

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | THURSDAY 25 | MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Panguni 12
Tithi: Dwadashi
Star: Aayilyam
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam: 6 am to 7.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.01 am
Zohar: 12.21 pm
Asar: 3.34 pm
Maghrib: 6.20 pm
Isha: 7.31 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.20 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.10 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 3.14 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 4.15 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+51,286)	(+219)
1,17,84,880	1,60,696

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,636)
TN: 8,71,440 12,630

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

12,51,13,170

DEATHS

27,50,432

219
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

worldometers.info

Summons to PC and Karti in INX Media case

New Delhi: A Delhi court Wednesday issued summons to former Union minister P Chidambaram and his son Karti in the INX Media money-laundering case on taking cognisance of the charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against them. Special Judge M K Nagpal issued summons against the senior Congress leader, his son and others directing them to appear before court on April 7. The chargesheet names Karti's chartered accountant SS Bhaskararaman among others.

COUNTER

POINT



Don't panic! Not extortion. I am only collecting party fund!



CITY | 2

My govt protected Muslims: CM Palaniswami



WORLD | 5

Surgeon General: Senate okays Murthy

SPORT | 8

Shreyas out of England ODIs



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RAPID SURGE INEXPLICABLE: HEALTH MINISTRY

Double mutant virus variant, new strains cause concern

VINEETA PANDEY | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

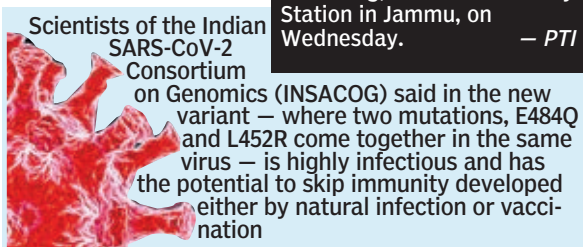
Amid rising Covid-19 cases in the country, there is now a new cause of concern. A new “double mutant” variant of Covid-19 has been detected in several parts of India in addition to many other strains which have also been found abroad.

Scientists of the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG) said in the new variant — where two mutations, E484Q and L452R come together in the same virus — is highly infectious and has the potential to skip immunity developed either by natural infection or vaccination.

Though the new strain has been found in about 15-20 per cent samples, Union health ministry officials said the new mutations have not been detected in sufficient numbers to establish direct relationship or explain the surge

DOUBLE JEOPARDY

A new “double mutant” variant of Covid-19 has been detected in several parts of India in addition to many other strains which have also been found abroad.



A medic takes swab samples from passengers for Covid-19 testing, at Jammu Railway Station in Jammu, on Wednesday. — PTI

in cases in some states. Genomic sequencing and epidemiological studies are continuing to analyse the situation, they added.

Officials said the new “Indian strain” does not match any previously catalogued Variants of Concerns (VOC). “These have been categorized as

VOCs but require the same epidemiological and public health response of increased testing, comprehensive tracking of close contacts, prompt isolation of positive cases and contacts as well as treatment as per National Treatment Protocol by the States/UTs,” Union health

Renegade cop Waze booked in UAPA

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 24

The National Investigation Agency on Wednesday invoked the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against suspended Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze.

The Maharashtra ATS also handed over the two accused and the case papers in the Mansukh Hiren murder case to the NIA after a court order. The NIA had approached the court saying despite the Centre transferring the Hiren murder case to the NIA, the ATS was not handing over the case documents to them.

Under the stringent

UAPA law, the investigating agency can get police custody of an accused up to 30 days and can also get an extension of 90 days to file a chargesheet (over the usual 90 days). Securing bail will also be much tougher in comparison with other sections.

The NIA added Section 16 (punishment for terrorist act) and 18 (punishment for conspiracy) of the UAPA Act against Waze. Chief judicial magistrate P.P. Ingale on Wednesday directed the ATS to hand over all relevant documents, case records, material, etc related to the Hiren case to the NIA.

Ex CoP can go to Bombay HC, says SC

New Delhi, March 24: The Supreme Court Wednesday said there was no doubt that the issues raised by former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh in his plea against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh were “quite serious”, but asked him to approach the Bombay High Court with his grievances.

The court allowed Singh to

withdraw his plea seeking direction for an “impartial and fair” CBI probe into alleged corrupt practices of Deshmukh. A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and R S Reddy granted liberty to Singh to approach the Bombay High Court with his grievances. “There is no doubt that the matter is quite serious”, the bench observed.

ministry said.

INSACOG is a grouping of 10 national laboratories established by the ministry of health and family welfare in October last year. Since then 771 variants of concerns (VOCs) have been detected in a total of 10,787 positive samples shared by states and UTs. These include 736 samples positive for viruses of UK (B.1.1.7) lineage, while 34 samples were found positive for viruses of South African (B.1.351) lineage and one sample was found positive for virus of the Brazilian (P.1) lineage. The samples with these VOCs have been identified in 18 states.

The analysis of samples from Maharashtra has revealed that compared to December 2020, there has been an increase in the fraction of samples with the E484Q and L452R mutations. From Kerala, 2,032 samples (from all 14 districts) have been sequenced.

INSIDE

CITY.. PG2

HC stays proceedings in defamation cases against Maran

STATE.. PG3

Quantum jump in number of Covaxin takers

PM slams Didi for defaming Nandigram

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 24

Hammering at West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's slogan of “bohiringago” (outsiders) against the BJP on a nationalistic pitch, Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Trinamul supremo Wednesday of “defaming” Nandigram, the hot seat of the Assembly election where she is contesting from.

With her nemesis Suwendu Adhikari on the dais at his mega rally at Contai in East Midnapore, Mr Modi also promised the crowd that the BJP will pick a “son of this soil” as CM if it comes to power in the state.

In a virulent speech, the PM said: “Didi is now talking of bohiringago in Bengal, which stitched the whole of India with Vande Mataram! Amra Sobai Ei Bharatbhumir Sontan. Ei

Bhumi te Kono Bharatbasi Bohiringago Noy. Bolun Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Vande Mataram! Ekhane Kono Bharatbasi Bohiringago Noy. Sob Bharatmatnar Sontan (All of us are the children of the land of India. No Indian is an outsider on this land. Hail Mother India, we worship Mother India. No Indian is an outsider here. All are the children of Mother India).”

Invoking the national

anthem Mr Modi asked Ms Banerjee: “How dare you to talk of bohiringago in that very Bengal from where Gurudev stitched all Indians in one bond and said from this soil what we repeat daily? How can you? While labels of ‘tourist’ are made, fun is made and insults are hurled. The people from the soil of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore do not see anyone as bohiringago here.”

Tears, smiles & promises make poll weapons

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, MARCH 24

Tears, smiles, selfies, bonhomie, tete-a-tetes, sharing professional burden and words of promise are some of the weapons of endearment used by candidates and supporters as they go around wooing the electorate with the campaign for the April 6 Assembly elections shifting into overdrive.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is addressing a meeting at Seelanaickenpatti in Salem district on March 28 to seek votes for the candidates of the DMK-led alliance.

DMK President M K Stalin would preside over the meeting in which leaders of all alliance parties, besides DK President K Veeramani, would speak. Leaders scheduled to address the crowd are TNCC chief K S Alagiri, MDMK's Vaiko, VCK's Thol

Thirumavalavan, CPM's K Balakrishnan, CPI's Mutharasan, MMK's M H Jawahirullah, IUML's Kadar Moihdeen and Tamilaga Valvurimai Katchi's T Velmurugan.

While Stalin was away campaigning for his party candidates in the districts, his wife Durga Stalinwent around her husband's Kolathur constituency on Tuesday meeting voters and soliciting their support as the candidate himself was away campaigning for other candidates of his party.

Reaching out to people in his own constituency of Viralmalai, Health Minister C Vijayabaskar broke down telling his tale of woes. He tried to tug at the heart strings of the people by revealing his health condition, saying that he was a diabetic and suffered from hypertension.

It is said that the Minister's rival, Palaniyappan of the DMK,



DMK women's wing secretary Kanimozhi during an election campaign rally in support of party's Jayankondam constituency candidate KSK Kannan in Ariyalur district, on Wednesday. — PTI

has earned the sympathies of the people, who see him as one who had lost two

elections and needed their support. Chary of his support base slipping,

Vijayabaskar is said to have shed tears to touch the hearts of the voters.

Though campaigning started in many places soon after the names and constituencies were finalized by the various alliances, with just 11 more days left, it has now picked up momentum after the battle lines were clearly drawn following the completion of the nomination process.

The election commission has announced that 4074 contestants were in the fray across the State in the 234 Assembly constituencies and 12 in the fight for the lone Lok Sabha bye election in Kanyakumari constituency.

While Karur has the maximum number of 77 contestants, some of the constituencies with less number of candidates are Valparai, Bhavanisagar (both 6), Gudalur, Vannur (both 7) and Pattukottai and Peravurini (both 8).

