

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 2 | APRIL 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 38°C  
**Min:** 22°C  
**Rainfall:** Nil

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Panguni 20  
**Tithi:** Panchami  
**Star:** Anusham/Kettai  
**Rahukalam:** 10.30 am to 12 am  
**Yamagandam:** 3.00 PM to 4.30 PM

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 5:01 am  
**Zohar:** 12:21 pm  
**Asar:** 3:34 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6:20 pm  
**Isha:** 7:31 pm

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+81,380)	(+468)
1,23,02,092	1,63,428

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,817)	
TN: 8,89,490	12,738

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

12,98,84,548

### DEATHS

28,33,387

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

219

worldometers.info

## Pawar in good health after surgery

**Mumbai:** NCP chief Sharad Pawar who underwent a surgical procedure for the removal of a gall bladder stone two days ago is responding well to the treatment, a party leader said on Thursday. He underwent a check-up at 7 pm and is now allowed to walk and take solid food, said Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik on Twitter. Pawar was responding well to the treatment and was in excellent health, said Malik. Pawar, 80, was admitted to the Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai on Tuesday after he experienced abdominal pain.

## Sputnik V denied emergency use authorisation in India

**New Delhi:** Russian COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V was on Thursday denied recommendations for emergency use authorisation by the Subject Expert Committee, constituted by the central government. The SEC met today on drugmaker Dr Reddys application seeking authorisation for the vaccine in India. The expert panel has asked Dr Reddys and the drugmaker to submit more data on the vaccine. Meanwhile, Dr Reddys issued a statement saying, We have had our meeting with the SEC today and will await the feedback from the CDSCO."



**How about conferring this award on him at a mega election rally?**

# Biden lets Trump's H-1B visa bans lapse

**Washington, April 1:** US President Joe Biden on Thursday let the ban on foreign workers visa, in particular H-1B, lapse as the notification issued by his predecessor Donald Trump expired, a move which is likely to benefit thousands of Indian IT professionals. Amidst a national lockdown and the Covid-19 crisis, Mr Trump in June last year issued a proclamation that suspended entry to the US of applicants for several temporary or "non-immigrant" visa categories, incl-



uding H-1B, arguing that these visas presented a risk to the US labour market during the economic recovery.

On December 31, Mr Trump extended the order to March 31, 2021, noting that an extension was war-

ranted as the pandemic continued to disrupt Americans' lives, and high levels of unemployment and job loss were still presenting serious economic challenges to workers across the US.

Mr Biden did not issue a fresh proclamation for the ban on H-1B visas to continue after March 31. He had promised to lift the suspension on H-1B visas, saying Mr Trump's immigration policies were cruel.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows

US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The expiry of the Trump's proclamation would now result in the issuing of H-1B visas by American diplomatic missions overseas that would result in US companies bringing in talented technology professionals inside the country.



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**Don't forget dark rule of DMK in 2006-2011: CM**



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**Assam polls battle between 'jhooth' & 'vikas', says Modi**

## SPORT | 8

**CSK's Hazlewood pulls out of IPL**



# Dadasaheb Phalke award for superstar Rajinikanth

■ **Highest award in Indian cinema for legendary actor**

**ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN | DC CHENNAI, APRIL 1**

It looks like the Dadasaheb Phalke jury had done its homework on Rajinikanth's 'Thursday' sentiments and has timed its award accordingly. Yes, superstar Rajinikanth has been conferred with the 51st Dadasaheb Phalke award. Minister of Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar took to social media to share the news. He wrote, "Happy to announce #Dadasaheb Phalke award for 2020 to one of the greatest actors in history of Indian cinema Rajnikan'ti. His contribution as actor, producer and screenwriter has been iconic."

The jury team for this year for the prestigious award included ace playback singer Asha Bhosle, director-producer Subhash Ghai, Malayalam superstar Mohanlal, music composer and singer Shankar Mahadevan and actor-politician Biswajeet Chatterjee.

Presented annually at the National Film Award ceremony, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award recognises



'outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema.' Instituted in 1969, Amitabh Bachchan was awarded with the honour in 2019.

Rajinikanth is the 12th south Indian to be conferred with this award. Legends like Dr

Rajkumar, Sivaji Ganesan, Akkineni Nageshwar Rao, K Balachander, K. Vishwanath have been awarded before.

The legendary actor has been honoured with the Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan in the past.

## AT ZENITH, HE REMEMBERS THEM ALL

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 1**

The star actor who is at present shooting for Annaatthe directed by Siva has thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union government for conferring the Dadasaheb Phalke Award on him. "Immensely humbled and honoured with your greetings and the most prestigious #Dadasaheb Phalke Award award respected and dearest Shri@narendramodi ji. My heartfelt thanks to you and the government of India."

In a statement, Rajini said, "I thank the Indian government and the honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi for conferring me Indian cinema's highest honour, Dadasaheb Phalke Award. I dedicate this award to my friend and bus driver Raj Bahadur, who discovered my acting talent and encouraged me." ■P3

## PAKISTAN DEFERS TRADE PLAN, TIES IT TO ARTICLE 370

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 1**

In what is being reported as a "swift U-turn" on Thursday following a "political backlash", Pakistan on Thursday "deferred" its move to import cotton and sugar from India and linked it to the condition that India should first restore Article 370 on Jammu and Kashmir that was abrogated two years ago.

According to international news agency reports from Islamabad on Thursday, Pakistani interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed told reporters there that the decision (to import cotton and sugar from India) had been "deferred" until India restored Kashmir's special status under the (revoked) Article 370.

In what was earlier seen as a huge step towards normalisation of Indo-Pak ties, Pakistan had on Wednesday approved the resumption of bilateral trade between the two countries and had decided to import cotton from India at least till June 30 this year. Also, Pakistan was expected to soon import white sugar from India. The decision was initially taken by that country's Cabinet Economic Coordination Committee and the note put up before that body by the commerce ministry.

# Violence mars Nandigram voting; forces rescue Didi

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC with agency inputs KOLKATA, APRIL 1**

Despite prohibitory orders issued under Section 144 of the CrPC, massive presence of Centre-ordered paramilitary forces and aerial surveillance by the Election Commission, Nandigram -- the hot seat in West Bengal Assembly elections where Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is taking on her protege-turned-adversary Suvendu Adhikari -- reeled under violence on Thursday, leaving Ms Banerjee stranded at a polling booth for over two hours.

Ms Banerjee had to be rescued by Central paramilitary forces after she was confined at a polling booth amid an extremely tense face-off between BJP and Trinamul Congress supporters. From the spot, she dialled Governor Jagdeep Dhankar, telling him the situation was a failure of the Election Commission.

"Anything might happen at any moment... There is total breakdown of law and order," wheelchair-bound Ms Banerjee said, adding that she feared for her life. She was escorted out by the security forces, who managed to bring the situation under control after long-drawn negotiations with the villagers.

# ECI bans Raja from campaign for 48 hrs

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 1**

Former Union minister and DMK deputy general secretary A Raja has been debarred from campaigning for 48 hours 'with immediate effect' by the Election Commission of India (ECI), which was not satisfied with his reply to a notice sent to him on a complaint by the

AIADMK.

The ECI order on Thursday reprimanded Mr Raja for violating the Model Code of Conduct and delisted him as DMK's star campaigner, besides advising him "to be watchful and not to make intemperate, indecent, derogatory, obscene remarks and lower the dignity of women in future during election campaign".

## ‘VIP MOVEMENT SHOULD NOT TROUBLE PUBLIC’

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 1:**

A division bench of Madras High Court headed by Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee on Thursday directed the authorities not to cause any inconvenience to the general public during VIP movements and campaigns during the elections and ensure free flow of traffic.

■P3

## STALIN PREDICTS WASHOUT FOR OPPONENTS

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 1**

DMK president M.K. Stalin on Thursday predicted a total washout of the BJP-AIADMK alliance in the April 6 Assembly elections as an anti-Palaniswami wave, along with the anti-Modi wave that hit them in the Lok Sabha elections, was set to sweep through the State like a tsunami.

■P3

# KAMA

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EC not satisfied  
with Raja's reply

DMK's A. Raja's interim reply — in which he denied the allegations and asked for copies of the full text of his speech and AIADMK's complaint, besides requesting an opportunity to give a detailed reply and personal hearing with his lawyer — was found not to be satisfactory by the ECI

MANDATE 2021

TAMIL NADU

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OTHER STORIES

## HC rejects Pondy BJP stand on access to voters' numbers

Chennai: Expressing dissatisfaction over the response of Puducherry unit of the BJP that mobile numbers of local voters were collected by party workers over a period of time, the Madras High Court on Thursday directed the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and the Election Commission (EC) to probe into the matter.

When the PIL petition by A Anand, president of the Puducherry unit of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) came up for further hearing, the first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy found something fishy. The UIDAI should pursue the matter involving a breach in the maintenance of secrecy, without any attempt to cover up the issue, the judges said.—PTI

## Do not disturb public during VIP movement, campaigns: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, APRIL 1

The Madras high court has directed the authorities not to cause any inconvenience to the general public during VIP movements and campaigns during the elections and ensure free flow of traffic.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy gave the directive while disposing of a Public Interest Litigation filed by advocate M.Gnanasekar, which sought to forbear the authorities from preventing the people of Tamil Nadu from using the roads in the name of political campaigns by the political leaders and permit free flow of traffic to public during the Tamil Nadu State election to the Legislative Assembly.

According to the petitioner all the political parties started their campaigning vigorously from the date of nomination itself.

