04.00 p.m.)
Last date and time for submission of Proof of EMD : 19.05.2021 (Wednesday) upto 4.00 pm
EMD shall be deposited Only through NEFT to credit of MSTC E-WALLET (Refer Point No.13-b in terms & conditions uploaded in the website)

The auction will be conducted online only, through the web portal <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/bapi/index.jsp>.
The bidder registration should be completed by bidder well in advance, before e-auction date as the process takes minimum of two to three working days.
For detailed terms and conditions of the E-auction sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://bapi.in> & <https://bank.sbi>

Date : 12-04-2021
Place : Coimbatore

Authorised Officer
State Bank of India

DECCAN Chronicle

20 APRIL 2021

China giving India the runaround

The Chinese were giving the Indians the runaround in the matter of negotiations for disengagement from friction points in eastern Ladakh until the Indian Army, in an audacious late night action in late August last year that caught the Chinese troops unawares, captured key peaks in the Kailash Range south of the Pangong Lake. From the position of advantage thus gained, the Indian forces commanded a strategically panoramic view of the Chinese deployments stretching far, and could deal with them as they wished. However, a military advantage of such significance was surrendered by New Delhi in February this year in negotiations.

The expectation was that a show of reasonableness in this area would persuade the Chinese to be accommodating in the Depsang Plains to the north, and in Gogra and Hot Springs in the broad Galwan area. Currently, Chinese armour has rapidly raced forward more than 15 kilometres inside the Indian demarcation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and can threaten our military airfield at Daulat Beg Oldi, which is practically within hailing distance from the Karakoram Pass that links China and Pakistan overland. Depsang has critical value for India and the Chinese are not budging from there.

The upshot of this is quite clear — the Chinese are not going back to status quo ante which existed in March, 2020 any time soon, as demanded by India.

8, but under the settlement Indian patrols are not permitted beyond Finger 4. This was not the case a year ago.

The upshot of this is quite clear — the Chinese are not going back to status quo ante which existed in March, 2020 any time soon, as demanded by India. If this demand is not met, the restoration of bilateral relations to earlier levels cannot be visualised. This was evident in a plaintive statement of the external affairs ministry earlier this month. "In this context it was highlighted also that completion of disengagement in other areas would pave the way for (the) two sides to consider de-escalation of forces and ensure full restoration of peace and tranquillity and enable progress in bilateral relations," the statement read. This was after the eleventh round of military-level talks in which, according to the statement, it was decided to resolve the outstanding issues in an "expeditious manner".

Instead of staring facts in the face, defence minister Rajnath Singh and General Bipin Rawat, the Chief of Defence Staff, appear to be launched on a propaganda spree to distract public opinion. The minister has more than once echoed the Prime Minister in saying that India has not lost one inch of territory to China in eastern Ladakh. The establishment seeks to garner praise from the public for standing up to the might of the Chinese military. But the world knows better. So do our own security professionals. If there won't be "disengagement" by China in Depsang and Gogra-Hot Springs, there can be no "de-escalation" by India in Ladakh. This has the makings of the 38th parallel, the militarised border between north and South Korea.

Castro, a beacon of strength

To a question during his visit to the United States if he would want a Muammar Gaddafi or Yasser Arafat or a Fidel Castro to be the future president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela replied: "One of the mistakes which some political analysts make is to think that their enemies should be our enemies." In one stroke, the anti-Apartheid warrior, newly released from prison after 27 years, decimated the white arrogance that believed it has the power to decide the politics of the world, and also marketed a brand of politics that challenged the US hegemony in the northern hemisphere for decades. People have their reasons to find fault with Cuba and the Castros, but that tiny island nation and its iconic leaders, brothers Fidel and Raul, were a beacon of strength to revolutionaries who fought impossible imperialists around the world. Mandela was just reflecting that allegiance. So, the stepping down of Raul as the first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba marks an end of an era that began with the Cuban revolution in 1959.

