

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | FRIDAY 2 | APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Max: 35°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
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DEATHS

	28,33,387
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COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES	219
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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



NATION | 5

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. ■P5

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

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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 grant 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 Amma 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.

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

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 1

The Madras high court has dismissed a Public Interest Litigation, which sought a direction to the Election Commissioner/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



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

How political parties are making the most of television channels



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 Nadai 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.

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E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Name of work: AMOC of Bio Toilet in coaches of Kathar division for a period of one year. Tender Value: ₹2,92,42,545/- Tender document cost: 10,000/-. Date & time of closing of tender: 22-04-2021 at 15:00 hrs. & opening on 22-04-2021 at 15:30 hrs. For details please visit in website www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. DME/AC/Kathar

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First Corrigendum

The tender notice no 570-Sig/PS/Tender/113 dated 30.03.2021 invited by Dy.CSTE/C/PS/NDLS, may now be find with the following corrigendum:-

S.No.	Points	Existing Provision	Revised Provision
1	Date & Time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Time of Submission: hrs. from 15.04.2021 to 20.04.2021 upto 11:30	Time of Submission: 09.04.2021 to 23.04.2021. upto 11:30 hrs.
		Time of Opening : soon after 11:30 hrs on 20.04.2021	Time of Opening : soon after 11:30 hrs on 23.04.2021

1. All other terms and conditions in this tender will remain the same.

No. 570-Sig/PS/Tender/113 Dated : 31.03.2021 750/2021

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Tender Notice

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01	02211929	Disconnecting and Earthing Device	150 NOS	28.04.2021
02	19210961	Set of Single Duct Leather Bellow for Traction Motor	50 SET	30.04.2021
03	19210772	Membrane for Hurth Coupling of WAP-5 Loco	36 NOS	01.06.2021
04	02211918	Blower Fan Motor 1.1 KW	389 NOS	17.06.2021

NOTE: 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained.

Tender Notice No. 01/2021-2022 Dated : 01.04.2021 752/2021

Serving Customers With A Smile

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 Thalappathi 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.

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.

Rajini dedicates award to those responsible for his rise

Chennai, April 1: Superstar Rajinikanth on Thursday dedicated the prestigious Dada Saheb Phalke Award announced by the Centre to those who made him what he is now, including a bus driver friend and his mentor who launched him in cinema, the late K. Balachander.

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar had announced on Thursday that Rajinikanth will be bestowed with the Dada Saheb Phalke award for the year 2019, making him the third from Tamil cinema after the late thespian Sivaji Ganesan and late director Balachander, his mentor, to have been chosen for the award. Congratulatory messages poured in from various quarters to the veteran.

The 70-year old actor thanked the Centre for conferring the prestigious award and said he dedicated it to his friend Raj Bahadur, elder brother Sathyanarayana Rao and all those who made him the

Rajini that is now. "I dedicate this award to my friend and bus driver Raj Bahadur, who discovered my acting talent and encouraged me, my elder brother Sathyanarayana Rao Gaekwad, who sacrificed a lot to make me an actor while struggling with poverty, my guru K. Balachander, who created this Rajinikanth," he said.

In a statement he also dedicated the award to producers, directors, technicians, distributors, theatre owners, media, the Tamil people, "who have given me my life, and my fans across the world." Rajinikanth said he thanked the Indian government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for conferring him the "Indian cinema's highest honour." The star thanked P a l a n i s w a m y, Panneerselvam, Leader of Opposition Stalin, "my friend Kamal Haasan," national and state politicians, his friends, his friends in the film industry and my well-wishers. "Long live Tamil people! Long live Tamil Nadu! Jai Hind!!," he said. —PTI

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

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 wishes Rajini

Amaravati, April 1: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday wished Rajinikanth on being selected for the Dada Saheb Phalke Award. The stylish Tamil superstar made a profound impact on silver screen with his inimitable mannerisms and performance, the Chief Minister said in a statement. —PTI

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

Format C-1

Declaration About Criminal Cases

(As Per The Judgement Dates 25th September, 2018, Of The Hon'ble Supreme Court In Wp (Civil) No.536 Of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union Of India & Anr.)