## HC restrains petitioner from instituting PIL in court for one year

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, APRIL 1

Dismissing a Public Interest Litigation, the Madras high court has restrained the PIL petitioner from instituting any public interest litigation in the court for a period of one year without first obtaining the leave of the relevant Bench.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy dismissed the PIL filed by S.P.V.Paul Raj, which sought a direction to the Chief Electoral Officer and the State government to issue necessary order to carryout compulsory medical test to all the candidates contesting in the ongoing Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly elections so that 6, 29, 43, 512 voters can be protected from infecting the deadly Covid-19 virus.

The bench said this is utterly a frivolous matter and it is hoped that some degree of responsibility will be exercised before rubbish is thrown at the Court in future. The petitioner has instituted a public interest litigation since the petitioner desires that all candidates contesting in the Legislative Assembly elections scheduled next week should undertake a compulsory medical test.

# Don't forget dark rule of DMK in 2006-2011: CM

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
COONOOR, APRIL 1

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has appealed to the voters not to forget the dark rule of the DMK in the state between 2006 and 2011 and added that Nilgiris MP A. Raja's recent disrespectful and

distasteful comments on women reflect the cruel mentality of that party.

Hitting the campaign trail in Coonoor on Thursday, Palaniswami said that it is shameful that Stalin failed to receive petitions from the public to address issues when he was a minister during the 2006-2011 DMK regime, but now he collects petitions and seals them in boxes to find solutions. The DMK leaders, including Stalin, are speaking only lies with an aim to come to power and



loot the state again. "If a Nobel prize was to be instituted for a person who speaks maximum lies, then Stalin is the best person to receive it" he noted.

"DMK is meant for family rule. Mr. Stalin occupied the DMK president's post after the demise of his father. He made his son the chief of DMK's youth wing. His sister Kanimozhi was made the

secretary of the DMK's women's wing. This clearly proves that how family rule is dominant in the DMK", he added.

Saying that women will not be safe during DMK rule, he said that DMK leaders and cadres never respect women and they do not even help those who suffer. People should teach a lesson to the DMK in this election too. People should not forget the poor law and order situation during the 2006-2011 DMK rule and how people suffered due to the electricity crisis. When AIADMK came back to power in 2011, not only was the power crisis solved, but Tamil Nadu has become a power surplus state now. This is enough to prove the administrative capability of the AIADMK, he said.

Stating that Tamil Nadu has begun to occupy top

positions in many fields, including higher education, he said that distribution of laptops to the students enabled even the poor to pursue higher education with zeal and comfort.

Listing the various achievements of the AIADMK government over the decade, he appealed to the voters to elect the AIADMK again for a peaceful living. He also touched upon the various schemes that were implemented in Nilgiris during the AIADMK rule, which includes government medical college for Ooty, Emerald water supply scheme for Coonoor and Halakarai water supply scheme for Kotagiri.

Palaniswami said the state government has recommended to the Centre to include the Badaga community in Nilgiris under the ST list.

## AIADMK candidate tests Covid +ve

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, APRIL 1

AIADMK candidate for Thuraiyur (reserve) constituency Indra Gandhi was admitted in a private hospital at Tiruchy on Thursday after testing positive for Covid-19.

Sources confirmed that she was infected with the Coronavirus and she went on the clinical analysis which confirmed it as positive.

## Vijayakanth seeks votes for AMMK candidates

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, APRIL 1

Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam founder-president Vijayakanth on Thursday went on a whirlwind electioneering in favour of the Anna Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam candidates in Tiruchy East and Srirangam assembly segments.

Vijayakanth campaigned at Gandhi Market seeking votes for AMMK Tiruchy East candidate R. Manoharan.

Earlier, Vijayakanth campaigned at Srirangam for Charubala Thondaiman, the AMMK candidate for the Srirangam assembly segment.

## HC rejects plea to forbear unlawful use of electronic media to voters

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, APRIL 1

The Madras high court has dismissed a Public Interest Litigation, which sought a direction to the Election Commission/Officers to issue appropriate measures to forbear the unlawful use of Electronic Media to communicate the voters by SMS, Whatsapp, Social Media Advertisement in Search Engine, Apps, E-mails and all these possible means of communicating voters at large during the vital 48 hours (i.e two days) before the election

date till the end of date of voting. The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy dismissed the petition filed by M.J.Logesh Babu.

The bench said the pres-



Modi visiting Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai on Thursday evening.

— K. Manikandan

# Defeat anti-women DMK: Shah to voters

Thirukoyilur (TN),

April 1: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday hit out at the DMK over its leader A Raja's alleged vulgar remarks against Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami's mother, saying it showed the party had no regard for women.

The "mothers and sisters" of the state should teach a 'lesson' to the DMK in the April 6 Assembly polls by defeating it, he said. Addressing an election rally here, Shah canvassed votes for NDA candidates—those from the AIADMK, BJP and the PMK, even as he charged the DMK with aiming to romp home in the polls by 'hook or crook.' Referring to Raja's alleged offensive remarks targeted at Palaniswami, leader of the BJP's ally AIADMK, Shah also accused the DMK and Congress of corruption and dynasty. "I saw the statement by DMK leader A Raja. The kind of statement he made against a deceased woman. I think they (DMK) have no regard for women and want to win this election by hook or crook," he said. "In the past, DMK made such bad remarks against (the late Chief Minister) Jayalalithaa ji. I appeal to the mothers and sisters of Tamil Nadu—teach a lesson to the anti-women DMK in the polls by defeating it," the BJP veteran said. The electoral battle was between the NDA which was walking the path of development and the UPA which was into corruption and dynasty, he said. Both the parties (DMK, Congress) were not bothered about the people of Tamil Nadu,



Shah claimed. The Election Commission, Shah said, has chosen April 6 as the polling day in Tamil Nadu and it coincided with the BJP's Foundation Day and therefore the NDA will win the polls, he said. He described Palaniswami as a "son of the soil" and a farmer and lauded both the chief minister and his deputy O Panneerselvam for protecting the people of the state against coronavirus. "On the other side, the DMK and Congress are not bothered about the people of Tamil Nadu," he said. While Congress President Sonia Gandhi was "worried" about her son Rahul, DMK chief M K Stalin was "worried" about his son Udhayanidhi, Shah alleged. "We all know DMK and Congress party well. DMK and Congress mean corruption, rowdiness, land encroachment and furthering the interests of their sons and daughters and not bothered about people," Shah alleged. On the other hand, the NDA, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, was concerned about the welfare of Tamil Nadu and was walking in the path of late chief minister M G Ramachandran and J

Jayalalithaa, he said. In fact, the credit for all pro-poor programmes in the country should go to Ramachandran, fondly addressed as MGR, he said. It was in his honour, that the Chennai Central Railway Station was earlier named after MGR by Modi, Shah said, adding the AIADMK founder is the "true Makkal thilagam" (People's leader).

Under the PM's leadership, Palaniswami and Panneerselvam were also taking the state forward in the path of development, he said. Later in the day, Shah participated in a road show at Velayudampalayam to canvass votes for the party's BJP candidate from Aravakurichi in Karur, K Annamalai and travelled on an open top van. In his address, he said there were two choices before Tamil Nadu—the "corrupt DMK and Congress on one side" and on the other side it was the PM-led NDA "which is fighting the polls for Tamil Nadu's development." While Modi, Palaniswami and Panneerselvam want the development of Tamil Nadu and jobs for youth "Stalin" wants Udhayanidhi to become Chief Minister," he said. "Do you want development of Tamil Nadu or Udhayanidhi? The time has come that the footsteps of great MGR and Jayalalithaa be followed for the state's growth. And only the AIADMK and BJP can do this and no one else." "Reject the corrupt and Tamil Nadu will become one of the most developed states in the country," Shah said.

—PTI



AIADMK candidate Saidai Duraisamy campaigning at Jafferkanpet on Thursday.

—DC



B. Vijayalakshmi

## Viewpoint

TV channels have become the best traditional medium for political parties and their leaders to give a local twist to their poll agenda and reach out to voters. Regional Tamil channels and local cable channels

are flooded with political advertisements during this election season. With April 6 nearing, not only news channels but also entertainment channels have begun airing campaign ads frequently between programmes.

Parties find regional TV channels more relevant because they have a huge reach and candidates can communicate in local language and dialect. It also gives them an opportunity to have the extra personal touch to connect with people in the constituency.

With strong content prepared for elections, TV channels also offer a complete package to political parties. Advertisements, campaign speeches, election rallies, debates and interviews on TV help parties reach interior pockets

of the state. Though social media is popular among people, especially the youth, television continues to be the best medium to woo people in areas where there is low internet penetration during these pandemic times.

DMK and AIADMK have maximum ads telecast on television. Their *Vetri Naalai Podum Thamizhagame* and *Stalin thaana vararu* series seemed to have left an impressive impact on the audience. Meanwhile, parties owning TV channels

have a field day.

The ad videos have specific target audiences and gain considerable traction. Campaign planners in parties ensure their ads with targeted slots reach first-time voters, adults and senior citizens in both urban and rural areas. They not only woo first time voters but also keep their loyal voters engaged.

Only May 2 poll results will reveal how prominent was the role played by television in reaching out to the masses in the digital era.

# How political parties are making the most of television channels



# From Shivaji Rao Gaekwad to Rajinikanth: The rise of the superstar

## All-time cult superstar

**ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN | DC**  
CHENNAI, APRIL 1

Born in a Marathi family as Shivaji Rao Gaekwad, the doyen of Tamil cinema, K. Balachander, discovered him and introduced him in his 1975 national award-winning film *Apoorva Raagangal*. It was on a Holi day the legendary film-maker rechristened him as Rajinikanth and the rest is history.