Raul succeeded his elder brother as President of Cuba in 2008 and as party chief in 2011; quit as President in 2018 and handed over the charge to Miguel Diaz-Canel, who is expected to succeed him as the party chief as well. In the last six decades of the Communist rule, Cuba has achieved tremendous progress in two key human development indices: health and education. Cuba's ratio of physicians to 10,000 people is the highest in the world; at 99.9 per cent, the literacy rate of Cuba is one of the highest. But the Cuban dispensation faces the same challenge every Communist country does: the need to change with the times, democratise the systems and institutions and meet the aspirations of their free-minded people. The revolutionaries will have to reinvent themselves if they were to remain a beacon of strength for their comrades outside as well as their own people.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



US Afghan exit a pyrrhic victory for Pak generals?



Indranil Banerjee

Conventional wisdom has it that America's decision to end its military presence in Afghanistan signals total victory for Pakistan's artful generals and disaster for the Afghan government and its allies, particularly India. However, this might not necessarily be the actual long-term denouement.

To begin with, the US withdrawal decision was inevitable and sensible. For, there was no favourable end state in sight for the United States. US President Joe Biden did well to announce the formal end to the 20-year-old "Afghan War". All US combatants are to leave Afghanistan by September 9, 2021, the twentieth anniversary of the attacks on America in 2001.

The generals in Rawalpindi are gloating over what is generally being viewed as America's worst military defeat. The US invaded Afghanistan 20 years ago with the aim of annihilating the terrorist organisation Al Qaeda and driving out its Pakistan-backed ally, the Taliban.

Al Qaeda was pretty much decimated, and the Taliban fled to safe havens inside their mentor's backyard while remnants of the Pakistan Army were allowed an honourable exit. For a while, in the initial years, it had appeared that the US military campaign had done wildly well.

Smug officials and legislators in Washington drew up ambitious plans to install a Western-style democracy in Afghanistan. A former CIA contact, Hamid Karzai, was pulled out from hiding and installed as President in Kabul. Thereafter things started going downhill.

What the powers in Washington had not reckoned with was the tenacity of the generals in Pakistan's military headquarters at Rawalpindi. The generals were cowed down by their "friends" and men-

tors in Washington but would not abandon their dream of making Afghanistan a part of their strategic backyard.

The generals publicly cringed and whined before their American masters but secretly worked against them, reviving the Taliban, arming and training them and fielding even more vicious groups like the notorious Haqqani network to target Americans.

Rawalpindi rightly calculated that Washington could not win a war of attrition spread over decades. The Americans bled in the Afghan badlands, their convoys came under regular attack within Pakistan, assassins trained by Rawalpindi's dirty tricks department regularly eliminated troublesome Afghans, especially the military types, and remorseless Pathans raised in Pakistan's madrasas routinely blew themselves up in the roads and bazaars of Afghan towns and cities, taking down innumerable civilians with them.

Gradually the Taliban and their murderous allies gained the upper hand while the Americans and their Nato allies retreated.

That there could be no satisfactory endgame for the United States had dawned upon American Presidents a long time ago. Former US President Donald Trump vowed to bring back all US troops from Afghanistan but had prevaricated and ultimately thrown up his hands. For all military experts agreed that any US military withdrawal would enable the Taliban backed by the Pakistan Army to quickly bring the present Afghan regime to its knees and undo the sacrifices of thousands of US servicemen.

President Biden though is determined not to go down that route and the September 9 deadline seems to be hard and final. The Stars and Stripes will be lowered over the dusty Afghan landscape for the last time on that day.

Strategic experts in India are worried. And for good reason too. The last time the Taliban had taken over Afghanistan, some 26 years ago, India's historical presence in Afghanistan was forced to abruptly end. Almost overnight, Indian diplomats and others had to flee in specially chartered flights, leaving behind a grand embassy building that was later to be converted to an ammunition dump by the victorious Taliban forces.

This time too there is no guarantee that India's presence and influence in Afghanistan will not end with the anticipated victory of the Taliban. Pakistan's generals, who own and control the Taliban, want more than anything else to forcefully and completely eject all Indian presence from Afghanistan. If the Indians are allowed to remain, it will at best be a token presence.

This is a stated objective and Rawalpindi's generals have even complained about the humanitarian and development work carried out in that country by the Indian government. With Afghanistan out of bounds for Indians, the generals hope they will convert that country into their backyard for military and terrorist activities much of which would be directed against India.