Name And Address Of Candidate: **K. Pandiarajan**
No.215, 27th Street, JB Estate
Avadi, Chennai - 600 054

Name Of Political Party : **AIADMK**
Anaithindiya Anna Dravida
Munnetra Kazhagam

Name Of Election : **Legislative Assembly**
Name of Constituency **Avadi-006 constituency**

I, **K.Pandiarajan**, a candidate for the abovementioned election declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents.

(A) Pending Criminal cases					
Sl.No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated Status of Case	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)	
1	Additional Special Court for (MP & MLA) of Tamilnadu	CC/72/2019	Pending	Section 171 F of IPC, Section 123 (2) (b) RPAct &	
2	Madras High Court	CRL/OP/33597/2019 (main)	Pending	Section 2 Prevention of insults to national honour (A amendment) Act, 2003	
	Madras High Court	CRL/MP/18526/2019			
	Madras High Court	CRL/MP/18527/2019			
(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences					
Sl.No.	Name of Court & date(s) of order (s)	Description of Offence(s) & Punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed		
NIL					

<p>THE FUGITIVES WERE SPARED FROM CERTAIN DEATH BY A FANTASTIC INCIDENT THE BAGER KULP LOST CONTROL.</p>	<p>AND THE RUBY SLIPPED AWAY FROM HIS SWEATY FINGERS! HE PLUNGED DESPERATELY—</p>	<p>BUT IT QUICKLY BELL, SHATTERING INTO A THOUSAND PIECES ON THE STONE STEPS.</p>
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**EIGHT
USUALLY,
NINE
SOMETIMES**

Mark Twain wrote, "One of the most striking differences between a cat and a lie is that a cat has only nine lives."

Well, it is hard to call an adage like "lead through strength and up to weakness" a lie. There are exceptions, but it is usually correct. Another adage is "eight ever, nine never." As you probably know, this means that if you have eight trumps missing only the queen, you should finesse on

round two. But if you have nine cards, it is better to play off the ace and king, expecting the queen to drop. However, in this latter case, that is only about 2% better than a second-round finesse. If you know something about another suit, the odds can change.

This deal occurred during the 1972 World Team Olympiad in Miami Beach, when the Aces faced Poland. The American West had an unenviable lead and selected

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. The Regional Meteorological Centre forecasted that there would be a fall in temperature in the state from Friday.

TIGERESS FOUND DEAD IN MP RESERVE FOREST

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, APRIL 1

A female tiger died in Bandhavgarh reserve forest core zone which was struck by a wildfire a couple of days ago, forest officers said on Thursday. Carcass of the 13-year-old tigress was found in Rahania forest beat area under Magadhi range in the reserve late on Tuesday night, field director of Bandhavgarh tiger reserve Vincent Rahim said.

Post-mortem of the body was done on Wednesday by the veterinary doctor of the range Nitin Gupta in the presence of representatives of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and senior officers of the state forest department including Rahim.

The post-mortem report, made public late on Wednesday night, suggested that the big cat may have succumbed to injuries caused by a fierce fight with another tiger, a senior forest officer told this newspaper.

"Prima facie it appears the tigress had suffered grievous wounds due to a tussle with a male tiger during their mating. The big cat had injury marks on her shoulder and neck. She may have succumbed to her injuries", Rahim said.



People queue up to vote on Thursday during the second phase of Assembly elections in East Medinipur district of West Bengal. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

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 time the two parties have come together therefore, the alliance is hoping its chances of inflicting heavy losses on the BJP in this region.

Three seats each in Darrang, Morigaon, Nagaon and Hojai districts also voted in the second phase of polling on Thursday. Five seats in Nagaon have already voted along with Upper Assam in the first phase of polling.

Like Barak Valley, Central Assam too has a sizable Muslim population, though it is a mix of Assamese and Bengali speakers.

Muslims account for 56 per cent of the population in central Assam's Nagaon district, 52 per cent in Morigaon, 53 per cent in Hojai and 64 per cent in Darrang. This region, too, is likely to witness a major impact of the Congress-led grand alliance with AIUDF.

In 2016, NDA had won 9 out of 12 seats, but four of these were due to a split in votes between the Congress and AIUDF. The political observers are of view that the NDA may have to struggle to hold on to its seats in this area too.