Even as leaders, speakers and cadre crowd the campaign trails across the State, paramilitary forces too rush in to provide security. So far 65 companies of paramilitary forces had landed and 235 more companies were expected in the run up to the polls, Chief Electoral Officer Satyabrata Sahoo told the media.

National leaders too are coming in to seek votes for their candidates. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be here on March 30 in Puducherry to introduce BJP's alliance candidates and for a meeting in Dharapuram constituency in the State to canvass votes for his party's State president L Murugan.

According to BJP leader C T Ravi, Modi will also be coming for a campaign meeting in Madurai in April and Union Home Minister Amit Shah would also be coming to the State on March 28. ■ **P2**

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

The Chief Justice of India, Justice Sharad A. Bobde, on Tuesday recommended Justice N.V. Ramana — the senior most judge after him — to be appointed as the next Chief Justice of India when he demits office on April 23, 2021.

Justice Ramana will be the 48th Chief Justice of India and will have a tenure of one year, four months and five days. He was elevated as a judge of the top court on February 17, 2014.

Justice Ramana will take over as Chief Justice of India on April 24, a day after incumbent CJI Bobde demits office. While recommending the appointment of Justice Ramana as next Chief Justice of India, the Supreme Court also rejected a complaint by

Andhra Pradesh chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy against him relating to the Amravati land scam.

A statement issued by the top court said, “A complaint dated 6th October, 2020, sent by the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh to the Supreme Court was dealt with under the ‘in-house procedure’ and the same, on due consideration, stands dismissed. It be noted that all the matters dealt with under the ‘in-house procedure’ being strictly confidential in nature, are not liable to be made public.”

Justice Ramana will be the second Telugu speaking



N.V. Ramana

Chief Justice of India.

Born in an agricultural family in undivided Andhra Pradesh on August 27, 1957, in Ponnavaram village, Krishna District, Justice Ramana did his B.Sc., B.L. and was enrolled as an advocate on February 10, 1983.

Prior to him Justice K. Subha Rao, the 9th Chief Justice of India, was from Andhra Pradesh and was in office from June 30, 1966, to April 11, 1967. Justice Subha Rao did his graduation from Govt. College, Rajahmundry, B.L. from Law College, Madras, and had practised in Madras high court, 1926 onward.

Though initially Justice Subha Rao was appointed as a judge of Madras high court, he went on to become the Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh high court.

CJI Bobde recommended Justice Ramana as next Chief Justice of India going by the principle of seniority — the senior-most judge after the CJI succeeding the incumbent CJI upon his retirement.



No postal ballot facility for overseas Indians

Postal ballot facility for eligible overseas Indian electors cannot be extended for the upcoming assembly polls as the matter is still under discussion with the Ministry of External Affairs to iron out logistical challenges in implementing the proposal, Lok Sabha was informed on Wednesday

MANDATE 2021

TAMIL NADU

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OTHER STORIES AU faculty members get reprieve

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 24

Coming to the rescue of assistant professors and associate professors of Anna University, who were denied promotions citing new additional qualifications introduced by the University, the Madras high court has directed the Anna University to pass appropriate orders within 4 weeks by granting promotions to them, as per their entitlement on the basis of the then existing eligibility criteria, if there are no other legal impediment against them.

Justice V.Parthiban gave the directive while disposing of a batch of petitions from Ganapathi Malarvizhi, an associate professor and 13 others.

The judge said without any uniform bench mark put in place, promotions cannot be allowed to capriciously depend on the opinion formation viz., subjective satisfaction of the committee members, giving room for personal preferences and predilection of the members in rejecting or clearing the candidates.

AIADMK, DMK leaders go spiritual to get votes

From P1

State leaders like Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Stalin are already going around the State launching broadsides against each other and would continue to do so till the end of March, after which they might concentrate on their own constituencies — Kolathur and Edappadi.

In Edappadi constituency, Palaniswami's rival from the DMK, Sampath Kumar, was worshipping in local temples and seeking votes from the devotees. In Chennai's Royapuram, Minister D Jayakumar visited a church to say a word of prayer and also seek the blessings of the priest. AIADMK candidate in Avadi, Minister K Pandiarajan, went to a market in the morning and spoke to the traders assuring them loans to run their businesses if his party was returned to power, while another Minister, P Benjamin, fighting it out again at Maduravoyal, called on leaders of the residents' welfare associations in Valasaravakkam to seek votes.

When AIADMK nominee for Pallavaram, Chitalapakkam Rajendran, was on the campaign trail, a house at Mongil Eri in Pammal accidentally caught fire. The candidate and his supporters rushed to douse the fire and also promised to build concrete houses.

Virugambakkam DMK candidate Prabakar Raja was going on foot to meet votes in K K Nagar area when he sat down at a roadside eatery and lent a helping hand to the cook by making dosas. Gudiyatham AIADMK candidate Farida too sat with a vegetable vendor and helped her do business for some time.

Saidapet DMK candidate Ma Subramaniam, a known health freak and marathon runner, is setting out to meet voters only on foot. He leaves home at 7 am and walks from house to house till noon. Then again he does it from 4 pm to 9 pm. He plays with the children in the houses and also takes selfies with them.

His rival from the AIADMK, Saidai Duraiswami, who was also the Mayor of Chennai, is also visiting the people personally. He is accompanied by the students of his various academies that train youth for competitive examinations, including the civil services.

In Thiruvottiyur constituency, where Naam Tamizhar Katchi founder and Chief Ministerial candidate Seeman is a candidate, the nominees of DMK, Shankar, and AIADMK, Kuppan, walk into the narrow allies of the fishing slums and talk to the people personally. Kuppan, on his part, tells them that washing machines will land at their doorstep if his party comes back to power.

In Karur, a former strongman of the DMK, Chinnasamy, had decided to meet Palaniswami when he visited the constituency for campaign and join the AIADMK. Chinnasamy, who was suspended from the DMK on Tuesday, said that Stalin was unable to take decisions on his own.

The Karur seat has been given to Senthil Balaji while Chinnasamy had been expecting to contest from there as a DMK candidate. He had been an MP and an MLA for three terms during his earlier stint in the AIADMK.



DMDK founder Vijayakanth canvassing for votes at Gummidipoondi on Wednesday. — DC

Constituency watch Nagapattinam to witness tough straight contest

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
NAGAPATTINAM, MARCH 24

Of the six assembly segments in the integrated Nagapattinam and Mayiladuthurai districts, Nagapattinam constituency seems to be a one of the keenly contested seats between the AIADMK and Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (DMK front), next to Vedharanyam constituency where there is a direct fight between Handloom minister O.S. Manian and former DMK MLA S.K. Vedharathinam.

AIADMK Nagapattinam town secretary and poll candidate, Thanga Kathiravan, who is pitched against DMK front's Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) candidate Alur Shanawaz, hopes that the voters here would prefer him, realising the government's achievements, and the popular 'Two leaf' symbol.

Both Thanga Kathiravan and Alur Shanawaz have been vociferously campaigning in their constituency. Slightly popular than Alur Shanawaz, Thanga Kathiravan, during a campaign in Nagore Vandipettai area, noticed a woman washing clothes in front of her house, and in an effort to draw the attention of womenfolk in the region, went there and assisted her in washing

AIADMK Nagapattinam town secretary and poll candidate, Thanga Kathiravan, who is pitched against DMK front's Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) candidate Alur Shanawaz, hopes that the voters here would prefer him, realising the government's achievements, and the popular 'Two leaf' symbol

the clothes. Before leaving, he made sure that the women assured their votes for him. He is also popular among fishermen in the district, and used to help them whenever they approached him.

Alur Shanawaz fully depends on the Muslim votes and seems to be disappointed over the non-cooperation of the DMK front parties, since they have been denied the seat this time.

Nagapattinam assembly consisting of 36 wards of the Nagapattinam municipality, 13 village panchayats of Nagapattinam panchayat union, 39 village panchayats of Thirumarugal panchayat union besides Thittacherry town panchayat. This constituency so far faced 15 assembly elections from 1,952 to 2016, of which CPI(M) won six times, the Congress twice and the AIADMK four times.

In the 2016 assembly election, sitting AIADMK MLA Thamimun Anzari, defeated his nearest Manitha Neya Makkal Katchi rival,

Jawahirullah, by a margin of over 20,000 votes. Nagapattinam constituency dominated by Dalits, Muslims and fishermen, also has Vellalar, Kallar and other communities in lesser numbers spread across the constituency. The constituency is having fishing and agriculture activities and has facilities like port, ITIs, engineering and pharmaceutical colleges, arts and science colleges and a fisheries university in the name of late Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa. The Chennai Petroleum Corporation, IOC and ONGC firms, are located in and around Nagapattinam, which provides employment to a sizeable local population. Recently, the foundation stone was laid for Rs 31,500 crores oil refinery at Panagudi near Nagapattinam, and Rs 34 crore fishing harbour at Nambiyar Nagar, which is a fishermen hamlet in the district.