However, such a favourable outcome could well elude the generals this time. For global strategic equations are changing, and the primary focus of the Western powers has moved away from the Middle East which has been their principal obsession since the end of the Second World War.

The importance of oil in global geopolitics and economics compelled the Western powers to evolve a strategy to maintain domi-

nance over the Middle East and deny its enemies influence or unfettered access to this region. With the diminishing importance of oil and the concomitant rise of an assertive China, the focus of the Western powers has shifted.

Pakistan, which was a lynchpin in Western strategic calculation, has lost its previous importance. The US withdrawal from Afghanistan will free Washington from the last of its dependencies on Islamabad. This will presage profound changes.

Coupled with this is the gradual and inevitable shrinking of Saudi Arabian influence and cash reserves. Riyadh too can no longer afford to write blank cheques for Islamabad as it did in the past.

As a result, Pakistan is bound to face increased economic difficulties as it consumes more and more of its limited resources to keep the fighting going in Afghanistan and on the borders with India. This is one reason why Islamabad today seeks a temporary truce at the Line of Control in Kashmir. Constant fighting is a costly business and Pakistan is gradually but inevitably sliding into bankruptcy.

These developments will very shortly completely push Islamabad into the deep pockets of its "all-weather friend" Beijing, which already views Pakistan as a vassal state. Pakistan's generals might continue to dream of turning Afghanistan into a vassal state but they might not have realised that as a vassal themselves, the real power in Afghanistan will be China. Beijing will decide what kind of regime it wants in Afghanistan and from all indications it is clear they have no desire to witness the free run of the highly radicalised Islamists in that country.

Pakistan internally too is not exactly a picture of serenity or economic health. There is a heavy price to pay for sponsoring egregious violence.

Pakistan's generals may raise their glasses to celebrate their victory in Afghanistan, but those glasses might well turn out to be empty.

The writer is an independent commentator on political and security issues

LETTERS

PEOPLE, POLITICOS

THE CULPRITS

DC's Resident Editor R. Mohan has not spared anybody for the surge of the scourge called Covid in its more virulent form. Not even one word in his write up can be called as exaggeration or overreaction swerving from truth. However, people and politicians were the main culprits for the spread of Covid on such a large and vehement scale with impunity and ignorance of the consequences of throwing protocols to the wind during election campaigns. Had the ECI wished it could have even postponed the elections for at least six months considering human lives more valuable than the craze of politicians to grab power by any means. Even now it is not too late. The ECI can impose all restrictions with regard to victory celebrations which the winning alliance will indulge in after the counting of votes is over. .

V. Rakesh Kaushik, Chennai

VACCINE FOR ALL

Some State Chief Ministers and politicians have been demanding that the government should be administering 'vaccine for all' considering the exponential rate at which the Covid-19 pandemic is spreading in almost all States. However, the present strategy of the Central government to initially vaccinate all those aged 45 and above was the most appropriate policy. It is people of this age group, especially senior citizens, who are the most vulnerable with weaker immunity, comorbidities etc. who face a much higher risk to their lives from the deadly virus as compared to younger persons. The government's most urgent responsibility would be to prevent mortalities of all those in this age group by fully vaccinating them on priority basis. Moreover, we also now hear of vaccine shortages in some States, which would not make it possible to implement a 'vaccine for all policy' anyway at this stage, till these vaccines are adequately stocked throughout the country. Considering the urgency of the present serious health crisis situation, it would have been justified to speedily vaccinate the higher aged group first, after which the younger population will also be covered.

A. Mohan, Chennai

BOUNCING CHEQUES

It is disheartening to note that as many as 15000 cheques issued towards Ram Mandir construction have been returned by the Banks for various reasons, the main one being want of "sufficient funds." "This is really shameful on the part of Ram Bakhts who for unwanted publicity and prestige issue cheques knowing full well that they don't have enough funds in the Bank. Is it not cheating Ram Lalla and how can they expect Lord Rama to bless them? The temple authorities don't also have any legal authority to proceed against such defaulters as the cheques, were issued as donations. In such matters only the conscience and honesty of the individual should work and none can receive the blessings of God by issuing cheques that bounce for want of funds which is an act of dishonesty. Though God will not sue anybody in this regard the devotees should keep their conscience clean and clear.