The battle for one seat — Barhampur in Nagaon district — has also become interesting as the BJP has taken over the seat of its ally AGP, denying a ticket to former chief minister and AGP stalwart Prafulla Kumar Mahanta.

The polling in Assam was almost peaceful with a significant number of voters turning up since morning hours to exercise their franchise on Thursday.

Assam polls battle between 'jhooth' & '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 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 Bhan 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 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. Bankura recorded the highest turnout at 82.92 per cent, followed by Purba Medinipur at 81.23, South 24 Parganas at 79.65 per cent, Paschim Medinipur at 78 per cent.

The Election Commission has sought a report from the East Midnapore district administration on Ms Banerjee's presence at the booth for a long time and her allegations of electoral malpractices.

Violence erupted across the high-profile constituency as the polling got underway in the morning. At Satengabari, TMC activists pelted stones on the convoy of Mr Adhikari of the BJP, and shouted "Go Back". Bombs were hurled at Sonachura and Kalicharanpur.

In Bhetukiya a BJP worker, Uday Dube (48), was found hanging in his residence. His party accused the TMC of driving him to commit suicide.

RAJA BANNED FROM CAMPAIGN FOR TWO DAYS

FROM PG 1

The AIADMK's complaint dated March 27, alleging that Mr Raja had made a derogatory and scandalous speech during a campaign on March 26 at the Thousand Lights constituency, was forwarded by the chief electoral officer (CEO) to the ECI.

Mr Raja was asked to give his explanation after the ECI obtained a factual report from the CEO and on the basis of preliminary reports and transcripts of his speeches made at Keelapalur and Meensuruti.

The order said that Mr Raja had described DMK president M.K. Stalin as a child of good relationship and good birth and Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami as a child of a bad relationship and a prematurely born child at Keelapalur.

At Meensuruti, he had said that Mr Palaniswami crawled and held the feet of former party general secretary V.K. Sasikala to come to his present position, the order said, adding "after considering your statements and reports, the Commission had found the contents of the speech made by you are not only derogatory but also obscene and lower the dignity of motherhood of women."

Since it was a serious violation of the provision of the Model Code of Conduct, the ECI issued a notice on March 30, asking Mr Raja to explain his position by March 31.

Mr 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.

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 protestors 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 protestors 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 is 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.

COVID UPDATE

NEW VARIANT FOUND IN CHHATTISGARH

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC 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.

However, doctors say a study was yet to be done as to how the new variant of the virus would exactly affect our immune system.

But, it has been found that the mutant was capable of weakening the immune system.

Singhdeo said no Coronavirus variants of Britain, South Africa and Brazil were so far detected in Chhattisgarh.

All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Raipur, gathers samples in Chhattisgarh and sends them to the National Centre for Disease Control for tests.

The first positive case in Chhattisgarh was reported in Raipur on March 18, 2020.

Meanwhile, India on Thursday recorded 79,275 new cases and 461 deaths in the last 24 hours taking the nationwide tally of cases to 1,22,99,987.

FOUR MORE DIE IN J&K, 461 NEW CASES REPORTED

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, APRIL 1

The number of Coronavirus cases are increasing with each passing day in Jammu and Kashmir.

On Thursday, as many as 461 fresh cases of the virus were reported including 361 from the Valley and 100 from Jammu region of the Union Territory which is the highest daily rise this year.

Also, four more people died of the infection, raising the toll to 1,998. "The total number of Covid-19 positive cases in J&K has risen to 1,31,421. However, only 2,874 are active positive whereas 1,26,549 patients have recovered and 1,998 have died," an official spokesman said in Jammu.

Several areas in the Valley have been declared contaminated zones following residents in fairly large numbers contracted the virus.

Also, eight schools have been shut for three to seven days after the swab samples of more than 60 students and half a dozen teachers collected during a recent drive by the J&K Health Department turned positive for the virus.

The Jammu & Kashmir government had on Tuesday announced a slew of measures to contain Coronavirus in view of fresh surge in positive cases.

Odisha infant dies as doc gives injection after 'Google search'

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 1

A couple hailing from Odisha's Nabarangpur on Thursday alleged that their six-month-old infant son suffering from pneumonia died after he was administered an injection which was prescribed by the doctor after a 'Google search' at Dabugam Health Centre.