Though Rajini started his career as a baddie and continued doing films with shades of grey, it was his ultimate negative character 'Parattai' in ace director Bharathiraja's debut film *16 Vayadhinile*, which made him an instant hit. His inimitable style combined with the punch line 'Edhu Eppidi Irukku' was admired by all.

Veteran film-maker S.P. Muthuraman's *Bhuvana Oru Kelvikuri*, in which Rajini portrayed a positive character, changed his image overnight. His yet another milestone film with SPM was *Arilirundhu Arubadhu Varai*, a blockbuster in which Rajini was projected as an emotional person and his histrionics were portrayed without any antics. Together, the duo made 25 movies and some of the memorable films include *Netrikkan*, *Murattu Kaalai* (first time Rajini in a full-fledged rural action role), *Naan Mahan Alla*, *Nallavanu Nallavan* etc.

Prolific film-maker Thanu, who identified the star in him, gave the 'Superstar' title to Rajini when he released *Bhairavi* in 1978. Much later in 2016, Thanu made *Kabali* with Rajini where the latter played an aged gangster.

Mullum Malarum with ace Mahendran was a major breakthrough for Rajinikanth, whose performance as 'Kali' received unanimous praise, and is widely considered as the best performance in his career and also won him special



award in state awards.

Rajinikanth did only a single yet significant film *Thalapathy* with Mani Ratnam. The movie emerged as a crucial film in his career, apart from being a commercial hit.

Baasha directed by Suresh Krishna and released in 1995 went on to become a cult classic, which made Rajini 'Baasha' of all times. Rajini played an auto driver with a deadly past. The Superstar became an overnight rage among auto drivers of Tamil Nadu.

Commercial director K.S. Ravikumar teamed up with Rajini for *Muthu*, which was a huge box office hit and was the first film to be dubbed into Japanese as *Mutu - Odoru Maharaja*. The film went on to create a huge fan base and market for Rajinikanth in Japan. The success of *Muthu* in Japan led American news magazine *Newsweek* to comment that Rajinikanth

had superseded Leonardo Di Caprio as Japan's trendiest heartthrob.

Shankar, known for his grandeur and extravaganzas, collaborated with Rajinikanth for *Sivaji*. The blockbuster became the first Tamil movie to be listed as one of the top 10 best films of the UK and South Africa. Rajini, who was reportedly paid a whopping Rs 20 crore salary for *Sivaji*, is said to be the second highest paid actor in all of Asia.

Enthiran, yet another film with Shankar, was the first sci-fi for him which was released in 2010 and touted to be the most expensive Indian film to be made then (Rs150 crore) and highest grossing Tamil film of its time. Rajini commanded a remuneration of Rs 45 crore for his dual roles of a robot (a negative one) and a scientist.

Chandramukhi, a comedy-horror film directed by P. Vasu, was a comeback film for Rajinikanth after



"My heartfelt thanks to the government of India, respected & dearest @narendramodi ji, @PrakashJavdekar ji and the jury for conferring upon me the prestigious #DadasahebPhalke Award. I sincerely dedicate it to all those who have been a part of my journey. Thanks to the almighty," he tweeted.

his self-imposed sabbatical following the fiasco of his writing and production venture *Baba*. It was Rajini's third all-time blockbuster and completed a 700-day run at the box office. About 20 million tickets were reportedly sold worldwide.

His last film was *Darbar*, which was released in 2020.

Rajinikanth has a cult fan following with 55,000 fan clubs registered around the world in 2017 and few thousand unofficial ones. The first fan club was started in Madurai by one of his ardent fans called Muthuman 45 years ago and the actor got in touch with him and gave him financial assistance when the former was hospitalized recently.

The actor, who is 71 and arguably one of south India's biggest stars till today, sparks extreme fan mania before every film's release - from erecting massive cutouts and doing pal abhishekam to them, offering special prayers and celebrating it as a special festival.

The iconic star has acted in more than 160 films in all south languages as well as Hindi and in an American cinema with a supporting role in the mystery adventure film titled *Bloodstone* in 1988.

## CM, Deputy CM, Stalin, Kamal greet actor

**Chennai, April 1:** Congratulating the actor over phone, CM Palaniswami said the Dada Saheb Phalke Award recognises his hard work in the film industry. "I pray to God that you will receive many more awards and live long," the chief minister said.

His long-time friend and Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan said the award, highest to be bestowed on a performing artiste, is 100 per cent appropriate for Rajinikanth while Stalin said that though 'delayed' the recognition was welcome. "It is a great pleasure that the highest award, the Dada Saheb Phalke Award, has been announced to Rajinikanth, the supreme star and my dearest friend. The award is 100 per cent appropriate for Rajini, who has proven that he can win over fans by appearing on screen," Haasan tweeted. Stalin described

Rajinikanth as a "dear friend" and an "unparalleled performer" and expressed joy over him being selected for the award. "Delayed but welcome," he said in a tweet. He wished that Rajinikanth, "a symbol of acting and friendship," continues with his journey in film-dom.

PMK leader and former union minister Dr Anbumani Ramadoss congratulated the superstar.

"Actor Rajinikanth has been honored with the Dada Saheb Phalke Award, the highest award of the film industry in India. Award winning close friend @rajinikanth Congratulations," he tweeted.

AMMK leader TTV Dhinakaran, BJP state president L Murugan, national award winning lyricist Vairamuthu, popular comedian Vivekh and a number of film personalities greeted the actor on being selected for the award. —PTI

## No politics, please

When even God cannot save TN to ippo illana eppovum illa

**Chennai, April 1:** When he thundered in 1996 that "even God cannot save" Tamil Nadu if the then Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa won a successive term in elections, many saw it as Rajinikanth's prelude to the political entry of the uncrowned king of Tamil cinema known for his sureshot hits. For, cinema

to politics transition was nothing new in Tamil Nadu as former chief ministers, CN Annadurai, M. Karunanidhi, M. G. Ramachandran and Jayalalithaa had successful cinema stints before blending with politics to lead the state. But ever since it was a guessing game, occasional punch dialogues in films, an assertive statement in 2017 and a 2020 marked with flip-flops which culminated with the actor finally saying a big no to politics, citing his frail health. His roar of "now or never" in politics last year ended with a whimper in the same when he finally said he would not take the political plunge owing to his frail health.

This, after a 2017 assertion that he would launch a political party and fight from all 234 assembly seats in the 2021 elections in Tamil Nadu which enthused his diehard fans who had been awaiting an announcement that their 'Thalaiva' who beat up evil men on screen black and blue was now ready to clean up the 'system' with his political avatar. However, their joy was to be short-lived when in March 2020, he announced in a press conference that he never desired to be Chief Minister and that he would enter politics when he saw an upsurge among



the people yearning for a change ushering in clean politics, prompting intense debates of "will he or won't he." However, within months, he seemed to have a change of heart and categorically announced floating a party in January 2021.

This was the best time to take the shot, he had said with a catchy Tamil phrase "ippo illana eppovum illa," meaning if not now then never: With the spirited fans once again rallying behind the veteran, Rajinikanth made another U-turn in December, when he said he will not enter politics in view of his frail health, putting an end to his long-nurtured plans and describing his then hospitalisation as a God's warning. "Only I know the pain behind making this announcement," the 70-year old actor then said, days before he was to spell out the contours of his party based on spiritual politics aimed at bringing a total change in the Dravidian heartland Tamil Nadu in the 2021 assembly elections. His announcement came as a shock to many, with Manian quitting politics and Moorthy later floating his own outfit. Many members of his Rajini Makkal Mandram, seen as a precursor to the possible political party, quit it and joined other organisations in the poll year.

**Raghava Lawrence**

"I'm extremely happy to hear that Thalaivar superstar is receiving the prestigious #DadasahebPhalke award. I don't have the age to praise him. May his greatness live on forever! Guruve saranam."



Devotees pulling the temple car as part of the Panguni Uthiram festival at Subramanya Swamy temple in Thiruparankundram near Madurai.

— DC

### WORD OF PRAISE



**Amit Shah @AmitShah**

Rajni kanth ji is a true legend, a versatile actor, whose acting and cinematic talent has millions of fans across the world. I join our countrymen in congratulating Shri @rajinikanth Ji for being conferred the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award.



**@KSChithra**

Heartiest Congratulations to Shri @rajinikanth sir on winning the 51st Dadasaheb Phalke Award.



**@ARMurugadoss**

Congrats superstar@rajinikanth sir on winning the 51st Dadasaheb Phalke award another feather on your cap sir. You are always an inspiration.



**@Aariarajunan**

Very very happy and proud to know that our @rajinikanth sir has been conferred with #DadaSahebPhalke award. Congratulations sir.



**Radhikaa Sarathkumar**

Congratulations to @rajinikanth sir on being conferred with the #DadaSahebPhalke . Truly deserving to a man who rose to this meteoric stardom



## TN Governor congratulates Rajinikanth

**Chennai, April 1:** Governor Banwarilal Purohit on Thursday congratulated actor Rajinikanth on being chosen by the Centre for the Dada Saheb Phalke award, saying his contribution to Indian Cinema has been of "an iconic quality and variety."

In his greetings to Rajinikanth, the Governor stated the actor has added up to the great galaxy of lofty achievers who have got this honour previously, a Raj Bhavan release said. "You have added to the honour of the award as well. Hence my cheers to you. Your contribution to Indian cinema at large has been of an iconic quality

and variety." "You provided to millions of people not just a healthy escape from mundane lives through your movies, but also a dream to chase lofty ideals of human virtue of courage and conviction in right values," he told the actor.