S. Nagarajan Iyer, Coimbatore

Aakar Patel



How the world sees India is changing... not for the better

What sort of India is the present generation growing up in and what will they live through? I am over 50 and with good health and good luck might see another couple of decades or so but in productivity terms my best years are behind me. The future belongs to those who are today children and young adults. What do they have in store for them? Having looked at the data and the facts of the last seven years in detail for my next book, I can see a little bit into the future and what it has in store.

Economically, the future is slightly different from what it was when I was coming into the job market. India had liberalised its economy in the year that I turned 21 and in the few years after that the market for jobs vastly improved in the cities. Even people with a generic college degree with no specialisation could get a white-collar job in an airconditioned office if they had just basic knowledge of English.

This greatly benefited the middle class which had always had access to quality schools but not that many op-

tions in terms of work (which is why parents kept insisting on specialisation in education and asking children to become doctors and engineers). Now it was possible even for a BA, BSc or BCom woman or man to access an upper class lifestyle. I was one who benefited from this, as did lakhs of others.

The majority of Indians did not benefit from this, of course, because they had access neither to the big cities or to a decent education. But they had hope, and this explains the thousands of private educational institutions that sprang up in India's towns and semi-urban spaces that attempted to replicate what was happening in the cities.

This period is now over. India's urban unemployment is at a historic high and, more important, the participation rate of India's labour force — meaning those who are employed or looking for work — is at a historic low. This means crores of Indians of working age (15 and above) have given up hope of finding a job. This was the case even before the Covid-19 pandemic and the position has been steady for over

three years, meaning that it is not cyclical and will not change on its own. The lack of work will in time result in a lack of hope and this will have consequences. One of them will be an increase in crime and lawlessness.

Long term trends globally are also negative in terms of both trade and employment and so, unlike in the past when some of us benefited, the future does not hold out hope for those who are today young.

Socially also, the India that I grew up in and knew has changed. India has always had a problem of reconciling its theoretical secular status with the reality that communal tensions existed. The 1980s and 1990s gave us enough evidence to prove this was the case. This communal impulse was dampened by efforts from the government. However poor these efforts may have been, the government did not actively inflame the impulse as has happened since 2014. This has consequences both internally and, less important, externally. Within India our politics has become dark and election campaigns are run by the dominant political party

actively targeting Indian Muslims. Because this is electorally rewarding as we have seen, we will see more of it. The consequence is that it has damaged Indian society and produced violence in neighbourhoods. To give one clear example, there were zero beef lynchings before 2015. We have introduced a new category of violence.

This will have downstream consequences also, such as economic, which will affect the wider population, but there is no point talking about that today. Externally, our love for hate has brought the world's attention on us. Just to give an example from this week, this is what the European Parliament said on April 14: "Members have expressed concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in India, echoing comments by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and several UN Special Rapporteurs. This includes reports that human rights defenders and journalists in the country lack a safe working environment. The report also voices alarm regarding India's Citizenship Amendment Act, which according to the

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is fundamentally discriminatory in nature against Muslims and dangerously divisive."

This text was approved by 61 votes in favour and six votes against. India's attempts to stop it or soften the criticism failed. The Indian government will brush it off as it has several other reports this year, but again, this comes with consequences. You cannot expect to be given a position on the UN Security Council, as India does, when the world sees what you are doing with India.

India was viewed from the outside as a place which was chaotic and noisy but likeable. This was so when I first went abroad at the age of 16. This has now changed in the view of those who study and observe India. It will change soon for the rest of the world also. The optimism has gone. It is disappointing as an Indian to record this, but one cannot look away from what one has found.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,746.21	0.17
Nifty 50	14,873.80	0.37
S&P 500*	4,161.45	-0.57
Dollar (₹)	74.59	-0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.51	0.50
Euro (₹)	88.52	0.07
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	45,975▲182	0.39
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.73	-0.06
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.081	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.605	0.032

* As of 8:30 PM IST

ACC net jumps 74% to ₹563 cr in March quarter

Cement maker ACC Ltd reported a 74.17 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 562.59 crore for the first quarter ended March 2021, helped by an increase in sales and cost efficiency. The company, which follows the January-December financial year, had posted a profit of Rs 323.02 crore in the year-ago period. Total revenue from operations was at Rs 4,291.97 crore, up 22.57 per cent from Rs 3,501.71 crore earlier.