The local medical officer, however, denied the allegation and said proper injection was given to the infant. According to the reports, Prasad Bisoyee of Badaolama village in Nabarangpur district on

Thursday took his critically ill son to the Dabugam Health Centre after his condition deteriorated.

The doctor who attended the infant wrote the prescription after searching the medicine on Google, he said.

"The doctor advised that my son needed a life-saving injection. He prescribed the injection not from his memory but after doing a Google search. Soon after the baby was administered the injection, he closed eyes and died," Bisoyee added.

"The doctor didn't bother to refer us to the Umerkote hospital in time where we could have availed better treatment," he alleged.

On the other hand, the medical officer at the health centre rubbished the allegation of 'Google search' medication.

"There was no medical negligence. The child suffered from severe pneumonia and was admitted to the hospital in a critical condition. Appropriate medicines were used. But, he was in the last stage," said Subhasis Sahoo, the medical officer at Dabugam.

"They took the patient to Umerkote, but returned mid-way after his condition deteriorated. When they reached here the patient had become very critical," Sahoo claimed.

HOLY GATHERING

It is for the 1st time in history that the event is held for just a month

Kumbh Mela begins in Haridwar

Haridwar, April 1: The Kumbh Mela formally began in Haridwar on Thursday with several restrictions imposed on devotees coming to attend the event amid rising cases of Covid-19 in various states including Uttarakhand.

Officials associated with organising the event, including Mela Officer Deepak Rawat, Mela IG Sanjay Gunjyal and Haridwar SSP Janmejay Khanduri, worshipped in temples along the banks of the Ganga to pray for a safe and unhindered Kumbh fair.

Checking on

Uttarakhand's borders with Uttar Pradesh at Narsan in Roorkee and Kashipur in Udham Singh Nagar district has been intensified to ensure that only people with a negative RT-PCR test report proceed for the Kumbh Mela.

"Besides registering on our portal, it is compulsory for devotees to bring a negative RT-PCR test report with them," Mela Officer Deepak Rawat said.

A negative RT-PCR test report not older than 72 hours before arrival has been made mandatory for devotees gathering for the

Kumbh by the Uttarakhand High Court.

In an order on Wednesday, the high court said a negative RT-PCR certification will be compulsory even in the case of devotees who have received the first dose of the Corona vaccine.

Devotees who have taken the anti-Covid vaccination will have to show their certificates and follow the anti-Covid guidelines like wearing masks, maintaining social distancing and frequently undertaking hand sanitisation in the Kumbh Kshetra.

The high court has also asked the health authori-

ties in Haridwar to ramp up testing from 5,000 per day to 50,000. Uttarakhand reported 293 positive Covid-19 cases on Wednesday with Dehradun and Haridwar districts accounting for a majority of them.

Dehradun reported 171 cases followed by Haridwar which reported 70, the Covid Control room in Dehradun said.

It is for the first time in the history of the grand religious congregation held on the banks of the Ganga in Haridwar once in 12 years that its duration has been curtailed to just one month due to the

pandemic.

In normal circumstances, Kumbh is held for nearly four months. Its last edition was held in Haridwar from January 14 to April 28 in 2010.

Between April 1 and 30, there will be three major bathing dates (shahi snan or royal baths) on April 12, 14 and 27.

Besides the shahi snan dates when people descend in droves on the banks of the Ganga in Haridwar for a holy bath, a heavy turnout of devotees is also expected on the occasion of Chaitra Pratipada on April 13 and Ram Navami on April 21.

— PTI

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.

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

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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.

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	50,029.83 1.05
Nifty 50	14,867.40 1.20
S&P 500*	4,009.89 0.93
Dollar (₹)	73.11 0.01
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.03 -0.26
Euro (₹)	85.99 -0.25
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,701.881 1.97
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.00 2.01
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.177 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.679 -0.067

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Wipro to acquire Oz's Ampion for \$117 million

Wipro said it will acquire Ampion, an Australia-based provider of cyber security, DevOps and quality engineering services for \$117 million (about Rs 857 crore). The acquisition of Ampion is an important step for Wipro in this direction, and strengthens the commitment towards clients and stakeholders in Australia and New Zealand, Wipro said. The acquisition is expected to close in the June quarter.