Despite all these, locals want works on the proposed rail overbridge at Thoni Thurai to be expedited, establishment of a green port to face all seasons, the work of which is pending for years together, and check dams to be constructed across the Vettar river to prevent sea water entering the town.

There are 1,97,316 voters including 1,01,748 women voters, and in the last five years new voters numbering 1,428 have been enrolled.

The fight of the also-rans in Kanyakumari district

DC CORRESPONDENT
KANYAKUMARI, MARCH 24

The smaller parties of T.T.V. Dhinakaran, Seeman and Kamal Haasan which fielded candidates for the six assembly constituencies in the Kanyakumari district and the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha segment byelection however fight not to bag the constituencies but to ensure the fifth position as the first places will be shared by the big brothers

Seeman's Naam Tamilar Katchi and Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiaam too are no better than the AMMK as their candidates also had forfeited the deposit amount in the Lok Sabha contest in 2019

— the DMK, Congress, AIADMK and the BJP.

Likely to play spoilsport against the ruling AIADMK-led alliance, Dhinakaran's AMMK is not a force to be reckoned

with in any of the six assembly segments in the Kanyakumari district or in the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency. The reason is the absence of the caste which supports AMMK in the district. The party bagged just 1.18 percent votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha election in Kanyakumari.

Seeman's Naam Tamilar Katchi and Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiaam too are no better than the AMMK as their

candidates also had forfeited the deposit amount in the Lok Sabha contest in 2019.

The three smaller parties put together were able to secure just 3.63 percent of votes in the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha election in 2019 against the major players. Congress candidate Vasanthakumar's vote share was 59.83 percent and BJP candidate Pon Radhakrishnan polled 35.04 percent votes.

Canvassing through WhatsApp: HC seeks EC's reply

Chennai, March 24:

The Madras high court on Wednesday sought a detailed reply from the Election Commission over allegations of Puducherry unit of the BJP obtaining cell phone numbers of local voters to canvass through WhatsApp.

In his public interest writ petition, Anand, Puducherry unit president of the Democratic Youth Foundation of India, alleged local BJP candidates had obtained the cell phone numbers from the Unique Identification Authority of India and created WhatsApp groups in their respective constituencies for campaigning.

He wanted the court to set up a special investigation team to probe the issue and restrain the BJP candidates from doing so.

When the matter came up today, counsel for the EC told the first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy that the complaint received from DYFI in this connection has been forwarded to the Cyber Crime Cell for inquiry. The EC was directed by the bench to submit its reply on Friday. — PTI



Constitute anti-corruption special cell in registration dept, says HC

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 23

With a view to eradicate or at least minimize corruption in the Registration department, the Madras high court has directed the Inspector General of Registration/Head of the department to constitute a separate "Anti-Corruption Special Cell", consists of officials with integrity for initiating actions against illegalities, irregularities and corrupt practices in co-ordination with the department of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption.

Justice N. Satishkumar granted the stay while passing interim orders on the criminal

High court stays proceedings in defamation cases against Maran

Chennai, March 24: The Madras high court on Wednesday stayed proceedings in two defamation cases against former Union Minister and DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran before the Special Court constituted for hearing cases against MPs and MLAs. Justice N. Satishkumar granted the stay while passing interim orders on the criminal

original petitions from Maran. While the first one related to his statement made on January 31, 2020 against state Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar on an alleged scam, the second one pertained to his staging a dharna to condemn bus fare hike near Chetpet signal here on January 29, 2018.

— PTI

tion of actions under law.

The judge also directed the Inspector General of Registration to provide a separate telephone/ mobile number to the "Anti-Corruption Special Cell" and the Address and the Telephone numbers are to be displayed visibly in all the Registration department offices across the State of Tamil Nadu, enabling the public to pro-

vide information or complaints regarding any illegalities or corrupt practices. The judge gave the above directives while dismissing an appeal filed by Ravi alias KN. Annamalai, challenging the suo motu revision proceedings initiated by the Inspector General of Registration and fixing higher market value for a property in Villupuram district.

Tada Periyasamy hopes to win poll with thumping margin

A ARUL PALANI | DC
CUDDALORE, March 23

Tada Periyasamy, a BJP candidate for the Thitakudi Assembly (Reserved) Constituency in Cuddalore district is hoping to win the poll with a thumping margin. Periyasamy, son of the soil, has worked for the welfare of the poor and downtrodden people in the rural terrain for decades. During the campaign he assured the people to improve the Constituency and bring more infrastructure for the development of the people, especially youth.

Thittakudi (SC) assembly constituency was formed after constituency delimitations in 2008. It is included in the Cuddalore parliamentary constituency. After delimitation the Mangalore (SC) Constituency became Thittakudi (SC) assembly constituency in 2008.

In 2016, Thittakudi legislative assembly constituency had a total 2,06,089 electors, and total number of voters were 1,60,176. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam candidate Ganesan V won by securing 65,139 votes. All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam candidate Ayyasamy P stood second with 62,927 votes. He lost by 2212 votes. Now the Constituency has total voters of 2,18,971 and of this 1,07,303 are men and 1,11,656 women voters.

Thittakudi constituency has number of villages including Thittakudi, Pennadam, Sengamedu, Mangalore, Avinagudi, Sirupaakam, Arasangudi Tholar, Karunkuzhi, Kothatai, Kozhiyur, Sirumangalam, Sevr,



BJP candidate Tada Periyasamy campaigns in Thitakudi Assembly (Reserved) Constituency in Cuddalore. — DC

Neivaasal, P. Deevalur, Thazhanallur, Narasingamangalam, Kollathangurichirai, Eraiyur, Venkarumbar, Guddalore, Thiruvattadurai, Kodikalam, O.Keeranur, Pe. Poovanur, Pelandurai, Irulampattu, Kosapallam, Maligaikottam, Korakai, Aavati, Sirumalai, Pulivalam, Pothirangalam, Thachur, Thozhudur, Ramanatham, Keezhacheruvai, Melur and Nanthimangalam.

Periyasamy has been touring every corner in the constituency since he was nominated by the party high command. Son of the soil hope to win the Assembly poll. Recently, CT Ravi, BJP national general secretary in charge of Tamil Nadu, has toured the Constituency and appreciated Periyasamy for his election related work.

Periyasamy's promise includes improving the living conditions of the people, setting up of more infrastructures, factories and improving rural connectivity in the backward region.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Periyasamy said people including women are aware of people friendly policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The office bearers

from alliance parties including AIADMK and PMK have been rendering support to him.

He wishes to set up a multi speciality hospital, to bring water from Gomukhi dam to Wellington Reservoir. The region faces a water crisis during summer. Replenishing the reservoir will help the farmers to cultivate thrice in a year. This would also solve drinking water shortage.

The region was known for sugarcane cultivation. As the lone private sugar mill was functioning farmers were not interested in raising sugarcane.

He assured that he would take efforts to set up more sugar mills in the region. Majority of youth have gone to Chennai and other cities for employment opportunities. He said he would speak to party high command in Delhi to bring more industries to create employment opportunities for the youth.

Periyasamy, a pioneer in Tamil nationalism, had contested in election for Perambalur parliamentary constituency in 1999 and Harur assembly constituency in 2001 as DPI (now VCK) candidate, Chidambaram parliamentary constituency in 2004 and Varagur assembly constituency in 2006 as BJP candidate. He has been running 'Nandhanar Sevashrama Trust', which is working for the development of Dalit children and providing vocational training to women in the region. He is also involved in restoring the 'Panchami lands' from the illegal occupants.

VTMS demands promises from Gudalur candidates

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, MARCH 24

The Vyavasiyaikal Thozhailalarkal Munnetra Sangam (VTMS) in Gudalur has demanded the candidates of the jungle-rich Gudalur assembly constituency to make their stand clear on man-animal conflict, issues related to Janmam lands and other issues.

VTMS state coordinator M.S. Selvaraj said the demands put forward by the people of Gudalur for the last several years for getting title for agricul-

VTMS state coordinator M.S. Selvaraj said the demands put forward by the people of Gudalur for the last several years for getting title for agricultural lands in Section 17(Janman land) and Section 53 have not been resolved till date

tural lands in Section 17(Janman land) and Section 53 have not been resolved till date.

As per the new law, brought in 2019, Section 16A was added to the Tamil Nadu Forest Act, 1882 enabling the conversion

of agricultural lands into a reserve forest in Section 53 and Section 17 of the Janmam Act. Such transfer of inhabited lands to the forest department is a grave injustice, he said.

Therefore, the amendment should be repealed. Steps should be taken to

provide house and agricultural land to plantation workers.