Market turns volatile; FPIs net sellers Sentiments sour as C19 cases rise

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 19

It was panic selling over rising Covid infections in the country as the market opened on Monday. In just half an hour, the Sensex was down 1469.32 points, or 3 per cent, as the benchmark index touched the day's low of 47,362.71. The Nifty-50 touched a low of 14,191.40, down 426 points.

But a partial recovery later helped the Sensex to close with a loss of 882.61 points, or 1.81 per cent, at 47,949.42 while Nifty-50 closed at 14,359.45, down 1.77 per cent.

Vaccine and oxygen shortages in several states were making the fight against the second Covid wave difficult for the Centre and states.

"It seems like our markets have decoupled from global counterparts due to rising Covid cases in India. Going forward, the Covid-19 situation and the pace of vaccination would be a key monitorable for the markets," said Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking. "Market participants reacted negatively to increasing restriction announcements from state governments while ignoring the positive global cues," Mishra said.

Foreign portfolio investors were net sellers of equities worth Rs 1,633.70 crore but domestic institutional investors stepped in with Rs 2,355.56 crore net buying.

₹ SHEDS 53 PAISE ON LOCKDOWN FEARS

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 19

Fear of harsher restrictions and more economic pain amid a record surge in Covid-19 cases spooked the rupee that fell 53 paise to close at 74.88 on Monday. The rupee is under pressure despite a weak US dollar globally and has weakened by 3 per cent this month.

India reported its tenth record daily increase in Covid cases in 11 days, with the capital city of New Delhi announcing a

complete curfew till next Monday. Maharashtra had imposed stringent curbs, effective April 15.

On Friday, the rupee had settled at 74.35 a dollar: The Dollar Index, which gauges the dollar's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.49 per cent to 91.11. Anindya Banerjee, deputy vice-president-currency derivatives at Kotak Securities, said, "RBL...may intervene aggressively to curb volatility. Over the near term, we expect a range of 74.00 and 75.50."

MACROTECH TANKS ON MKT DEBUT

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 19

Mumbai-based Macrotech Developers, earlier Lodha Developers, made a tepid stock market debut at 10.28 per cent discount to the public issue price, of Rs 486 a share, at Rs 436 on the NSE. As the market faced huge selling pressure, Macrotech further dipped to a low of Rs 422.60. However, the shares gained upward momentum as the mar-

ket stabilised and recovered some losses, which helped Macrotech to close at Rs 457.95 on the NSE and at Rs 463.15 on the BSE, lower by 5.77 per cent and 4.70 per cent, respectively. The firm had raised Rs 2,500 crore from the IPO.

Macrotech Developers is now the third largest listed realty firm in terms of m-cap at Rs 20,717.55 crore, after DLF (Rs 58,615.38 crore) and Godrej Properties (Rs 36,167.34 crore.)

The fall was bigger in the broader market with Nifty Mid-cap 50 and Nifty Mid-cap 100 indices down by 2.

60 per cent and 2.12 per cent respectively and the BSE Mid-cap down by 1.93 per cent.

Oxford study to reinfect recovered C19 patients

TODD GILLESPIE
APRIL 19

People who have fought off the Covid-19 virus will be deliberately reinfecting in a first-of-its-kind trial at the University of Oxford that may shed light on how to develop more effective vaccines against the pathogen.

Researchers are looking for 64 healthy, previously Covid-infected volunteers from 18 to 30 years old to be studied under controlled, quarantined conditions for at least 17 days, the UK university said on Monday. Participants will be infected with the original strain from Wuhan and followed for a year.

Initial data from the Oxford study should be available within several months, helping vaccine developers look at levels and types of immunity needed to prevent reinfection, and how long protection persists. Challenge trials, involving deliberate, supervised infections, are seen as helpful for answering questions like these, because they allow scientists to scrutinise the details of how the body confronts the virus and vice versa.

While vaccines and previous infections provide some immune protection against the coronavirus, concerns and doubts remain about how long it lasts.