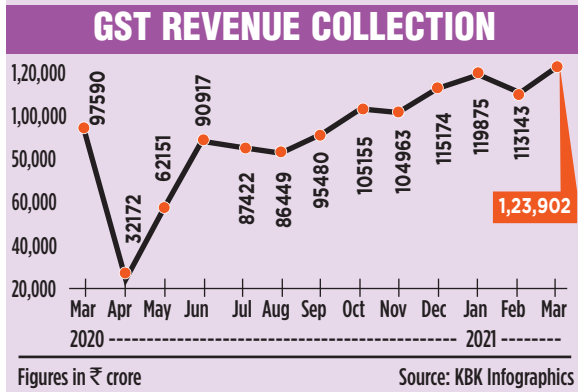
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Collection tops ₹1 L cr for 6th month in a row GST mop-up hits record ₹1.23 lakh crore in March

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.

Car sales rebound in March

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, APRIL 1

Most carmakers in the country—such as Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Tata Motors, Kia Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, Toyota Kirloskar Motors, Renault, Ford Motor, Honda Cars, MG Motor and Nissan Motor—on Thursday reported substantial year-on-year sales growth in March 2021 in comparison to the unusually low sales in March 2020 because of the lockdown.

These 11 of the 14 carmakers in India who control 99 per cent of India's domestic car market

clocked a 126 per cent jump in March sales to 3,15,946 units, up from 1,39,761 cars sold in March 2020 when the lockdown had begun to hit production.

Car sales have been improving in the last few months and March showed a substantial year-on-year growth.

Maruti Suzuki, which sells one car out of two bought in India, reported 91.76 per cent sales growth to 1,46,203 units last month compared to 76,240 units sold in March 2020.

Hyundai, the South Korean carmaker, clocked a 100 per cent rise in domestic sales during

March to 52,600 units as against 26,300 units sold in the same month last year.

Tata Motors, India's third biggest carmaker, recorded a 422 per cent increase to 29,654 units as compared to 5,676 units sold in March last year. This is the highest-ever sales in a month for the company in nine years. A total of 705 Nexon EVs were sold in March.

Korean brand Kia Motors logged a 123 per cent growth in volumes to 19,100 units against 8,583 units.

Sales at Mahindra & Mahindra, the SUV specialist, climbed 394 per cent to 16,700 units during the month against 3,383 units

sold in March last year.

Similarly, Toyota Kirloskar Motors posted a 114 per cent sales increase to 15,001 units as against 7,023 units, clocking the best monthly sales for it since 2013.

Sales at French car brand Renault also jumped 278 per cent to 12,356 units last month against 3,269 units sold in February last year.

Ford Motor India clocked 7,746 units sales in March, a growth of 120 per cent from 3,519 units.

Sales at Honda Cars India was up 92 per cent to 7,103 units versus 3,697 units. Its production in March was impacted due to a shortage of semiconductors.

TAFE'S MALLIKA SRINIVASAN TO SELECT PUBLIC SECTOR HONCHOS



Mallika Srinivasan

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. He is at present secretary, Department of Public Enterprises.

The PESB shall consist of one chairperson and three full-time members. M. K. Gupta and Rear Admiral Shekhar Mital (ret'd) are its two serving members. —PTI

PE/VC funding soars 85% in Q4



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.

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.

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 with 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 equalities 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 (IWLF) 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 medallist 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.

However, Villanueva said no information about the cause of the accident would be released unless Woods waived his right to privacy.

“A cause has been determined, the investigation has concluded,” Villanueva said. “However, we have reached out to Tiger Woods and his personnel.

“There’s some privacy issues on releasing information on the investigation, and we’re going to ask them if they waive the privacy. Then we’ll be able to do a full release on all the information regarding the accident,” he further added. — *AFP*

Osaka Guv wants to nix torch relay

Tokyo: The governor of Osaka prefecture said on Thursday that he wants to cancel the torch relay legs going through Osaka later this month, less than four months before the opening of the Tokyo Olympics. Governor Hirofumi Yoshimura said the prefecture is coming under new Covid-19 control measures because of rising case numbers. He said that will mean people being asked to stay home except for essential outings. “I think the torch relay through the middle of Osaka should be canceled,” he said. — *AP*

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.