Due to lack of food in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve jungle, wild animals stray into human settlements resulting in man-animal conflict. Flora for animals should be produced inside the forest. A relief of Rs 10 lakh should be given to the families who suffered loss of life due to man-animal conflict.

The Protection of Private Forest Act should be amended to exempt lands up to 4.5 hectares from the Act.

My govt protected Muslims: CM Palaniswami

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
KARUR, MARCH 24

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami has said his government reflected the feelings of Muslims and protected them, and added he is not saying this for any political purpose. But the DMK, in order to get minorities' votes,



has unleashed a false propaganda against him, he said.

CM listed out various welfare measures undertaken exclusively for Muslims and said his government hiked the subsidy for Haj pilgrimage from ₹6 crore to ₹10 crore, and a ₹15 crore Haj house is coming up at Chennai for the benefit of Haj pilgrims

Palaniswami said this at a campaign meeting at K. Paramathi in support

of the BJP's Aravakkurichi assembly segment candidate K. Annamalai. He listed

out various welfare measures undertaken exclusively for Muslims and said his government hiked the subsidy for Haj pilgrimage from ₹6 crore to ₹10 crore, and a ₹15 crore Haj house is coming up at Chennai for the benefit of Haj pilgrims.

He said Prime Minister Narendra

Modi has provided several suggestions for the betterment of Tamil Nadu. He said Union Home Minister Amit Shah has also helped us whenever we asked for any help for Tamil Nadu and its people. The BJP government at the Centre is providing good governance to the people and because of main-

taining a cordial relationship, the union government has sanctioned several projects including the more than Rs 1 lakh crore national highways project in Tamil Nadu. Palaniswami took strong exception to DMK president M.K. Stalin's charge that he was a fake farmer. He said 70 percent of

Tamil Nadu people depend on agriculture and the government is keen to provide necessary schemes for their uplift, he added.

M. Chinnasamy, agriculture wing secretary of the DMK, joined the AIADMK in the presence of the chief minister and participated in the CM's election meetings.

Quantum jump in number of Covaxin takers

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 24

The publication of the third phase trial data a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the jab has resulted in the multiplication of the takers of indigenous Covaxin in the state which was below par compared to Covishield vaccination till the beginning of

March. According to the data provided by the state health department, 84,585 people aged above 60 took Covaxin till March 23. This is a big jump from 175 on March 1.

When it comes to the category aged between 45 and 60 with co-morbidities, 82,283 beneficiaries took Covaxin that was just 29 on

March 1. The surge of Covaxin takers shows that publishing of trial data on March 3 had instilled a great deal of confidence among beneficiaries.

Publishing the first interim analysis data, Bharat Biotech, the manufacturer of Covaxin, had said that the whole virion inactivated Covid-19 vaccine candidate demonstrated

an interim vaccine efficacy of 81percent in its phase 3 clinical trial.

It was on January 16 the government introduced Covishield, manufactured by Serum Institute of India, and Covaxin of Bharat Biotech, aiming at bringing speedy immunity to the virus. However, the controversies over lack of public data on trials marred

the fortunes of Covaxin.

The number of healthcare workers and frontline workers who chose Covaxin has also gone up in March. The data shows 30,714 healthcare workers and 40,445 frontline workers took Covaxin till March 23, which is a jump from 9,746 and 1,032 on March 1.

According to the data, the state was able to vac-

inate 2,346,107 people till March 23. The officials said that the number of Covaxin takers will increase further as the norms on co-morbidities between 45 and 60 have been removed. "Enough doses of vaccine are made available to all centres including private and public. After trial data was published, we had instructed the concerned authorities to

issue Covaxin doses to start with minimum one viral to the private hospitals upon their request and inform the hospitals to use the vaccines with minimum wastage and obtain consent from the individual. The department has set up 529 government Covid vaccination centres and 761 private Covid vaccination centres across the state," the officials said.

Foreign currency worth ₹18.25 L seized by Chennai air customs

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 24

Chennai air customs made a seizure of Rs 18.25 lakh worth foreign currency at the airport here.

According to airport sources, based on intelligence, a woman passenger identified as Vasantha, from Kanchipuram was intercepted on the suspicion of carrying foreign currency, after she had cleared Immigration and

was proceeding to board FlyDubai flight FZ8516.v On questioning she became nervous so her personal search as well as examination of her hand trolley bag and check in trolley bag was taken up. On search 18500 US Dollars in 100 denomination and 840 Kuwait Dinars in denomination of 20 were found concealed in the inner side fittings of her trolley bags.

Absconding accused in vandalism case held immigration officers

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 24

A 30-year-old man, accused in a vandalism case, was arrested by the immigration officers at the Chennai airport on Tuesday night when he landed here from Oman. A Lookout Circular (LOC) was issued by the Nagapattinam district police against him.

According to Immigration official sources, the accused has been identified as Ramesh (30) a native of Nagapattinam in Tamil Nadu. He had been working as an electrical engineer and had allegedly caused damage to the public properties while taking part in a protest in Nagai district in 2013.

He was caught at the Chennai airport when he arrived from Muscat by

Oman Airlines flight. The Immigration authorities, while verifying the passport of all the passengers who arrived in the flight, found that a LOC was pending against Ramesh, who was also cited as an absconding accused in the case, arrested him and proceeding with formalities to hand him over to the Nagapattinam police.

After his involvement in vandalism, the accused fled Oman. Following this, the District Superintendent of Police declared him as an absconding accused and a LOC was issued to all the airports.

He was caught on arrival from Oman on Tuesday. Police at the airport said the accused was handed over to the district police team on Wednesday.

2 nabbed for running fake foreign exchange co to cheat customers

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 24

Sleuths of the Central Crime Branch (CCB) have arrested two persons for running a fake foreign exchange company and cheating people under the pretext of earning them high profit amounts.

According to police sources, the complainant identified as M. Ashok Kumar, electrician from Thiruverkadu, had lodged a complaint before the Commissioner of Police, in which he stated that the accused, had approached him over phone number and introduced themselves as directors of a foreign exchange company having its branch in various countries and allured him to invest to earn high profit amount.

Believing the accused's alluring words, Ashok Kumar had created an account in the company's website and transferred Rs 10.54 lakh to its bank account through 11 transactions between October 17, 2019 and January 3, 2021. Later, on releasing that he was cheated by the accused with false promise of offer-

ing high return of money, he had approached the Chennai City Police Commissioner and the case was registered in Cyber Crime Cell, CCB and took up for investigation.

During the course of investigation, the accused identified as Syed Abu Thahir and Syed Ali Husain have been caught and they have admitted to creating fake website www.deltin-international.com and www.deltin-international.com and misused foreign numbers for contacting complainant Ashok Kumar and made false promise of high return and made him to create an account in Deltin International Solutions and fraudulently swindled ₹10.54 lakh.

The duo was arrested and ₹1,95,000 Lakh in cash and five mobile phones were seized from them. Further investigations revealed that hundreds of victims across India were cheated by the accused.

Chennai Cyber Crime Cell Police have advised the general public to be cautious while transferring money for Foreign Exchange Company without verifying it.

Rowdy hacked to death in Kanchi

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 24

As in a scene out of a movie, the murder of a 42-year-old history-sheeter outside temple, in front of public, has left the residents of Kanchipuram shocked.

The victim has been identified as 'Soolai Karuppu' alias Vadivel, 42 a resident of Thaayaramman Kuppam,

had several criminal cases, including that of murder, pending against him.

According to the police, while he was walking towards a temple near his home at 8:30 am on Wednesday a gang of four who came to spot two motorbikes surrounded him right outside the temple and attacked him indiscriminately with the knives and

machetes.

The public who witnessed the gory murder, ran out of fear from the spot.

The assailants escaped the scene after confirming the victim had passed away.

Based on the alert from the residents, the Sivakanchi police rushed to the spot. Senior police officials in the district arrived at the crime scene and conducted

investigations. The police sent the body of Vadivel to the Kanchipuram government hospital for post-mortem.

Police said that the victim has had previous enmity due to his fights with another rowdy gang. Police have taken a few persons into custody for further investigations. Sivakanchi police have registered a case.

TB patients should take jab post-cure: Medical expert

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 24

Active tuberculosis patients should take the Covid-19 vaccines only after ensuring proper treatment to bring down their disease level, said a medical expert.

As part of World TB Day that was observed on Wednesday, Dr Aishwarya Vinoth, consultant, pulmonology, Rela Hospital said that if an active TB person takes the Covid-19 vaccine there will be a high risk of their health deteriorating. So it is better to take the jab post TB or getting

their TB condition minimised, she said.

The travel constraints during lockdown have caused delay in the timely TB treatment. The pandemic had brought in a lot of behavioural changes in the public that helped us stop public spitting, sneezing and coughing to a great extent. These are the main reasons for the spreading of TB, she said.