— Bloomberg

SC stays HC proceedings in Future-Amazon case

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

The Supreme Court has stayed the proceedings in the Amazon-Future Group case before the single and division benches of the Delhi High Court.

"...Further proceedings before the single judge as well as the Division bench of the High Court shall remain stayed," the bench headed by Rohinton Fali Nariman said.

The court was hearing the appeal by Amazon that challenged the division bench's decision in the case involving the Future group. On March 22, the division bench of Chief



Justice D. N. Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh had stayed a March 18 order of single judge Justice J. R. Midha ordering attachment of the assets of Future Coupons, Future Retail, Kishore Biyani and 10 others promoters.

The court has permitted filing of counter affidavit within two weeks from Monday. A rejoinder affidavit can be filed within

one week thereafter. The matter will come up for final disposal on May 4 along with other matters, the top court said.

Amazon has been seeking enforcement of an order of the emergency arbitrator (EA) at the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) restraining Future Retail from taking any steps to transfer its retail assets to Reliance Group under a proposed Rs 25,000-crore deal.

Amazon's contention is that it had invested Rs 1,431 crore in Future Coupons on the clear understanding that Future Retail would be the sole vehicle for its retail business.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

GLENMARK LIFE PLANS IPO

Mumbai, April 19: Glenmark Life Sciences, a wholly owned subsidiary of Glenmark Pharmaceuticals, has filed draft red herring prospectus with the Sebi for an initial public offering. The public offer comprises a fresh issue of shares worth up to Rs 1,160 crore and an offer for sale of over 73.05 lakh equity shares each of Rs 2 face value.

Glenmark Life Sciences is a developer and manufacturer of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). The company works with 16 of the 20 largest generic companies globally. With 120 APIs in its portfolio, the firm supplies APIs to more than 540 pharma companies worldwide.

— FC Bureau

WHATSAPP IN PINK IS A VIRUS

New Delhi, April 19: Cyber experts have warned users from falling into the prey of a virus link, which claims to turn Whatsapp in pink colour and

comes with new features. Clicking on the link claiming to be an official update from Whatsapp will hack users phone and they may lose access to their Whatsapp. "Beware of WhatsApp Pink!! A Virus is being spread in whatsapp groups with an APK download link. Don't click any link with the name of #WhatsappPink. Complete access to your phone will be lost," cyber security expert Rajshekhar Rajaharia posted on social media platforms. Several Whatsapp users were seen sharing the malicious link.

— PTI

M&M SELLS 1,000 E-CARGO AUTO



Pune, April 19: Mahindra & Mahindra on Monday said its Mahindra Treo Zor electric three-wheeler (cargo) has crossed the sales milestone of 1,000

units within six months of its launch, indicating growing demand for electric three-wheelers in Asia's third largest economy. With this milestone, the Treo Zor has become India's top selling electric cargo and has acquired a market share of 59 per cent in its category. —

Games

SHORT TAKES

Surge in cases delays India Open

New Delhi: The India Open Super 500 tournament, one of the last three qualifying events for the Tokyo Olympics, was on Monday postponed due to raging Covid-19 pandemic in the country. The \$400,000 India Open was scheduled to be held behind closed doors in the national capital from May 11 to 16.

"Considering the current challenges, BAI is left with no option but to announce the postponement of the tournament for the time being," Badminton Association of India (BAI) general secretary Ajay Singhania said. Delhi has emerged as the worst hit city with 25,462 cases reported on Sunday. — PTI

Vaccinate athletes at earliest: NRAI

New Delhi: The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has requested the government to vaccinate its Olympic-bound shooters at the earliest, taking into account the unprecedented spike in Covid-19 cases.

As per the data updated by the union health ministry, India reported 2,73,810 new positive cases in the last 24 hours, the highest single-day surge taking the country's caseload past the 1.5 crore mark.