“Being constantly exposed to that is a huge benefit to us as a team, especially with the T20 World Cup coming up at the end of the year in India; it’s a great chance for the English guys to get more experience in these conditions,” Stokes said. — *PTI*



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.

Head coach Simon Katich also came out of quarantine, along with pacer Navdeep Saini as the RCB team underwent another practice session.

UMESH READY TO HIT THE DECK FOR DC

Out of mandatory seven-day quarantine, India and Delhi Capitals fast bowler Umesh Yadav is ready to hit the deck as he returns to be with the familiar faces at his old franchise in the Indian Premier League, beginning on April 9.

The 33-year-old Yadav,

who started his IPL career with the Delhi franchise, returned to the side after being acquired for his base price of ₹1 crore in the auction in February.

“After being in quarantine for one week, it was great to step onto the ground and spend some time with the boys,” Yadav said.

“I just want to do well whenever I have the ball in my hand. I will definitely give my best for my team and keep getting better everyday,” he said in a DC release.

Yadav, who has picked up 119 wickets in 121 IPL matches, said he felt at home in the Delhi Capitals camp. — *PTI*

GRITTY NISSANKA, RAIN HOLD UP WI IN 2ND TEST

North Sound (Antigua and Barbuda), April 1: Pathum Nissanka kept the West Indies at bay, with Sri Lanka limping to the close at 250 for eight in reply to the home side’s first-innings total of 354 on a rain-affected third day of the second and final Test in Antigua on Wednesday. Bursting with confidence following a debut hundred in the first Test at the same venue just a week earlier, the Nissanka defied the Caribbean pacers in compiling an unbeaten 49.

It gave visitors some hope of continuing to whittle away at what is potentially a critical first-innings lead for the West Indies going into day four.

Nissanka’s determination for almost three hours, in which he faced 119 deliveries and stroked four boundaries, could yet prove beneficial for Sri Lanka should the other overnight batsman, Lasith Embuldeniya, and last man Vishwa Fernando replicate the resistance shown by the Windies lower order in their first innings. — *AFP*

Brief scores (Day 3, stumps): West Indies 354 vs Sri Lanka 250/8 in 103.1 overs (Chandimal 44, P. Nissanka 49 batting; J. Holder 2/39, A. Joseph 2/64).



Action during the semifinal between Mahesh Mangaonkar (right) and Abhay Singh.

Mahesh to meet Harrity in final

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI, APRIL 1

Top seed Mahesh Mangaonkar 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.

Mangaonkar 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 Mangaonkar (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): Vigneswara 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 4/57) 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).

Naomi crumbles to Sakkari power

Miami, April 1: Top-seeded Daniil Medvedev crashed out of the Miami Open Wednesday on a day of upsets that also saw Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka ousted from the quarterfinals.

Seventh-seeded Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut beat Medvedev 6-4, 6-2, for his third win in as many meetings with the Russian who was runner-up to Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open and ascended to No. 2 in the world with his victory at Marseille in March.

Women’s world No. 2 Naomi Osaka — seeded second behind Ashleigh Barty in the prestigious ATP Masters and WTA hard-court tournament — had bowed out hours earlier, the Japanese star’s 23-match winning streak coming to a crashing halt with a 6-0, 6-4 loss to Greece’s Maria Sakkari.

Bautista booked a semi-final showdown with 19-year-old Italian Jannick Sinner, the world No. 31 who beat Kazakhstan’s Alexander Bublik 7-6 (7/5), 6-4. Sakkari will face eighth-seeded Canadian Bianca Andreescu for a place in the women’s final.

Andreescu, ranked ninth in the world, clawed out a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 victory over tenacious 58th-ranked Spaniard Sara Sorribes Tormo. Osaka, playing her first tournament since lifting her fourth Grand Slam title at the Australian Open, won just eight points in the first set as she failed to muster a single winner.

Osaka broke in the second game of the second set and seized a 3-0 lead before Sakkari roared back for a victory that ended Osaka’s chance of overtaking Australia’s Barty — who had already booked her semi-final spot — atop the world rankings this week. — *AFP*

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