Meanwhile, the state is making efforts to bring down the prevalence of TB by initiating the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme in 2002. Tamil Nadu is the

first state to implement nutritional support through direct benefit transfer under Nikshay Poshan Yojana in the country from April 2018. It aims at diagnosing and caring for TB cases both in the public as well as in the private sector. The drug-sensitive patients are treated using fixed drug combinations through the directly observed treatment strategy.

The state has also implemented programmatic management of drug-resistant TB services since 2009 which aims at early diagnosis of drug-resistant TB cases and treating them with appropriate regimen.



Indian CG ship commissioned in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 24

The Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Vajra' an offshore patrol vessel, was commissioned in Chennai on Wednesday. General Bipin Rawat, Chief of Defence Staff has commissioned the ship in the presence of DG Krishnaswamy Natarajan, Director General-Indian Coast Guard, Inspector General S Paramesh Commander, Coast Guard Region (East), JD Patil, Whole Time Director, M/s L&T and other senior dignitaries of the Central and State Government.

ICGS Vajra is commanded by Deputy Inspector General Alex Thomas and will be based at Tuticorin under the Operational and Administrative Control of the Commander, No.16 Coast Guard District (Tuticorin). Vajrais the sixth in the series of seven offshore patrol vessel (OPVs) constructed by M/s Larsen & Toubro Ltd.,

ICGS Vajra, the 98 meter OPV, has been designed and built by M/s Larsen & Toubro Ltd at Kattupalli, Chennai. It has been fitted with state-of-the-art navigation and communication equipment, sensors and machinery.

The Ship will be equipped with 30mm and 12.7mm Guns

with Fire Control System for enhancing its fighting efficiency. The ship has been designed to carry a twin-engine helicopter (ALH MK-III under acceptance by ICG from M/s HAL) and four high speed boats including two Rigid Hull Inflatable Boats for swift Boarding Operations, Search and Rescue, Law Enforcement and Maritime Patrol.

The ship is also capable of carrying Pollution Response Equipment for oil spill response at sea. The sustenance and reach, coupled with the latest modern equipment & systems, provides her the capability to perform the role of a Command Platform to accomplish the Coast Guard Charter of Duties.

'Vajra' meaning 'Thunderbolt' is a projection of Indian Coast Guard's will and commitment 'To Serve and Protect' the maritime interests of our nation. On joining the Coast Guard Eastern fleet, it will be deployed extensively for EEZ surveillance and other duties as enshrined in the Coast Guard Charter, to safeguard the Maritime Interests of India. The Indian Coast Guard with this ship joining the fleet, will have 156 Surface Assets and 62 Aircraft in its inventory.

FORM C-1

Declaration about Criminal Case

(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of 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 : Agri.S.S.Krishnamurthy

s/o. Sundaresan,
Elathur Village & Post, Kalasapakkam Taluk,
Tiruvannamalai District.

Name of Political Party : All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)

Name of Election : Tamilnadu Legislative Assembly Election - 2021

Name of Constituency : 066 - Polur

I, Agri.S.S.Krishnamurthy, a candidate for the above mentioned 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 (s)	Section (s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence (s)
1	Hon'ble Supreme Court	CrI. Appeal No : 322/2017 dated 10.02.2017	(Detailed below)	(Detailed below)
(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	Nil		Nil

The CBCID Police, Tirunelveli has registered a FIR in Crime No. 1/2015 under Section 174 of Cr.P.C and it was subsequently altered to Section 120(B) of I.P.C., r/w. Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, r/w. Sections 109, 306 & 34 of I.P.C. and the same was numbered as P.R.C. No. 40/2015.

The CrI.O.P. (MD) No. 22379/2015 was filed by the candidate herein under Section 482 of Cr.P.C before the Hon'ble Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court and the said P.R.C. No. 40/2015 on the file of the Judicial Magistrate, Tirunelveli was quashed by an order dated 08.03.2016 of the Hon'ble Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court.

However, the State has preferred SLP No. 2688/2016 before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, challenging the said order and the SLP has been converted as Criminal Appeal No. 322/2017 and the same is pending.

Cyber scams are on the rise, Don't share your OTP, UPI-PIN, Card details and pay a heavy price

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And easily debit money from your card or bank account. So beware

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SHORT TAKES

EC FILES FIR AGAINST BJP CANDIDATE

DC CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI, MARCH 24

The Election Commission (EC) has filed an FIR against BJP candidate in Assam for his remarks on beef during an election meeting. The FIR has been lodged at the Gauripur police station in Western Assam’s Dhubri district. BJP candidate Banendra Kumar Mushahary, who is contesting from Gauripur, claimed that beef is the “national dish of India”. In an obvious bid to appease the minority voters he made this remark at an election meeting in a Muslim-dominated area of the district.

“How can anyone ban beef? It is the national dish of India,” he said at the meeting.

Contrary to frequent campaigns of the saffron party to ban beef across the country, he went on saying, “The beef is an international dish and “educated Muslims in the rural areas of Assam should understand that no one can ban the sale of beef in Assam or anywhere in India.”

Mushahary, a veteran politician, joined the BJP in December 2020. He was first elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1996 as an independent candidate from Gauripur in Dhubri district.

In 2011, he was elected as an AGP candidate from Gauripur. Later, he joined the Bodoland People’s Front (BPF) and was elected as an MLA for the third time.

Meanwhile, BJP workers in the districts have expressed deep anguish over Mushahary’s remarks and demanded an unconditional apology for his remark.

BJP WORKER FOUND DEAD IN COOCHBEHAR

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 24

Close on the heels of a boy’s death in a crude bomb blast pre poll violence claimed another life in West Bengal as a BJP worker was found dead under mysterious circumstances at Dinhatata in Coochbehar of North Bengal.

The deceased, Amit Sarkar, was the Dinhatata Town Mondal president of the party. He was found hanging by a rope tied around his neck at the verandah of a state-run veterinary hospital and his feet almost touching the ground on Wednesday morning. Angry BJP workers initially stopped the police from taking away the body for post-mortem.

BJP MP Nishith Pramanik, contesting from Dinhatata, alleged that the TMC goons first killed Sarkar and then hanged the body to pass it as a case of suicide.

Pointing fingers at TMC MLA and his rival candidate Udayan Guha, he demanded a CBI probe into the case.

ORDER ON ELECTORAL BONDS RESERVED

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

The Supreme Court on Wednesday reserved its order on a plea by NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) seeking stay of the opening any further window for sale of fresh electoral bonds from April 1 ahead of the ongoing Assembly elections in five states.

Reserving the order, a bench headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde and also comprising Justice A S Bopanna and Justice V Ramsubramanian, however, expressed concerns over the possible misuse of bonds and asked the Centre to examine it.

“If a political party gets Rs 100 crore worth bonds what is the control over the use of these bonds for illegal activities or purposes outside political agenda,” the court asked in a poser to the government.

The court asked Attorney General K.K.Venugopal that they would like the government to look into the angle of misuse of the funds coming through electoral bonds.

The Attorney General however, said after the electoral bonds scheme was launched in 2018, black money in election funding has been kept under check as no cash is collected. These bonds can be purchased only through cheque or Demand Draft, he said.

The court was hearing a petition by the ADR seeking to stall the sale of fresh electoral bonds starting from April 1.

ECI CRACKS WHIP ON OFFICIALS

FROM PAGE 1

Another major concern that has now gripped the ECI is the possibility of the election campaigns causing the spread of Coronavirus. With two more candidates – P S W Madhava Rao (Congress) of Srivilliputhur constituency and Aravind Ramesh (DMK) of Sholinganallur – testing positive, five candidates are already out of action due to Covid-19. Two candidates of Makkal Neethi Maiam, Santosh Babu (Velacherry) and Ponraj (Annanagar), and DMDK’s Salem West candidate Mohan Raj have already left the campaign scene.

Since DMDK’s top honcho, L K Sudheesh, has also been admitted to hospital after testing positive for Covid-19, election authorities requested his sister and the party treasurer Premalatha Vijayakanth to take a test.

Premalatha, a candidate from Vridhachalam, was busy canvassing for votes and hence declined to go for the test, saying that her campaign would be affected. But Health Officials are said to have met during the campaign trail and given her an ultimatum.

All the affected candidates are now reaching out to their voters through social media and video calls and only their supporters are doing the campaigning at the ground level. Anyway, they would be allowed to vote by visiting the booth in the last hour of polling wearing PPEs. Two days prior to polling and on the day of counting all liquor shops and bars should be closed, says an order from the government.

The closure time is from 10 am on April 4 to 12 midnight on April 6 and on May 2.

Meanwhile, the Congress party announced a list of 30 star campaigners that included Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi. It is not known when Sonia Gandhi or Priyanka Gandhi is visiting the State for campaign.

Results announced for March session of JEE-Mains: NTA

New Delhi, Mar 24: Thirteen candidates scored perfect 100 in March edition of the engineering entrance exam JEE-Mains, results of which were announced on Wednesday, according to officials of the National Testing Agency.