As many as 1,619 people succumbed to the disease in the last 24 hours. Considering the grim situation, the NRAI is keen that its athletes are vaccinated soon. — PTI

Foxes pip Saints to reach FA Cup final

London: The goal scored by Kelechi Iheanacho didn't just send Leicester into a first FA Cup final since 1969. It was the first to be cheered by spectators at Wembley in more than a year. Not since March 2020 had fans been allowed into English football's national stadium through three national lockdowns. Now as coronavirus restrictions are eased, Wembley was allowed a 4,000-strong, socially distanced crowd on Sunday to witness Leicester's 1-0 victory over Southampton to test the return of spectators. While those permitted were only local residents over the age of 18 who tested negative for Covid-19. — AP

‘Super clubs’ in different league European heavyweights face criticism over ‘cynical’ Super League

Paris, April 19: Twelve of football's most powerful clubs faced accusations of greed and cynicism on Monday as they announced a breakaway European Super League that could have far-reaching implications for the game.

Six Premier League teams — Liverpool, Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City and Tottenham — are involved, alongside Real Madrid, Barcelona, Atletico Madrid, Juventus, Inter Milan and AC Milan.

The clubs, most of them saddled with debt and large wage bills, and hit hard by the pandemic, stand to benefit financial-

ly, with predictions that they will share billions of euros.

But the initial reaction from football authorities, fans and pundits was furious, with threats to ban participating clubs from domestic, European and world competitions.

"Our members and football supporters across the world have experienced the ultimate betrayal," the Chelsea Supporters' Trust said.

"This is unforgivable. Enough is enough," it added.

The ESL said the founding clubs had agreed to create a "new midweek competition" to start "as soon as practicable" but that they would continue

● **The clubs, most of them saddled with debt and large wage bills, and hit hard by the pandemic, stand to benefit financially, with predictions that they will share billions of euros.**

to play in their domestic leagues.

Three more clubs would be announced, the statement said, with the 15 founder members guaranteed to play each year. Another five places will be available "based on achievements in the prior season".

The founding clubs will share 3.5 billion euros for infrastructure investment and to offset pandemic costs, and are expected to receive a further 10 billion euros in "solidarity payments" over the life of the initial commitment — much more than is available in the Champions League.

"I think there are two things in play here: one is greed and the other is desperation," former England Football Association and Manchester City chairman David Bernstein told the BBC.

UEFA THREAT

Under the plan, two groups of 10 will play each other home and away, with the

top three qualifying for the quarter-finals. The fourth and fifth-based teams would play off for the two remaining spots.

Then the competition would adopt the same two-leg knockout format used in the Champions League before a single-leg final in May. A women's version is also planned.

But European governing body UEFA and the English, Spanish and Italian football authorities warned the clubs face being barred from their national competitions and the Champions League.

"We... Will remain united in our efforts to stop this cynical project," read a joint statement.

— AFP

Advantage Atletico after Real held

Madrid, April 19: A depleted Real Madrid delivered a major boost to Atletico Madrid's title hopes on Sunday by drawing 0-0 with Getafe in La Liga.

Atletico had thrashed Eibar 5-0 to reignite their own fading challenge and their victory proved even more valuable after Real Madrid were held to a goalless draw at the Coliseum Alfonso Perez.

It means Atletico extend their advantage at the top of the table from one to three points over Real while Barcelona, who now have a game in hand, are five points back.

Sevilla could yet join the race after they defeated Real Sociedad 2-1 but with six points separating them and Atletico, it remains more of an outside chance.

Real have enjoyed an incredible two weeks after beating Barcelona in the Clasico last weekend between knocking out Liverpool over two legs in the quarter-finals of the Champions League. But a crippling list of injuries and absences means the squad is down to its bare bones and this was the game that finally caught up with them. — AFP



Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois dives for the ball during a La Liga match against Getafe in Getafe on Sunday.

— AP

JUVENTUS' CHAMPIONS LEAGUE AT RISK

Milan, April 19: Andrea Pirlo conceded Juventus missed Cristiano Ronaldo's "killer instinct" as the Italian champions fell to their first league defeat in two decades to Atalanta on Sunday leaving their participation in next season's Champions League at risk.

Leaders Inter Milan edged towards the Serie A title despite a 1-1 draw at Napoli, to pull 13 points ahead of Juventus who dropped to fourth place.

Christian Eriksen snatched a point for Inter whose 11-match winning streak ended but who hold a nine-point advantage on AC Milan as they target a first league title since 2010.