The veteran star always addressed himself to larger issues of socio-cultural and political interests. "It is not without reason that millions of people across the barriers of region and language treat you as an icon whose images often adorn walls in countless homes as an ambassador of social causes," the release quoted Purohit as telling Rajinikanth. —PTI

## Cong questions timing of award

**New Delhi, April 1:** The Congress on Thursday questioned the timing of Dadasaheb Phalke Award to superstar Rajinikanth, saying the government should not do anything that unnecessarily drags celebrities in political controversies.

Congress leader Rajeev Shukla said the government should not try to take political advantage out of everything and be wary of

such actions. "This award should have been given to him long back, why is it being given this year," he said.

"The government should not do anything which unnecessarily drags our celebrities in political controversies. Rajinikanth is a respected film personality. The BJP and the government should be wary of this and it should not try to take political advantage out of everything,"

Shukla told reporters.

He alleged that the government doing anything with elections in view is not proper, but noted that people know everything. "The government should not try to take political gains out of everything it does. If the government has done this with the intention of making political gains and with elections in mind, then this is not appropriate in politics," he said. —PTI

## AP CM extends wishes to Rajini

**Amaravati, April 1:** Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday congratulated Tamil superstar Rajinikanth on being selected for the Dada Saheb Phalke Award.

The stylish Tamil superstar, born Shivaji Rao Gaekwad, made a profound impact on silver screen with his inimitable mannerisms and performance, the Chief Minister said in a statement. —PTI



Tirupur District Collector K. Vijayakarthy inspects installing of party logos on EVM machines on Thursday.

—DC



I S.KATHIRAVAN ( name of candidate ), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

- 1 -

-2-



-3-

-4-



# DECCAN Chronicle

2 APRIL 2021

## Small savings U-turn: Bad economics, bizarre optics

It is a bizarre moment for policy. Since Assembly elections are on in many states, evidently the fear of electoral backlash has forced an about turn by the Centre in something like 12 hours flat. On Wednesday night, the government announced substantial cuts in interest rates for small savings, meaning instruments such as PPF, post office savings, bank fixed deposits, Kisan Vikas Patras, and Senior Citizen Savings Scheme which ordinary people use to save their lifelong earnings. On Friday morning, the announcement was reversed in a tweet by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Small savings, or common people's savings, are critical. They constitute as much as 60 per cent of all savings in the economy. The savings rate in the country was already touching a 15-year low, with household savings (small savings) declining steadily on account of shrinking interest rates, especially since early 2020. If the savings rate is low, investments will be inadequate. As a result of low investment funds available within the country, India has had to take recourse to external borrowings. So, that's how important small savings are.

The core inflation rate in India was six per cent in January. The proposed cuts in interest rate for small savings would have brought the real value of most of these savings into negative territory. So, why was the finance minister unmindful of the daily needs of ordinary Indians when it is well known that millions of people depend on the interest earnings from their savings to meet their everyday needs?

This is not just bad poll-time optics, hurting the lower end of society is deplorable political economy. During the year-long pandemic, and for three years before that (as a consequence of demonetisation), it is the poor, the middle classes, and small and medium businesses that really suffered in terms of job losses and output losses. They have struggled to survive. In contrast, the richest Indians — especially big industry — have made handsome gains. And yet, the government's policy on interest rates, which is done quarterly, singled out small savings for punishment.

A probable reason is that the government may have calculated that if the interest rates are pushed down, it can borrow on better terms to meet its needs. Which means the ordinary people, rather than the better off citizens, were being asked to shoulder the burden of government borrowings which for the financial year 2021-22 is slated to be 12.06 trillion rupees. In effect, the section of the population which is already teetering on the brink was expected to surrender more to finance the government's plans, as compared to the big boys.

The plan was jettisoned overnight, but even at the prevailing rates of interest for small savings, the ordinary householder is eking out a hard living. Is the present finance minister responsible for the poor woman's misery, or is it that the policy set responsible for accelerating poverty pre-dates her assuming charge of finance?

Policymaking is highly centralised in the present set-up. Whether it is finance or foreign affairs or defence, or matters concerning home, agriculture or industry, it is widely thought that decisions are made on high. That is where answers ought to be sought for the goof-up. On account of elections, the panic button was pressed at the last minute. But what happens in the next quarter will be keenly watched.

## K'taka: 'Lotus' probe welcome

The Karnataka high court has allowed an inquiry into the "Operation Lotus" controversy that surfaced before the Janata Dal-Congress government of H.D. Kumaraswamy was brought down in July 2019 through defections. This is a setback for the BJP as well as its Karnataka chief minister B.S. Yediyurappa who was charged with engineering the collapse of the government through various inducements, including an offer of money reportedly made in a telephone call with the son of a JD(S) legislator.

The judge John Michael D'Cunha, known to take a tough stand on corruption in politics as evidenced in his sensational 2014 ruling to convict J. Jayalalithaa of graft and fine her ₹100 crore, has based his judgment on the allegations and the contents of the complaint being so serious as to not allow a court to empower itself to quash the complaint and FIR. It is a different matter that the agencies that will be tasked with running the probe would be controlled by the powers that be. The highest degree of morality would be sustained only if Mr Yediyurappa were to step down for the pendency of the probe but such ideals have been thrown by the way-side long ago in Indian politics.

In a sensational audio clip that became public at the time, a conversation between Mr Yediyurappa and Sharanagouda Patil, son of JD(S) MLA Naganagouda Patil, had revealed an offer of ₹10 crore as well as a ministerial berth if he could get his father to switch sides. Mr Yediyurappa had, of course, dismissed it as a conspiracy hatched by the then chief minister to entrap him.

Facile explanations should cut no ice with probe agencies provided they run a thorough investigation to get to the bottom of the affair and establish that compelling offers had indeed been made for legislators to switch loyalties. The fact that a probe has been ordered itself brings into focus the widely held view that the ruling party at the Centre had been playing toppling games through which non-BJP governments were targeted and brought down, as in Madhya Pradesh and Puducherry, but proved unsuccessful in Rajasthan.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



## BJP has a different take... On history, science, cows!



Karan Thapar

As I See It

My office keeps a track of some of the outlandish things said by leaders of the BJP. I am not sure how it started, and I doubt if we follow other parties equally assiduously. But the BJP collection, if I can use that term, is quite a hoard. It includes the offensive and the ludicrous, it ranges from the Prime Minister to the least known MLA, and it covers subjects as varied as religion, mythology, history, couture, cuisine, practically everything to do with cows and, of course, sex. On a slow day it can be quite fun to browse.

Well, that's what I did over the recent holidays and I noticed a few intriguing patterns. Perhaps the most striking is that the BJP has a very poor grasp of history. For instance, Tirath Singh Rawat, the new chief minister of Uttarakhand, believes "America enslaved India for 200 years". His counterpart in Tripura, Biplab Kumar Deb, is convinced that Rabindranath Tagore returned his Nobel Prize to protest against the British. But what really surprised me is the number of times the Prime Minister is confused by the past.

Alexander's army, he once said, conquered the entire world but was defeated by the Biharis. On another occasion he relocated Taxila to somewhere not far from Patna. On a third, he said when he thinks of the Gupta dynasty, he remembers Chandragupta. Of course, at the time he was wooing the voters of Bihar so perhaps this was intended as flattery.

But what do you make of this? In 2018 he claimed Kabir, Guru Nanak and Baba Gorakhnath "sat

together and discussed spirituality". It's an interesting idea but as impossible as the claim Jesus and Muhammad had a fireside chat or as inaccurate as the belief Buddha and Zarathustra were buddies. However, my favourite is a bloomer about the man many consider the Prime Minister's party's revered founder. This is what Mr Modi told a gathering in Gujarat in 2013: "Syama Prasad Mookerjee was a revolutionary. He died in 1930 in London." I would call that a three-in-one. Mookerjee was not a revolutionary. He was a member of Jawaharlal Nehru's first Cabinet. Before that he was president of the Hindu Mahasabha. Earlier, he was a lawyer and academic. He didn't die in 1930 but 1953. It wasn't in London but in a jail in Jammu and Kashmir. And, of course, he founded the Bharatiya Jan Sangh.

A second theme in the file is the BJP's questioning of science alongside its conviction that most modern achievements actually occurred centuries or even millennia earlier. When he was junior minister for human resources development — which, incidentally, includes education — Satyapal Singh said Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution was "scientifically wrong".

Since no one had seen "an ape turning into a man", he said, that was proof dear Charles had got things mixed up. Our textbooks, he concluded, need to be changed. And not surprisingly, long is the list of BJP leaders who believe some of the greatest modern achievements actually existed in the times of the Mahabharata. Tripura's Biplab Deb claims the Internet and satellite communications were known to the Kauravas

and Pandavas. Bengal's Jagdeep Dhankhar insists that Arjun's arrows had nuclear power. UP's Dinesh Sharma maintains journalism started to cover the battle at Kurukshetra. Not just that, there were live telecasts too. And he adds: "Your Google has started now but our Google started long time back".

Much the same sort of claim is made about genetic science, plastic surgery and test-tube babies. In 2014, in a speech at the inauguration of the Reliance Hospital in Mumbai, the Prime Minister said the fact Karan was born from Kunti's ear is proof that genetic science was known at the time. He added the fact Ganesh has an elephant head is proof there were plastic surgeons in those days. No doubt inspired by his leader, Dinesh Sharma has more recently proclaimed Sita was a test-tube baby!

Less surprising but also far more frequent is evidence of the BJP's incredible faith in the Indian cow and its many products. Suman Haripriya, a member of the Assam Assembly, believes "gau-mutra" and "gobar" can cure coronavirus. Sadhvi Pragma believes it's already cured her cancer. Meanwhile, for those who have blood pressure problems, she strongly recommends a good rub of a cow's back.