The exam was conducted from March 16 to 18 and a total of 6,19,368 candidates had registered for it. The perfect scorers are Siddharth Kalra and Kavya Chopra from Delhi; Bannuru Rohit Kumar Reddy, Madur Adarsh Reddy and

Josyula Venkata Aditya from Telangana; Bratin Mondal from West Bengal; Kumar Satyadarshi from Bihar;Mridul Agarwal and Zenith Malhotra from Rajasthan; Ashwin Abraham from Tamil Nadu.

With 5,185 Covid-19 cases, Mumbai reports new high Maha minister Munde contracts Coronavirus for second time

Mumbai, March 24: Mumbai on Wednesday reported its highest one-day rise in Covid-19 cases so far with 5,185 new infections coming to light, said the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. It took the caseload in the country’s financial capital to 3,74,611, the civic body said. With six deaths, the fatality count stood at 11,606. On the other hand, 2,088 persons were discharged from hospitals, taking the tally of recoveries to 3,31,322.

There are 30,760 active patients, the BMC said.

The growth rate of the viral infection between March 17 and 23 in the city was 0.79 per cent while recovery rate was 90 per cent, it said.

There are 39 active containment zones which include slums and chawls while 432 buildings have been sealed so far after patients were found there.

The rate of increase in Coronavirus cases in Maharashtra between



An artist makes a mural of Monalisa in Mumbai on Wednesday with a theme to spread awareness to wear masks in view of rising Covid-19 cases. — PTI

February 14 to March 23 was three times that recorded in the previous four months, data shows.

After a steady decline since October, the new cases surged noticeably since February 14. On March 20, Maharashtra reported over 30,000 new cases, the highest since the pandemic began.

Between February 14 and March 23, in the span of 37 days, 4,68,748 cases

were added in the state, taking the caseload to 25,33,026.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Minister Dhananjay Munde said he had tested positive for Coronavirus on Tuesday, adding that his health was fine. This is the second time the state minister for social justice is contracting Covid-19, the first being in June last year.

— PTI



A BJP supporter holds party flag during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s election campaign rally ahead of the Assam Assembly polls at Sipajhar in Darrang district on Wednesday. — PTI

Cong’s Mahajut is a ‘Maha jhooth’, says PM in Assam

Cong did nothing for tea workers when they were in power: Modi

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MARCH 24

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday accused the Congress of making false promises to the people of Assam.

Coming down heavily on the Congress-led grand alliance - Mahajut (grand alliance), Prime Minister while addressing a public meeting at Bihpuria said that it’s not Congress’ Mahajut but it’s Congress party’s ‘Maha jhooth’ (Biggest lie).

“A Maha jhooth that guarantees illegal immigrants in Satras, Namghar, National Parks, a mahajhooth which guarantees poaching and corruption. It is a mahajhooth, who for their own sake, can defame Assam’s pride and even tea in the whole world,” said Mr Modi.

Speaking about the promises made by the Congress to improve the condition of tea workers, Mr Modi said that the Congress did nothing for those working in the tea gardens when the party was in power. “In 15 years regime, they could not hike the tea workers wages above Rs 100,” he said.

He alleged that Congress never worked for the uplift of tea garden workers while the NDA government has increased and doubled their wages.

“Immediately after coming to power, we will work extensively to make their life better. The NDA government is committed to providing a dignified life to the women of tea gar-

BJP leader’s ‘wear Bermudas’ remarks distasteful: O’Brien

New Delhi, March 24: Trinamool Congress MP Derek O’Brien on Wednesday condemned as “distasteful” BJP leader Dilip Ghosh’s purported remarks against the West Bengal chief minister suggesting that she should wear Bermuda shorts to display her injured leg, and said such comments were “not acceptable” in politics.

Participating in a debate on the Finance Bill in Rajya Sabha, O’Brien said his party condemns this kind of remarks against anyone.

“There is decency, there is courtesy which we always try to extend. Doesn’t matter man, woman... So I am little disturbed...most distasteful statement was made about a woman saying that she should not wear a saree anymore but she should

dens,” said Mr Modi.

The BJP leader said that Congress can do anything for votes.

“Today, Congress’ hand is with those who are set to destroy the identity of Assam. Congress can do anything for votes. They can stand with anyone and can even betray anyone,” he alleged.

“The Congress, which has been a symbol of dis-

● A VIDEO clip of Ghosh apparently suggesting Mamata Banerjee should wear Bermuda shorts to display her injured leg has triggered a controversy. While no one was named in the purported speech by Ghosh, most commentators took the comments to be directed at Banerjee.

wear Bermuda shorts,” the Trinamool MP said.

He said the statement was made by a parliamentarian who is a state president of the BJP.

“This is not acceptable in politics. This was said by an MP and state president of the BJP. We condemn this kind of remarks against anyone,” the leader said.

He said there may be political differences among parties but that

crimination against indigenous people of Assam, is asking people to hand over Assam to them again. I have come to wake you up. Congress has its hands with such people, whose objective is to destroy the identity of Assam. Will you let this happen? Will you let your culture and tradition be destroyed?,” said the Prime Minister.

SHIVRAJ CALLS EMERGENCY MEET AS MP RECORDS YEAR’S HIGHEST ONE-DAY RISE

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, MARCH 24

Madhya Pradesh recorded year’s highest single-day spike in Coronavirus positive cases on Monday prod-ding Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to convene an emergency high level meeting late in the evening to review the situation and

Modi to begin 2-day B’desh visit tomorrow

SRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will begin his two-day visit to Bangladesh from March 26. The Prime Minister will be the guest of honour at the National Day programme of Bangladesh, celebrated on March 26, with both countries focusing on “preservation of the spirit of 1971” and honouring the Bangladesh freedom struggle for “independence from Pakistan and the oppression it repre-

sented”, foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Wednesday at a special ministry of external affairs (MEA) briefing.

He added that during the visit, both countries will also ink a “range of agreements” in areas such as trade, oceanography and disaster management.

The top ministry of external affairs official also said that the people to people ties between the two nations would be the ‘highlight’ of the visit.

RS approves Delhi L-G Bill

New Delhi, March 24: The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday approved the Bill giving primacy to Delhi’s Lieutenant Governor (L-G) over the elected government after high drama in the House that saw uproar by the Opposition and a walkout by MPs of parties like the BJD, SP, Congress and the YSR-Congress.

The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 that seeks to make it clear that the “government” in Delhi means the “Lieutenant Governor” was passed by Lok Sabha on March 22.

The legislation was passed in Rajya Sabha by a voice vote on Wednesday. However, a division was sought by the Opposition when the government moved the bill for consideration. During voting, 83 mem-

bers were in favour while 45 opposed the Bill. Just before the passage of the bill, the Congress too walked out.

Earlier, Rajya Sabha witnessed uproar by Opposition members who termed the Bill as “unconstitutional” and demanded that it be sent to a Select Committee for scrutiny. The upper house also witnessed two brief adjournments. The members of the BJD, SP and the YSR-Congress also walked out of the House.

Replying to the debate, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy sought to dispel the concerns of the opposition members saying the amendments in the Act would create a sound government mechanism in the NCT of Delhi. He said it will improve equity and inclusiveness.

BJP MANIFESTO PROMISES LAW AGAINST LOVE JIHAD IN KERALA

GILVESTER
ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 24

The BJP which is making an all out effort to improve its electoral prospects in Kerala, got a boost on Wednesday with the participation of union home minister Amit Shah in road shows and election meetings.

The BJP which had just a lone member in the 140 assembly in Kerala is hopeful of doing better this time though various opinion polls have predicted just one to three seats for the party. “We will perform in a much better way in Kerala in the coming elections. The people of Kerala are fed up with the corruption of LDF and UDF. They are desperately looking for an alternative. The BJP will provide them the alternative,” union home minister Mr Amit Shah told mediapersons on the sidelines of his roadshow in Tripunithura in Ernakulam district.

Mr Shah put five questions to the chief minister in connection with the gold smuggling case which included: was your principal secretary not involved in gold smuggling and money laundering? Didn’t you pay 3.5 lakh salary to the accused ? Didn’t the main accused travel on government expense? Didn’t the principal secretary call up to save the accused? Didn’t you apply pressure on Customs?

In the last elections the BJP-led NDA had secured nearly 15 per cent of the votes. It managed to retain the same percentage of vote even in the local bodies poll held in December.

In a bid to improve its vote share and convert the votes into seats, the BJP had made an attempt to reach out to the Christian community. The party has even given tickets to Christians this time hoping to make some dent in the Christian belt of Central Travancore. However, the attempts to woo the Christian community received a setback following an attack on the nuns in Jhansi who were travelling by train.

Meanwhile, Union minister Prakash Javadekar on Wednesday released the NDA manifesto for Kerala elections.