Milan earlier got back winning in the San Siro after two months 2-1 against Genoa.

Juve's nine-year reign as champions looks set to end with nine games left, and their European hopes are also at risk.

— AFP

Spurs sack ‘Special One’

London, April 19: Jose Mourinho was sacked by Tottenham on Monday just six days before they play Manchester City in the League Cup final as the Portuguese boss paid the price for a turbulent campaign. Mourinho, 58, was dismissed after only 17 months in charge, even though he could have led the club to their first silverware since 2008.

Tottenham have been struggling in their bid to qualify for the Champions League via a top-four finish in the Premier League. Spurs are currently seventh, five points behind fourth placed West Ham, and suffered a shock Europa League last-16 exit against Dinamo Zagreb.

"The club can today announce that Jose Mourinho and his coaching staff have been relieved of their duties," a Tottenham statement said.

The bombshell news came less than 24 hours after Tottenham announced they were one of 12 clubs planning to launch a breakaway European Super League.

Tottenham's academy coach Ryan Mason, a former player at the club, will take first-team training this week and is set to pick the team for Wednesday's Premier League clash with Southampton and the League Cup final at Wembley.

Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy said: "Jose and his coaching staff have been with us through some of our most challenging times as a club."

"On a personal level I have enjoyed working with him and regret that things have not worked out as we both had envisaged. "He will always be welcome here."

— AFP

TNPL players draft on May 7

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

As the fifth edition of the Tamil Nadu Premier League set to begin on June 4, the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association has announced that the player draft will be held on May 7.

As per the regulations for the 2021 edition, teams can choose to retain any number of players from their 2020 Squad. From the 2021 season, an auction will be conducted to determine the slot in which each of the teams will be choosing their players at the draft. The auction for the slots is likely to happen on April 30.

Meanwhile, the franchises have released as many as 19 players from the squads. Only Kovai Kings and Trichy Warriors retained all of their players, while Salem Spartans and Thiruppur Thamizhans released five players each. Abhinav Mukund who is set to do

commentary during the TNPL has been released by Thamizhans.

VB Warriors become Nellai Royal Kings

Meanwhile, the VB Kanchi Veerans have been bought over by Crown Forts Limited and renamed as Nellai Royal Kings. Businessmen S. Nagarajan, R. Chandramouli and Prithvi Cristy are the directors of the company.

Released players: Salem Spartans: M.K. Siva Kumar, Akhil Srinath, T. Raj Kumar, M. Suganesh, D. Prashanth Prabhu; **Chepauk Super Gillies:** R. Ajith Kumar, Vikram Jangid; **Madurai Panthers:** S. Ganesh, P. Hemacharan; **Nellai Royal Kings:** R. Jayachandran, P. Vidyuth, V. Rajnikanth; **Dindigul Dragons:** V. Yo Mahesh, Adithya Arun; **Thiruppur Thamizhans:** Abhinav Mukund, Mohit Panghal, S. Siddarth Ahnaja, M. Roobanraj, Abhinav Vishnu.

SOUTH INDIA RALLY POSTPONED TO JUNE

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

The South India Rally scheduled for April 23-25 has been postponed in the wake of fresh restrictions imposed by the government due to rising number of COVID-19 cases, organisers Madras Motor Sports Club (MMSC) announced on Monday.

The tentative fresh dates for the event, promoted by Champions Yacht Club, and which doubled up as a round of the FIA Asia Pacific Rally Championship, are June 25 to 27.

The South India Rally had attracted a record 70 entries of which 21 were women crews.

Chairman of the event and MMSC Vice-President Vicky Chandhok said: "Much as the sport is always our priority, we are very concerned about the huge spike in Covid-19 cases in the recent days."

"With an all-time record of 70 entries of which 21 are women competitors the enthusiasm for the sport has also spiked and is at its peak! But after discussions with promoter Vamcy Merla who had put in massive efforts, we decided to postpone the South India Rally keeping in mind the safety and health of those involved in the event."

Promoter Vamcy Merla said: "Unfortunately, in the last couple of days, a lot of restrictions have been imposed in many States due to the spike in Covid-19 cases in the country. I am in total agreement with the decision to postpone, giving due consideration to the safety and health of participants and organisers."