If, however, wealth rather than health is your concern Dilip Ghosh, the BJP's Bengal chief, insists that cow's milk contains gold. "There's a *nari* (blood vessel) that helps pro-

duce gold with the help of sunlight", he has declared. So rather than drink a glass of the stuff, you ought to sift it.

Michael Lobo, a BJP minister in Goa, says that cows in Calangute have recently changed their character and now "only eat non-vegetarian food". I wonder if earlier they were fond of beef? Uttarakhand's former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat had once proclaimed that cows exhale oxygen. So what do they breathe?

Our file reflects these days BJP leaders have become specialists in haute couture. They've taken to advising women what to wear. Tirath Singh Rawat has firmly ruled out ripped jeans. He doesn't approve of bare knees. "If this kind of woman goes out in society to meet people and solve their problems, what kind of message are we giving to society and to our kids?", he asks. So clearly, he's not in favour of a plunging décolletage.

Dilip Ghosh, his colleague in Bengal, who perhaps hopes to replace Mamata Banerjee as chief minister, is more avant-garde. He's suggested Ms Banerjee should wear Bermudas. "If she has to keep her leg out then why wear a sari", he asks. "She could wear a pair of Bermudas instead. So that it can be seen clearly".

Of course, the thickest part of the file is what BJP leaders have to say about Muslims, their religion Islam and the fact that they would be better off in Pakistan. Termites feature in this part fairly substantially. So does the size of their families. But there's nothing imaginative or fanciful about this portion. Just offensive and horribly wrong.

Now I don't know how other parties compare with the BJP. My office hasn't kept a track of their statements. My producer, Arvind Kumar, tells me this is something he intends to do. But will it be as much fun? Or is this one respect in which the BJP is truly special?

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

EYE ON ELECTION

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced that the interest on savings deposits, provident fund interest rates, etc., would not be reduced for the financial year 2021-22 (as mentioned in the budget). This announcement has rightly been criticised by the opposition party leaders as it is clearly influenced by assembly elections in four states and a union territory. It seems that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has either made a mistake or has been made to announce the same to please the electorate. If the former is the reason it does not speak well of an FM's calibre to bungle in matters of finance.

M.C. Vijay Shankar, Chennai

STOP SLANDERING

This refers to the report, 'Modi slams Cong-DMK over remark against CM's mother. DMK Raja's remark has been blown out of proportion. What Raja said had been taken out of the context by the CM as it has not been understood by him. Raja's remark has been clearly explained to the public in the press conference by Raja himself. He also sought the pardon from the public who were hurt, if any, by the miscarriage of words. He also rendered his apology to the Chief Minister. The ill-feelings between the two subsidised and the issue stood closed now. But, again the Prime Minister came in and this was the main topic for him to talk to the audience. He rakes up the issue again and complicates it by slamming both Congress and DMK. Where does the Congress come into this issue? The reason is simple. The pre-poll predictions by almost all agencies suggest a massive victory for the DMK-Congress alliance.

Jubel D'Cruz Mumbai

NO IDEOLOGY

In Indian politics there is absolutely no set ideology for any party. There is only one mantra - win by hook or crook and following "My enemy's enemy is my friend". Of course, such alliances do differ from state to state for these parties. The present-day political leaders' attitude is "even if I lose an eye, no problem. But the enemy should lose both his eyes". Ironically, later on, the same alliance is broken on some personal ego and the ruling party loses its majority to force a re-election at the cost of honest taxpayers' money. At that time none of these leaders would be concerned, either about their ideology, secularism or even democracy, which goes for a toss.

N. Mahadevan, Chennai

Vincenzo de Luca



## Linking Italian, Indian cultures, past & present, in Covid times

This year marks a very special one as we celebrate the Festival of Italian Culture in India which is held in parallel with the Indian Cultural Festival in Italy. The initiative was promoted at the last bilateral digital summit held on November 6, 2020 between the two Prime Ministers and it was also acknowledged by the President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, as one of the pillars of the bilateral cooperation between Italy and India. In his message to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the occasion of Republic Day, Mr Mattarella said: "The Festival of Italian Culture in India and Indian Culture in Italy will take place in 2021. These events will facilitate the reciprocal comprehension and the closeness among our people."

We inaugurated the festival in January and had the honour to host the minister of external affairs, S. Jaishankar, for the first in-person event since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. The festival is a unique opportunity to further strengthen the historical cultural relations between the two countries

and to share the new dynamics of exchanges between the protagonists of the Italian and Indian culture and creative industries.

The cultural exchanges between the two countries date back to ancient history. Not only can ties between European and Indian cultures be traced back to 700 BC, there are also testimonies of linguistic influences in the sixteenth century. In the last century, Giuseppe Tucci and Luigi Tessorì contributed to the knowledge of Indian culture and artistic tradition in Italy by collecting scientific studies and artistic testimonies still preserved in Italy. Thanks to these experiences, Italy boasts the most important tradition of Indology studies in the world outside India. In the last 50 years, exchanges in the cinematic field have flourished with the production of docu-films by Pierpaolo Pasolini and Roberto Rossellini and awards at the Venice Film Festival to Satyajit Ray and Mira Nair. We recently hosted the screening of Rossellini's and Pasolini's masterpieces during a three-night open-air "Notti Stellate, Italian Cinema under the Sky",

where unedited images from their travels throughout India in the late 1950s and 1960s are a testament of life in those days.

Cultural ties between Italy and India are not only rooted in the past, but they are very much driven by innovation, creativity and contemporary cultural contamination.

To celebrate the Festival of Italian Culture in India, together with the Embassy of India in Rome, we crafted a rich agenda of events in various fields — cinema, music, literature, visual arts, fashion and design. This year Italy celebrates the 700th anniversary of the death of the most important figure of the Italian culture — the father of Italian language and its most famous poet, Dante Alighieri. We are commemorating him in many of our cultural activities — from theatre to literature, exhibitions and musical performances. In February, I moderated a panel with two eminent professors from Rome and Trento University in which we analysed the figure of Dante Alighieri and how contemporary *The Divine Comedy* is today.

We are also working on a very special project on Italian Indology and Sanskrit studies. Together with the University of Rome La Sapienza, we are putting together a collection of publications by the most prominent Italian Indologists. The project is composed of four volumes — the first one will be a collection on Italian studies on Indian History, Economy, Society; the second volume focuses on culture and literature; the third is the English translation of the biography of Giuseppe Tucci; the fourth will be entirely dedicated to Indian contemporary art.

Our events are a constant dialogue between innovation and tradition. We are focusing on our traditions but also on our dynamic and contemporary cultural drive. We are also attaching great importance in forging partnerships with our Indian counterparts and are thus working on strengthening cooperation among museums, developing projects on the protection of our cultural heritage, enhancing collaboration among artists, musicians and our creative industries.

Promoting culture in the midst of a

pandemic is not easy. As with all the cultural institutions around the world, we also had to reinvent ourselves taking full advantage of the digital tools we familiarised with, without giving up on the possibility of nurturing our Indian friends with limited outdoor events carried out in full observation of health safety protocols. It is thanks to the digital tools that we have been able to connect Italy and India even more. The availability of digital performances through the channels of the Embassy of Italy in New Delhi, the consulates in Mumbai and Kolkata and the Italian Cultural Institutes of New Delhi and Mumbai, along with the innovative platforms launched by the Italian foreign ministry have been quite successful. The promotion of arts, music, culture knows no limits. Numerous more events still lie ahead, and I am sure the "Festival of Italian Culture in India" will further consolidate the relations between Italy and India, two culture super-powers.



## SHORT TAKES

## JAWAN BEGINS KASHMIR TO KANYAKUMARI RUN

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, APRIL 1

An Army corporal on Thursday began a walk from Kashmir to Kanyakumari with a resolve to set a Guinness World Record.

Naik N.A. Velu P. of the Army's 60 Para Field Hospital who was sent off from the headquarters of the Chinara or 15 Corps headquarters here by his colleagues on the journey covering a distance of approximately 4,300 kilometres within 50 days is an "ultra-marathoner who is attempting a Guinness book of world record, defence spokesman Lt. Colonel Emron Musavi said.

He was flagged off from 92 Base Hospital at Srinagar with a heart-warming gathering of enthusiasts.

## ODISHA SIZZLES UNDER SEVERE HEAT WAVE

DC CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 1

Bhubaneswar which on Wednesday recorded the country's maximum temperature of 44.2 degrees Celsius, continued to sizzle under intense heat wave on Thursday. The city, according to local meteorological office sources, recorded 39.8 degrees Celsius temperature.

While Angul and Talcher recorded the highest 42.7 degrees Celsius temperature, mercury hovered over 40 degrees Celsius in at least 13 other cities. Stating that the heat wave conditions would continue till next 24 hours, the weather department cautioned people not to venture out under the scorching sun.

Like Wednesday, normal life was severely affected on Thursday after mercury began to shoot up after 8 am.

Soon after, the local Met office posted a tweet warning people to avoid direct heat exposure till 4 pm.

## Cong, AIUDF aim to make big gains in Assam 2nd phase

Assam records 73% polling in 39 Assembly constituencies in phase-II

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, APRIL 1

In the second phase of polling, Assam on Thursday recorded more than 73 per cent polling in 39 Assembly seats spread across six different regions of the state. The Nowgong seat recorded the highest turnout of 83.10 per cent.

The six regions which went to polls on Thursday included Southern Assam's Barak Valley with 15 seats, Central Assam's 12 seats, Hill districts' five seats, Bodoland Territorial Council's four seats, Kamrup rural's two seats and one seat of lower Assam.