MP: 62-yr-old kidnapped, raped by youth

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MARCH 24

A 62-year-old woman was abducted at knife point by a youth in Gwalior and raped repeatedly on Tuesday night and later abandoned at the crime spot, police said. The incident took place near Bhagabanpur village on the outskirts of Gwalior

city. Local villagers found the victim lying in an unconscious state on the hilltop near the village on Wednesday morning and alerted the police. A police team led by local city superintendent of police Atmaram Sharma rushed to the spot and made arrangements for admission of the victim in the government hospital in Gwalior.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

DUBAI'S DY
RULER PASSES
AWAY AT 75

Dubai: Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, deputy ruler of Dubai and the finance minister of the United Arab Emirates, has died, his brother said on Wednesday. He was 75.

Sheikh Hamdan served as deputy leader of Dubai under his brother, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the hereditary ruler of the city-state who also serves as prime minister and vice president of the UAE. Emirati officials announced his death without specifying the cause. Sheikh Hamdan had been in poor health for several months.

VIRGINIA GOV. TO
SIGN LAW ENDING
DEATH PENALTY

Jarratt (US): Governor Ralph Northam is set to sign historic legislation that will put an end to the death penalty in Virginia, a state with a long and prolific history of carrying out executions.

Northam scheduled a tour on Wednesday of the death chamber at the Greensville Correction Center, then planned to sign the landmark legislation abolishing the death penalty.

The legislation marks a dramatic shift in a state that has executed more people than any other. Virginia has put to death nearly 1,400 people since its days as a colony. In modern times, Virginia is second only to Texas in the number of executions it has carried out, with 113 since the US Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976.

GILANI'S POLL
RESULT PLEA
DISMISSED

Islamabad: A Pakistani court on Wednesday dismissed former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani's petition challenging the results of the Senate chairman election which he lost in a keenly-fought contest.

Gilani filed the petition on Monday in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) which was accepted for hearing by Chief Justice Athar Minallah. During the hearing on Wednesday, Chief Justice Minallah noted that the proceedings of the upper house of parliament were "immune from the interference" of the high court.

The "language used by the framers of the Constitution is unambiguous and effective in order to prevent a court from encroaching upon the independence of the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament)," Chief Justice Minallah wrote.

UK MIN PLEDGES
OVERHAUL OF
REFUGEE SYSTEM

London: British Home Secretary Priti Patel on Wednesday announced a major overhaul of the country's asylum system, which includes tougher measures to break what she described as the business model of people smugglers and remove illegal migrants more easily.

In a speech in the House of Commons, the senior Indian-origin Cabinet minister laid out a "New Plan for Immigration" because she said the current system is becoming overwhelmed, as 1,09,000 claims are sitting in the asylum queue and 42,000 failed asylum seekers have not left the country, despite having their claim refused.

The plans have been dubbed the "biggest overhaul of the UK's asylum system in decades" as Patel said parts of the immigration system have been "open to abuse... for too long".

4 KILLED, 14
HURT IN PAK
BOMB BLAST

Quetta: At least four people were killed and 14 others injured after a powerful roadside bomb exploded outside the offices of Pakistani security forces in the restive Balochistan province, bordering Afghanistan, police said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack outside the Levies headquarters in Chaman town. Chaman Assistant Commissioner Zakullah Durrani said at least four people were killed and around 14 others injured in the explosion. Explosives were planted in a motorcycle and the apparent target was a police mobile stationed outside the Levies headquarters, which also serves as a temporary prison, he said.

Myanmar releases hundreds

It is first gesture by the military to try to placate the protest movement

Yangon, March 24: Hundreds of people imprisoned for protesting last month's coup were released Wednesday in the first apparent gesture by the military to try to placate the protest movement.

Witnesses outside Insein Prison in Yangon saw busloads of mostly young people, looking happy with some flashing the three-finger gesture of defiance adopted by the protest movement. State-run TV said a total of 628 were freed.

The prisoners appear to be the hundreds of students detained in early March while demonstrating against the Feb. 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. One lawyer, speaking on condition of anonymity because she doesn't want attention from the authorities, said all those released were arrested on March 3. She said only 55 people detained in connection with the protests remained in the prison, and it is likely they will all face charges under Section 505(A) of the Penal Code, which carries a penalty of up to three years in prison. Myanmar's Assistance Association for Political Prisoners says it has confirmed the killings of 275 people in connection with the post-coup crackdown, with additional deaths still unverified.



AP journalist Thein Zaw waves outside Insein prison after his release Wednesday, in Yangon, Myanmar. — AP/PTI

It also says that as of Tuesday, it had verified arrest or charges against 2,812 people, of whom 2,418 remain in custody or with outstanding charges. Demonstrators on Wednesday tried a new tactic that they dubbed a silence strike, calling on people to stay home and businesses to close for the day.

The extent of the strike was difficult to gauge, but social media users posted photos from cities and towns showing streets empty of activity save for the occasional stray dog. The online meme posted to publicise the action called silence "the loudest scream" and explained its purpose was to honour the

movement's fallen heroes, to recharge protesters' energy and to contradict the junta's claims that "everything is back to normal."

The new tactic was employed after an extended onslaught of violence from security forces. Local media reported that a seven-year-old girl in Mandalay, was among the latest vic-

tims on Tuesday.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners included her in its list of fatalities. "Khin Myo Chit was shot in the abdomen by a soldier while she sat in her father's lap inside her home in Aung Pin Le ward," the online news service *Myanmar Now* reported. — AP

No winner in Israel exit poll

Jerusalem, March 24: Israeli parliamentary elections have resulted in a virtual deadlock for a fourth time in the past two years, exit polls indicated, leaving Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with an uncertain future and the country facing the prospect of continued political gridlock.

The exit polls on Tuesday on Israel's three main TV stations indicated that both Netanyahu and his religious and nationalist allies, along with a group of anti-Netanyahu parties, fell short of the parliamentary majority required to form a new government. That raised the possibility of an unprecedented fifth consecutive election later this year.

The election was seen as a referendum on Netanyahu's polarising leadership, and the initial results showed the country remains as deeply divided as ever, with an array of small sectarian parties dominating the parliament. The results also signalled a continuing shift of the Israeli electorate toward the right wing, which supports West Bank settlements and opposes concessions in peace talks with the Palestinians. That trend was highlighted by the strong showing of an ultra-nationalist anti-Arab religious party. After three

previous inconclusive elections, Netanyahu had been hoping for a decisive victory that would allow him to form a government with his traditional ultra-Orthodox and hard-line nationalist allies and seek immunity from corruption charges.

In an address to supporters early Wednesday, a subdued Netanyahu boasted of a "great achievement" but stopped short of declaring victory. Instead, he appeared to reach out to his opponents and called for formation of a "stable government" that would avoid another election. "We must not under any circumstances drag the

state of Israel to new elections, to a fifth election," he said. "We must form a stable government now." Around 64 per cent of the vote had been counted by early Wednesday, leaving the outcome undetermined. A small Islamist party was hovering just below the threshold to enter parliament, and whether it made the cut could affect the distribution of pro- and anti-Netanyahu blocs in the Knesset.

Updated exit polls on two channels forecast an evenly divided parliament. The third station gave Netanyahu's opponents a one-seat advantage. — AP

Surgeon General: Senate okays Murthy

Washington, March 24: Indian-American physician Vivek Murthy has been confirmed by the Senate as President Joe Biden's surgeon general, a role in which his top priority would be responding to the Coronavirus pandemic that has severely hit the country. Dr Murthy, 43, would occupy the position of America's Surgeon General for the second time. In 2011, president Barack Obama tapped him to serve on the advisory group on prevention, health promotion, and integrative and public health.

I'm deeply grateful to be confirmed by the Senate to serve once again as your Surgeon General. We've endured great hardship as a nation over the past year, and I look forward to working with you to help our nation heal and create a better future for our children, Murthy said on Tuesday soon after the Senate confirmed his nomination by 57-43 votes.

In 2013, Obama nominated Dr. Murthy to be the surgeon general. He was

China bashes
US over racism

Beijing, March 24: China lashed out on Wednesday at the US over racism, financial inequality and the federal government's response to the Coronavirus in an annual report that seeks to counter US accusations of human rights abuses by China's ruling Communist Party.

The report issued by China's Cabinet said the US in 2020 "saw its own epidemic situation go out of control, accompanied by political disorder, inter-ethnic conflicts, and

social division." The document released by the State Council Information Office also highlighted the January 6 insurrectionist attack on the Capitol as well as gun violence and health disparities.

China issues the report each year in response to US criticism of its record on issues such as abuses against minority groups in the western regions of Xinjiang and Tibet and a crackdown on opposition voices in Hong Kong. — AP

the youngest ever to hold the office at the age of 37. However, he had to abruptly leave the position during the Trump administration. As US Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy will

advise President Biden on the Coronavirus pandemic and will be the federal government's leading voice on public health.