The political battles are also different in each of these regions. The biggest chunk of seats in the second phase are in the Barak Valley, in southern Assam. Bengali speaking voters are in a majority in this region, which has a sizable number of migrants, both — Hindus and Muslims. The BJP has traditionally been stronger among Bengali Hindus.

This region also has a sizable number of Muslim population — 60 per cent in Hailakandi district, 56 per cent in Karimganj district and 37 per cent in Cachar district. The Barak Valley Muslims are also Bengali speaking. In the 2016 Assembly polls, the BJP had won eight out of 15 seats, the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) four and the Congress three.

This time, however, the equations have changed with the Congress and AIUDF joining hands. In 2016, out of the eight seats BJP won, four were due to a vote split between the Congress and AIUDF. This

## Assam polls battle between 'jhooth' &amp; 'vikas', says Modi

DC CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI, APRIL 1

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday came down heavily on Opposition Congress and said that the ongoing Assam Assembly election has become a "battle" between the Congress-AIUDF grand alliance of "maha jhooth" (great lie) and National Democratic Alliance of "maha vikas" (great development).

Addressing a public rally in Kokrajhar which is scheduled to go for polling in the third and final phase of polling on April 6, Modi said, "Football is very popular among youth here. In terms of football

people have yet again shown a Red Card to Congress and its Mahajot. People of Assam have trust in the NDA for the development, peace, security of the state. This is an election between the 'maha jhooth' of Mahajot (Congress-AIUDF grand alliance) and 'maha vikas' of the double engine government."

Asserting that the BJP is set for a grand victory in Phase-I polls, Modi said the NDA government is working for the welfare of Assam with the mantra of 'sabka saath sabka vikas sabka vishwas'. "People of Assam have given blessings to NDA in 1st phase of polling. In the 1st phase, Assam has put a stamp on

grand victory of NDA," he said

Referring to BJP government's developmental initiatives in the state, Modi said, "Medical college is being set up in Kokrajhar at a rapid pace. A package of ₹1,500 crore has also been provided for development. Bodoland University, Central Institute of Technology, Bodoland Bhaman and several other institutions are becoming the identity of this region."

He said, "From providing land pattas to over 3.25 lakh families, increasing rates of workers to making the life of women working in tea gardens, the NDA has tried to bring all-round development."

## VIOLENCE MARS NANDIGRAM VOTING; FORCES RESCUE DIDI

FROM PG 1

Soon after, the Governor tweeted, "Issues flagged @MamataOfficial a while ago on phone have been imparted (sic) to the concerned".

Despite this, Nandigram recorded voter turnout of over 81 per cent till 5 pm.

"Eighty per cent votes here were rigged. Cheating was done in polling here. I lodged 63 complaints to the EC. Why are the goons of the BJP from other states

like Uttar Pradesh allowed here? I have never seen such an EC. I urge it to act impartially. I am not blaming the Central forces because Union home minister Amit Shah is giving orders to BSF, CRPF and others," Ms Banerjee said.

Though sporadic incidents of violence and allegations of vote fraud marked the second phase of West Bengal Assembly polls, a large voter turnout of more than 80 per cent was recorded.

## Troops sent to stop Myanmar refugees' entry

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

Additional battalions of ITBP, SSB and Assam Rifle are being rushed to the India-Myanmar border as some refugees from Myanmar have been trying to enter India in wake of Army action against protesters there. Though so far Myanmar residents are not being allowed, Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) will discuss the issue in its meeting next week, sources said.

Security and intelligence agencies are closely monitoring the situation all along the India-Myanmar border as there is considerable tension in Myanmar as Army has launched a massive offensive against protesters in their country. This has forced people to flee from Myanmar and a lot of them have been trying to enter India.

But so far border guards have managed to stop any illegal entry into India and have contained the situation along the border. India shares almost a 1,500-km long border with Myanmar.

Following the tense situation in Myanmar it has been decided that additional central paramilitary forces like ITBP, SSB and Assam Rifle have

been rushed to the Myanmar border.

Sources said so far it has been decided that illegal migrants will not be allowed into India. However, as a humanitarian gesture, Indian security forces have been providing food, medicine and water to some residents of villages in Myanmar which are close to the border. However, they are not being permitted to cross over into India.

Top security sources said that the Cabinet Committee on Security, which is likely to meet sometime next week, will discuss the Myanmar situation in detail.

A decision could also be taken on the crucial issue on whether some refugees from Myanmar should be allowed inside India purely on a temporary basis till the time the situation normalises in Myanmar.

"So far government policy is clear that no illegal migration would be allowed from Myanmar. But maybe some relaxation could be given only on temporary and humanitarian basis to give shelter to some refugees. But the decision will have to be taken by the Cabinet Committee on Security," a senior home ministry official added.

## NEW VARIANT FOUND IN CHHATTISGARH

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC WITH agency inputs BHOPAL, APRIL 1

New variant of Coronavirus, named N-440, has been found in Chhattisgarh indicating mutation of virus in the state, Chhattisgarh

health minister T.S. Singhdeo said on Thursday.

According to him, the Centre has sent a report to the Chhattisgarh government recently confirming that the new variant of Coronavirus was found in five samples from the state.

## WORLD

## SHORT TAKES

## PAK COURT LIFTS BAN ON TIKTOK

Peshawar, April 1: A Pakistani court on Thursday lifted its ban on popular Chinese video-sharing app TikTok and ordered the country's telecommunication authority to make sure that "immoral content" is not uploaded on it.

The Peshawar High Court on March 11 had ordered a ban on the TikTok over alleged "obscene content", the second time in less than six months. The court on Thursday lifted the ban.

## LONDON COP IN NEO-NAZI GROUP CONVICTED

London, April 1: A London jury has found a rookie police officer guilty of belonging to a banned neo-Nazi organisation, the first time a British police officer has been convicted of membership of an outlawed far-right group.

After 32 hours of deliberation, the jury at the city's Old Bailey court found Benjamin Hannam, 22, guilty Thursday of being a member of the extremist group National Action.

## US SAYS ISRAEL 'OCCUPIES' WEST BANK

Washington, April 1: US President Joe Biden's administration said Wednesday that Israel's control of the West Bank is indeed "occupation," clarifying its stance after the release of a report that seemed to downplay the term, adopting language used by Donald Trump's government.

The State Department's annual report on human rights "does use the term 'occupation' in the context of the current status of the West Bank," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters.

"This has been the longstanding position of previous administrations of both parties over the course of many decades," he said.

## US court lets Rana file reply

Hearing of Tahawwur, declared fugitive by India, is scheduled April 12

Washington, April 1: A US court has acceded to the request of Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, who is sought for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, to file an additional reply against his extradition to India.

The in-person extradition hearing of 59-year-old Rana, who has been declared a fugitive by India, is scheduled for April 12.

The United States has supported India's request for his extradition to India. US District Court Judge in Los Angeles Jac-

queline Chooljian, in his brief order on Wednesday, said: Rana shall file a sur-reply of no more than 20 pages by not later than April 5.

The government may, but is not required to file any surrebuttal to the sur-reply, which may not exceed 20 pages, by not later than April 12, the judge said. In a separate order, the judge asked both Rana and the government representatives to confer and submit a status report within a week regarding the scheduling of the in-person extradition hearing,

which is currently set for April 22.

Under the existing law, hearings in cases of extradition under treaty stipulation or convention shall be held on land, publicly, and in a room or office easily accessible to the public, the judge said.

However, an in-person hearing is not currently authorised due to the pandemic, the federal judge said. Nor is it clear to the Court on the current record, that Mr. Rana may waive an in-person extradition hearing and consent to proceed by video/telepho-

nic conference, even if he wished to do so, the judge said. As such, the judge ordered the two parties to confer and file a status report within a week.

Last week Rana, who is being sought in connection with his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, approached the court that it wanted to file an additional reply in opposition to the motion of the US government that supported his extradition to India. The US government quickly reached out to the court arguing that there was no need for Rana to file

an additional motion.

On Wednesday, the court ruled in favour of Rana.

Rana, a childhood friend of David Coleman Headley, was re-arrested on June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed.

Pakistani-American Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist Headley was involved in plotting the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. He was made an approver in the case. — PTI

## WHO blasts Europe's vaccine rollout

France latest to impose new restrictions to combat soaring virus infections

Copenhagen, April 1: The WHO on Thursday slammed Europe's "unacceptably slow" vaccine rollout and warned of a "worrying" surge in cases, as France became the latest country to impose new restrictions to combat soaring Coronavirus infections. In a sign of the devastation the virus is still causing while the world races to roll out vaccines, Brazil reported the country's death toll had spiralled last month. Officials said more than 66,000 people had died of Covid-19 in Brazil in March — more than twice as many fatalities as the country's second-deadliest month of the pandemic, July 2020.

"Never in Brazilian history have we seen a single event kill so many people" in one month, said doctor Miguel Nicolelis, former pandemic response coordinator for Brazil's impoverished northeast.

With the southern hemisphere winter approaching and the virus spreading fast, Brazil is facing "a perfect storm," he said.

The surge in Brazil has overwhelmed hospitals and forced doctors to

## Osaka, 2 other areas put under semi-emergency

Tokyo, April 1: Japan designated Osaka and two other areas for new virus control steps on Thursday as infections there rise less than four months before the Tokyo Olympics. Osaka, neighbouring Hyogo and Miyagi in the north have had sharp increases in daily cases since early March, soon after Japan scaled down its partial and non-binding state of emergency that began in January.

Japan lifted the state of emergency in the Tokyo area on March 21, fully ending the measures aimed at slowing the Coronavirus and relieving pressure on medical systems treating Covid-19 patients. Experts have raised concerns about Osaka's rapid spike — with many cases linked to new variants of the virus from Britain — and the burden on health care. — AP

make agonising decisions over whom to give life-saving care — prioritising those most likely to survive. The virus has killed more than 2.8 million people worldwide since it

## Italy extends Covid-19 curbs through April

Rome, April 1: Coronavirus restrictions in most of Italy that closed restaurants, shops and museums through Easter will be extended through April, the government said on Wednesday.

But "an easing of measures" could be decided if the trend of the epidemic and the vaccination rollout warrant it, according to the decree approved late Wednesday by the government of Prime Minister Mario Draghi.

Under the new decree, schools for lower grades will remain open, and it makes vaccines for healthcare workers compulsory.

Anyone refusing to be vaccinated can be reassigned, where possible, in roles that will be away from the public.

If not, their pay will be suspended. — AFP

## Lockdown once again in Ontario from tomorrow

Montreal, April 1: Canada's most populous province is expected to return to lockdown after a sharp rise in Covid-19 infections, local media reported Wednesday.

Premier Doug Ford is set to announce that Ontario — home to 14 million people, more than a third of the country's population — will return to lockdown for 28 days from Saturday, TV channels CBC and CTV reported.

The province has reported 2,000 new cases daily for a week, double the daily infections seen in the beginning of March.

The number of patients in intensive care also rose to 421 on Wednesday, equaling the peak reached in January, according to Radio-Canada. Essential services will remain open with capacity limited to 50 per cent. — AFP

Europe. "Vaccines present our best way out of this pandemic... however, the rollout of these vaccines is unacceptably slow," the World Health Organisation's director for Europe Hans

Kluge said. "We must speed up the process by ramping up manufacturing, reducing barriers to administering vaccines, and using every single vial we have in stock," he added.

## Race review: Johnson's PoC adviser resigns

London, April 1: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's senior-most PoC adviser, Samuel Kasumu, has stepped down from his post as Special Adviser for Civil Society and Communities, it emerged on Thursday, a day after the release of a controversial government-appointed race review.

Kasumu's resignation will come in effect from May 1 and Downing Street has dismissed as completely inaccurate reports that it is linked to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CREd) report, which had concluded that Britain was not a structurally racist nation even though overt racism remained a reality in the country. It has been claimed that Kasumu's exit was on the cards for some time due to tensions within Downing Street and is not directly linked to the much-criticised report.

"Mr Kasumu has played an incredibly valuable role during his time at No 10," a Downing Street spokesperson said. As he previously set out, he will be leaving government in May. Any suggestion that this decision has been made this week or that this is linked to the CREd report is completely inaccurate," the spokesperson said.

Kasumu had previously handed in his resignation in February but went on to retract it. At the time, he had said he wanted to continue work he had been doing fighting misinformation on Covid-19 vaccines with Britain's PoC community, with "the view to leaving at the end of May". However, according to *The Politico*, Kasumu confirmed his decision to leave Downing Street on Tuesday morning, just as the findings of the CREd report were released. It comes as racial equality campaigners criticised the findings, and the Opposition Labour Party accused the government of downplaying institutional racism.

Labour's shadow equality secretary Marsha de Cordova called the report "divisive", adding it was "no wonder" the government was "losing the expertise from their team".

"To have your most senior adviser on ethnic minorities quit as you publish a so-called landmark report on race in the UK is telling of how far removed the Tories are from the everyday lived experiences of PoC people," she said. — PTI

## Navalny health raises concern

Moscow, April 1: Supporters of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny are raising deep concerns about his decision to launch a hunger strike, saying they fear more damage to his already-fragile health.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent, announced the hunger strike on

Wednesday to demand proper medical treatment in prison. The 44-year-old is serving two-and-a-half years on old fraud charges in a penal colony east of Moscow. He was arrested when he returned to Russia in January from Germany, where he had spent months recovering from poisoning he blames on the Kremlin.



## SHORT TAKES

## Female lifter fails dope test, axed

**New Delhi:** A woman weightlifter, who was part of the ongoing national camp at the National Institute of Sports in Patiala, has been provisionally suspended after testing positive for banned substance. The weightlifter, a national record holder and who has participated in several international tournaments including the Commonwealth Championship where she won gold, was set to be a part of the Indian team for the Asian Championship to be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from April 16 to 25.

"Yes, she has failed a dope test. The report came about 10-15 days back," a source in the Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLFF) confirmed.

Taking a break from the national camp, the weightlifter went home in October last year when national coach Vijay Sharma and star lifter Mirabai Chanu had travelled to the United States.

After she returned to the camp, her sample was collected by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) in November last. The weightlifter had allegedly consumed a supplement that contained the prohibited substance. — PTI

## Ex-Olympian guilty of drug smuggling

**Brisbane:** Former two-time Olympic silver medalist canoeist Nathan Baggeley and his younger brother have been found guilty of plotting to smuggle 200 million Australian dollars (\$150 million) worth of cocaine into Australia. The 45-year-old Baggeley and his 39-year-old brother Dru were charged with attempting to import 650 kilograms (1,430 pounds) of cocaine in 2018.

After about eight hours of deliberating, a Brisbane Supreme Court jury found both men guilty on Thursday.

Nathan Baggeley won two canoeing silver medals at the 2004 Athens Olympics and also was a three-time world champion. But his career was tarnished with drug scandals testing positive for banned steroids in 2005 and also being jailed with Dru Baggeley 10 years later for his role in a drug manufacturing syndicate.

The Baggeley brothers will be sentenced on a date yet to be decided by the court. — AP

## Investigators mum over Woods crash

**Los Angeles:** Police in Los Angeles said Wednesday investigators have identified the cause of the crash which left Tiger Woods seriously injured last month but did not release further details, citing concerns about the golf star's privacy.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva said the probe into the one-vehicle accident on February 23, which left Woods with a shattered right leg, was now complete. — AFP

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# Umpire's call to stay

## But ICC introduces minor changes to DRS protocols

**Dubai, April 1:** The contentious 'Umpire's Call' will continue to be a part of the Decision Review System, the International Cricket Council's Board ruled on Thursday, but introduced a few changes to the current DRS protocols. Called "confusing" by India captain Virat Kohli, the Umpire's Call has been a subject of controversy for a while now. As per the existing rule, 50 per cent of the ball should be hitting at least one of the three stumps for the batsman to be adjudged LBW on review in case an umpire's not out call has been challenged.

"The Cricket Committee had an excellent discussion around Umpire's Call and analysed its use extensively," ICC's Cricket Committee head and former Indian captain Anil Kumble said in statement issued by the governing body after the end of its board meetings on Wednesday.

"The principle underpinning DRS was to correct clear errors in the game whilst ensuring the role of the umpire as the decision maker on the field of play was preserved...Umpire's Call allows that to happen, which is why it is important it remains," he added.

The ICC introduced three minor changes to the DRS and third Umpire protocols. "For LBW reviews, the height margin of the Wicket Zone will be lifted to the top of the stumps to ensure the same Umpire's Call margin around the stumps for both height and width," the ICC stated. — PTI



CSK skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Suresh Rains (left) share light moment in this photo.

— Twitter

# Hazlewood pulls out of IPL

**Melbourne, April 1:** Australia and Chennai Super Kings fast bowler Josh Hazlewood has pulled out of the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League to take a small break from cricket and keep himself fresh for the Ashes and the T20 World Cup later this year.

Hazlewood was to depart with other Australia's IPL-bound players and join CSK but decided to skip the cash-rich league,

which will start on April 9 and go on till May 30, and spend time at home for the next two months.

"It's been a long 10 months in bubbles and quarantine at different times, so I decided to have a rest from cricket and spend some time at home and in Australia in the next two months," Hazlewood was quoted as saying by *cricket.com.au*.

"We've got a big winter ahead. The West Indies is

going to be a long tour, with Bangladesh (T20 tour) potentially thrown on the end of that. Then potentially the T20 World Cup leading into the Ashes, so it's a big 12 months.

"As it always is with Australia, and I want to give myself the best chance to be mentally and physically ready for that," he added.

He follows Josh Philippe (RCB) and Mitchell Marsh

(SRH) in withdrawing from the IPL, while some other Australians may consider opting out also, according to the report.

Hazlewood has been under restrictions from July last year before leaving for England with Australia's limited-overs team where he was in strict bio-secure lockdown before heading to the UAE for the IPL where again safety protocols were tight. — PTI

# IPL WILL BE A HUGE BENEFIT TO US: STOKES

**Mumbai, April 1:** The increased participation of English players in the IPL, where there is constant pressure to perform, will benefit them during the T20 World Cup to be held in India later this year, reckons star all-rounder Ben Stokes.

This year, there are 14 England cricketers contracted to play IPL, Eoin Morgan, Jos Buttler, Stokes, Johnny Bairstow, Moeen Ali, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Sam Billings, Liam Livingstone and David Malan.

"Yes — the percentage of English players in the IPL has probably grown in the last five or so years," Stokes told *Sky Sports*.

"Not only is that great for the individual but it is also great for the players involved in the England set-up; it gives them experience in the most high-profile competition in the world but not only that — you are under constant pressure to perform," he added.

"You've got billions of people watching you and you've got the pressure of the franchise on you."



Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Virat Kohli (left) and star batsman AB de Villiers join the RCB squad in Chennai on Thursday ahead of upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League.

— Twitter

# Virat, AB arrive in Chennai

**Chennai, April 1:** India and Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Virat Kohli reached here on Thursday to join his IPL squad before which he will undergo a seven-day quarantine.

The team has already started its training camp on Tuesday for the upcoming season which begins on April 9.

"Captain Virat Kohli

has arrived in Chennai," RCB said, announcing Kohli's arrival in a tweet, along with a picture of their captain wearing a mask.

RCB face defending champions Mumbai Indians in the tournament opener on April 9 here.

Kohli, who has been with the RCB since the inception of the IPL in

2008, quit the bio-bubble in Pune on Monday after India's ODI series win against England.

He has been part of bio-secure bubbles since the end of January, ahead of the England series, and was part of each of the four Tests, five T20 Internationals and three ODIs.

Another key RCB player and South African star

batsman A B de Villiers also joined the RCB bio-bubble on Thursday.

"The spaceship has landed! AB de Villiers has joined the RCB bubble in Chennai," the RCB tweeted.

The 37-year-old batting great has been a key player for the team since he joined the franchise in 2011.

— PTI



Action during the match between Mahesh Mungaonkar and Abhay Singh.

# Mahesh to meet Harrity in final

**DC CORRESPONDENT**

CHENNAI, APRIL 1

Top seed Mahesh Mungaonkar of India quelled the challenge of compatriot Abhay Singh in four games to reach the men's final in the second HCL-SRFI Indian Tour -- Chennai Leg 1 at the Indian Squash Academy here on Thursday. The Indian world no 47 won 12-10 8-11 11-4 11-9 in a 66-minute encounter.

Mungaonkar edged Singh in a tight opening game before losing the next 8-11. He, however, stepped up his level of play to take the next two games 11-4 11-9 to book a spot in Friday's final against American Todd Harrity, the second seed.

Harrity got the better of third seeded Karim El Hammamy of Egypt 11-8

11-9 8-11 11-1 in 53 minutes. In the women's section, India's Tanvi Khanna, the third-seed, went down fighting to Egyptian second seed Hana Moataz 6-11 4-11 11-9 5-11 in 31 minutes. Moataz will face compatriot Malak Kamal in the final.

Kamal ended the run of fellow Egyptian Rana Ismail (seventh seed) with a 11-13 11-6 11-2 12-10 win in 36 minutes.

**Results:** **Semi-finals:**

**Women:** Malak Kamal beat Rana Ismail 11-13, 11-6, 11-2, 12-10; Hana Moataz (Egypt-X2) beat Tanvi Khanna (India-X3) 11-6, 11-4, 9-11, 11-5

**Men:** Mahesh Mungaonkar (India-X1) beat Abhay Singh (India) 12-10, 8-11, 11-4, 11-9; Todd Harrity (USA-X2) beat Rana Ismail (Egypt-X7) 11-13, 11-6, 11-2, 12-10.

## CITY CLIPS

## SPFA summer tournament

Sabir Pasha Football Academy summer tournament for U-15 category will be held at Ambattur ITI ground on Friday. As many as eight teams have been invited to compete in the 11-a-side tournament.

**Participating teams:** SPFA, Mahogany, Chennai Crystals FA, Cosmos FC, Puzhal FC, AVP FC, Great Goals, YMSC.

## Presidency Clup lift 'D' zone title

Presidency Club 'C' registered a 2-1 win over Gandhinagar Club 'B' to lift the 'D' zone title in the Sanmar-TNTA Chennai City Club League championship.

**Results:** Presidency Club 'C' bt Gandhinagar Club 'B' 2-1 (Ankur Malhotra/Palani Vale bt Vijay Bose/Shivakumar Viswanathan 6-4, 7-5; Sidharth Sangvi/Charan Asokan lost to K. Guhan/Chirrag Sheth 6-4, 4-6, 3-6; Suraj Kumar Ramnikal Sayani/Vivek Bhandari bt Karthik Athreya/Sujan Karthik 6-4, 6-1)

## Sounderamani sizzles

N.K. Sounderamani's five-wicket haul helped Kumbhat Cricket Club beat Venkat Cricket Club in the TNCA fifth division championship league match.

**Brief scores: IV-Division (Relegation play-off):** Vigneshwara Cricket Club 282/9 in 50 overs (R. Abinadh 95, K. R. Shreyas Raghavan 69, V. R. S. Guru Kedarnath 43, H. Sathish Babu 37; P. Vignesh 47) bt Fox Trotters Cricket Club 140 in 30.1 overs (M. Dhinakaran 49, R. Aarudhra Simhaddev 30; I. Selva 3/27).

**V-Division (Championship):** Venkat Cricket Club 112 in 34 overs (S. Senthil Kumar 52; N. K. Sounderamani 5/16) lost to Kumbhat Cricket Club 113/5 in 20.1 overs (R. Santhosh 42, R. Hrishikesh Trilochan 32).

## Challengers Hockey thump St. Paul's

Challengers Hockey, Chennai posted a thumping 7-0 win over St. Paul's Combined XI in the Shri N. P.V. Ramasamy Udayar Hockey Cup.

**Results:** Tamil Nadu Postal Hockey 1 (Yuvraj) bt Chennai Hockey Association U-21; Challengers Hockey, Chennai 7 (Sunil Moorthy 2, Veera Thamizhan 2, Arun Kumar, Nambi Ganesh, Thangaraj) bt St. Paul's Combined XI; Indian Overseas Bank 5 (Harisharan 2, V. Vinod Rayer 2, Manoj Jojo) bt Southern Railway 1 (Saravana Kumar).

# FINANCIAL Chronicle

## TAFE'S MALLIKA SRINIVASAN TO SELECT PUBLIC SECTOR HONCHOS

**New Delhi, April 1:** Mallika Srinivasan, chairman and managing director of Tractors and Farm Equipment (TAFE) Limited has been appointed as the chairperson of the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB), an order issued by the personnel ministry on Thursday said.

This is the first time a private sector specialist has been appointed as the head of the PESB, responsible for appointment of top management posts in the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), officials said.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Srinivasan as the chairperson of PESB for a period of three years from the date of assumption of charge, or until the attainment of the age of 65 years, it said. Sailesh, a 1985-batch IAS officer, has been appointed as member, PESB.

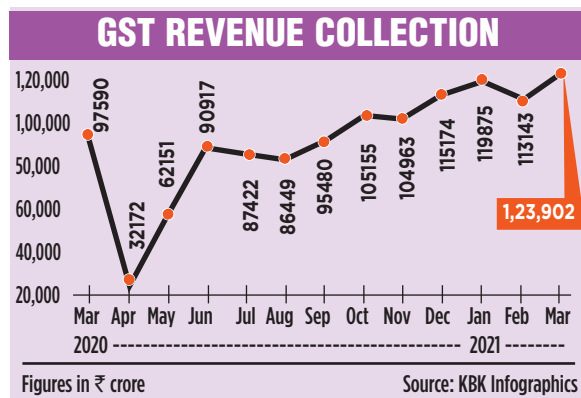
# Collection tops ₹1 L cr for 6th month in a row

## GST mop-up hits record ₹1.23 lakh crore in March

**FC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1

In line with the trend of constant recovery in GST revenues over the past five months, the gross goods and services tax (GST) revenue collected in March 2021 stood at a record high of over Rs 1.23 lakh crore. The total revenues earned for the month are 27 per cent higher than the GST collected in the same month last year, according to finance ministry data released on Thursday.

"The gross GST revenue collected in the month of March 2021 is at a record of Rs 1,23,902 crore, of which CGST is Rs 22,973 crore, SGST is Rs 29,329 crore, IGST is Rs 62,842 crore



(including Rs 31,097 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess is Rs 8,757 crore (including Rs 935 crore collected on import of goods)," the ministry said.

The GST collections for March this year is the six consecutive month of revenue crossing Rs 1-lakh crore mark. The finance ministry said that a steep increasing trend over this

period is a clear indicator of a rapid economic recovery post-pandemic.

"The revenues from import of goods was at 70 per cent higher and the revenues from domestic transaction (including import of services) are 17 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year. The GST revenue witnessed growth rate of (-) 41 per cent, (-) 8 per cent, 8 per cent and 14 per cent in the first, second, third and fourth quarters of this financial year, respectively, as compared to the same period last year," it said.

The Centre has settled Rs 21,879 crore to CGST and Rs 17,230 crore to SGST.

# Private equity VC funding soars 85% in fourth quarter

**SANGEETHA G**  
CHENNAI, APRIL 1

Private equity (PE) and venture capital (VC) investments in the March quarter was up 85 per cent against the pre-lock-down quarter of last year.

PE and VC firms invested over \$11.86 billion across 188 deals in the first three months of 2021—an increase of about 85 per cent compared to the same period in 2020, as per the data of Venture Intelligence. The pre-pandemic quarter of January-March 2020 had recorded PE/VC investments of \$6.5 billion across 238 deals.

The value of investments in the March quarter was also 58 per cent higher compared to the previous December quarter, which saw \$7.5 billion being invested across 231 deals. However, deal volumes were down by 21 per cent against the March quarter of last year and 19 per cent compared to the December quarter.

In the past few quarters, investments into Reliance Group entities have been pushing the aggregate funding to new highs. In the June

quarter, total investments had touched \$13.95 billion and in the September quarter it stood at \$11.87 billion. However in the March quarter, there were no investments into the group.

Piramal Enterprises winning the bankruptcy bid for Dewan Housing Finance for \$5.2 billion was the largest deal in the quarter. Some of the tech unicorns like Zomato and Byjus attracted \$500 million and \$460 million, respectively, in the quarter.

"The high level of fund flows during the latest quarter, coming as they did without any investments into Reliance Industries Group companies, is very encouraging. It would be interesting to see how the investment figures in the coming quarters match up against the high bar set by RIL Group deals which had dominated the last three quarters of 2020," said Arun Natarajan, founder of Venture Intelligence.

Exits too were active in the March quarter, as there were eight successful domestic IPOs of PE-VC backed companies.