Seven senators from the opposition Republican

COSMIC | MOUTHFUL Vines grew faster than those on Earth despite less light

Tasters savour wine that orbited earth

Bordeaux (France), March 24: It tastes like rose petals. It smells like a campfire. It glistens with a burnt-orange hue. What is it? A 5,000-euro bottle of Chateau Petrus Pomerol wine that spent a year in space. Researchers in Bordeaux are analysing a dozen bottles of the precious liquid along with 320 snippets of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines that returned to Earth in January after a sojourn aboard the International Space Station.

They're releasing preliminary results on Wednesday, as part of a

longer-term effort to make plants on earth more resilient to climate change and disease by exposing them to new stresses, and to better understand the aging process, fermentation and bubbles in wine.

At a one-of-a-kind tasting this month, 12 connoisseurs sampled one of the space-travelled wines, blindly tasting it alongside a bottle from the same vintage that had stayed in a cellar. I have tears in my eyes, said Nicolas Gaume, CEO and co-founder of the company that arranged the experiment, Space Cargo Unlimited, as the bottles were carefully

● **PRIVATE INVESTORS** helped fund the project, though the overall cost wasn't disclosed.

uncorked at the Institute for Wine and Vine Research in Bordeaux.

When you expose wine, when you expose cells, plants to an environment without gravity...we create tremendous stress on any living species, he said.

Jane Anson, a wine expert and writer with The Decanter, said the wine that remained on earth tasted a little younger than the one that had been to space.

Chemical and biological analysis of the wine's aging process could allow scientists to find a way to artificially age fine vintages, said Dr. Michael Lebert, a biologist at Germany's Friedrich-Alexander-University.

The vine snippets — known as canes in the grape-growing world — not only all survived the journey but also grew faster than vines on Earth, despite limited light and water.

It's too early for the researchers to determine why. But when they do, Lebert said that could help scientists develop sturdier

vines on earth and pave the way for grape-growing and wine-making in space.

Plus, he said, Grapes...are very healthy for the astronauts. Private investors helped fund the project, though the overall cost wasn't disclosed.

For the average earthling, the main question is: What does cosmic wine taste like?

For me, the difference between the space and earth wine...it wasn't easy to define, said Franck Dubourdieu, a Bordeaux-based agronomist and oenologist, an expert in the study of wine and wine-making. — AP

Cargo ship
turns sideways,
blocks Suez

Dubai, March 24: A cargo container ship that's among the largest in the world has turned sideways and blocked all traffic in Egypt's Suez Canal, officials said Wednesday, threatening to disrupt a global shipping system already strained by the coronavirus pandemic.

The MV Evergreen, a Panama-flagged container ship that carries trade between Asia and Europe, became grounded Tuesday in the narrow, man-made waterway dividing continental Africa from the Sinai Peninsula. It wasn't immediately clear what caused it to turn sideways in the canal.

GAC, a global shipping and logistics company, described the ship as suffering "a blackout while transiting in a northerly direction," without elaborating. Evergreen Marine Corp., a major Taiwan-based shipping company that operates the ship, said in a statement provided to *The Associated Press* that the ship had been overcome by strong winds as it entered the

Suez Canal from the Red Sea but none of its containers had sunk.

A Egyptian official, who spoke to the *AP* on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorized to brief journalists similarly blamed a strong wind in the area for the incident. Egyptian forecasters said high winds and a sandstorm plagued the area Tuesday, with winds gusting as much as 50 kph (31 mph). "All crew are safe and accounted for," said Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement, which manages the ship.

"There have been no reports of injuries or pollution." The Evergreen's bow was touching the canal's eastern wall, while its stern looked lodged against its western wall, according to satellite data from MarineTraffic.com. Several tug boats surrounded the ship, likely attempting to push it the right way, the data showed.

An image in Instagram by a user on another waiting cargo ship appeared to show it wedged across the canal. — AP



In this photo released by the Suez Canal Authority, a cargo ship Evergreen sits grounded Wednesday, after it turned sideways in Egypt's Suez Canal. — AP/PTI

Merkel cancels
Easter shutdown

Berlin, March 24: Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday dropped plans for a five-day shutdown in Germany over Easter, which had prompted confusion and criticism. She called the idea a mistake and apologised to Germans.

Merkel announced the decision after calling a hastily arranged video-conference on Wednesday with Germany's 16 state governors, who are responsible for imposing and lifting restrictions.

The same group had come up with the unexpected plan for deeper restrictions over Easter, which was announced early Tuesday.

The plan was to make Thursday next week —

the day before Good Friday — a "rest day," with all shops closed, and only allow supermarkets to open on Easter Saturday. Since the Friday and Monday are already holidays, that would have created a five-day shutdown of public life — on top of existing lockdown restrictions, which were extended through April 18.

The lockdown plan had raised many questions about logistical details, which remained unresolved, and also was criticised because there had been no public discussion of it before it emerged in the small hours of Tuesday following lengthy haggling. — AP

Shooting suspect
prone to rage

Colorado (US), March 24: Law enforcement officials and former associates of a 21-year-old accused of killing 10 people at a Colorado supermarket described the suspect as someone prone to sudden rage who was suspended from high school for a sudden attack on a classmate that left the student bloodied.

Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, who is from the Denver suburb of Arvada, was booked into jail Tuesday on murder charges a day after the attack at a King Soopers grocery in Boulder. He was due to make a first court appearance Thursday. Alissa had bought an assault weapon on March 16, six days before the attack, according to an arrest affidavit.

Investigators have not established a motive, said Boulder County District Attorney Michael Dougherty. It was not immediately known where the suspect purchased the weapon. Among the dead was Boulder police Officer Eric Talley, 51, who was the first to arrive after responding to a call about shots fired and someone carrying a gun, said police Chief Maris Herold.

A law enforcement official briefed on the shooting said the suspect's family told investigators they

DEMOCRATS
VOW VOTE ON
GUN BILLS

Washington, March 24: Democrats said they are pushing toward a vote on expanded gun control measures as the nation reels from its second mass shooting in a week. President Joe Biden said "we have to act," but prospects for any major changes were dim, for now, in the closely divided Congress.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer vowed Tuesday morning to bring to the Senate floor legislation passed by the House that would require background checks for most gun sales and transfers. He said the Senate "must confront a devastating truth" after a lack of congressional action on the issue for almost three decades. — AP

believed Alissa was suffering some type of mental illness, including delusions. Relatives described times when Alissa told them people were following or chasing him, which they said may have contributed to the violence, the official said. — AP

DECCAN
Chronicle

25 MARCH 2021

Shot eligibility expansion
route out of return wave

The decision of the Union government to open up the vaccination programme against pandemic Covid-19 further and include all those who are aged 45 years and above is a welcome move as it comes in the nick of time. India is on the verge of a second wave of the pandemic with more than 47,000 people contracting the virus on Tuesday alone. The daily caseload has been hovering above 40,000 for the last couple of weeks. Several states have already gone back to or are contemplating re-introducing lockdown in varying intensities to check the spread of the virus.

The government decision comes amid demands made by several state governments to include more categories of the population under it. The Delhi government has demanded that everyone above 18 years be given the jab while Punjab wanted the norms for the second phase where only those above 60 years were eligible for the vaccine be done away with. Its chief minister is particularly worried as 81 per cent samples that underwent genome sequencing from the state showed

The US has vaccinated 37.83 of every hundred people while China's number stands at 5.21 against India's 3.54

B117 virus, the UK strain of Covid-19. The government has of late ratcheted up the daily numbers in the inoculation programme, and the number of people who got a dose of the vaccine touched 33 lakhs on Tuesday. This is a commendable achievement compared with the slow progress the programme made in the initial phase. The total number of people who have got at least one dose of the vaccine has become 4.5 crores now but only less than 80 lakhs have got both their doses. The percentage of people who have got the vaccine is far too low compared with that in the US and Britain: the US has vaccinated 37.83 of every hundred people while China's number stands at 5.21 against India's 3.54. At this rate, India will take months on end to get a sizeable share of the population inoculated. This would mean some region or the other being under lockdown or debilitating restrictions. But the nation cannot afford to keep its economic activity in chains for long.

It has been one year since Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared a national lockdown to tame the virus and flatten the curve. One year on, India has suffered immensely at the hand of the microorganism. Crores of people found it difficult to make ends meet but the governments at the Centre and in most states offered very little in the form of immediate relief. Lakhs of people were made to flee their temporary abodes in the towns and trek thousands of miles on their way back home, creating one of the most heartrending and shameful episodes of Independent India. One year down the line, India is still the country with the third largest number of Covid cases and deaths after the United States and Brazil.

There cannot be a repeat of the same this year. The government must further strengthen the inoculation programme and at the same time strictly impose Covid-appropriate protocol across the country. Any laxity on these counts will cost the nation heavily.

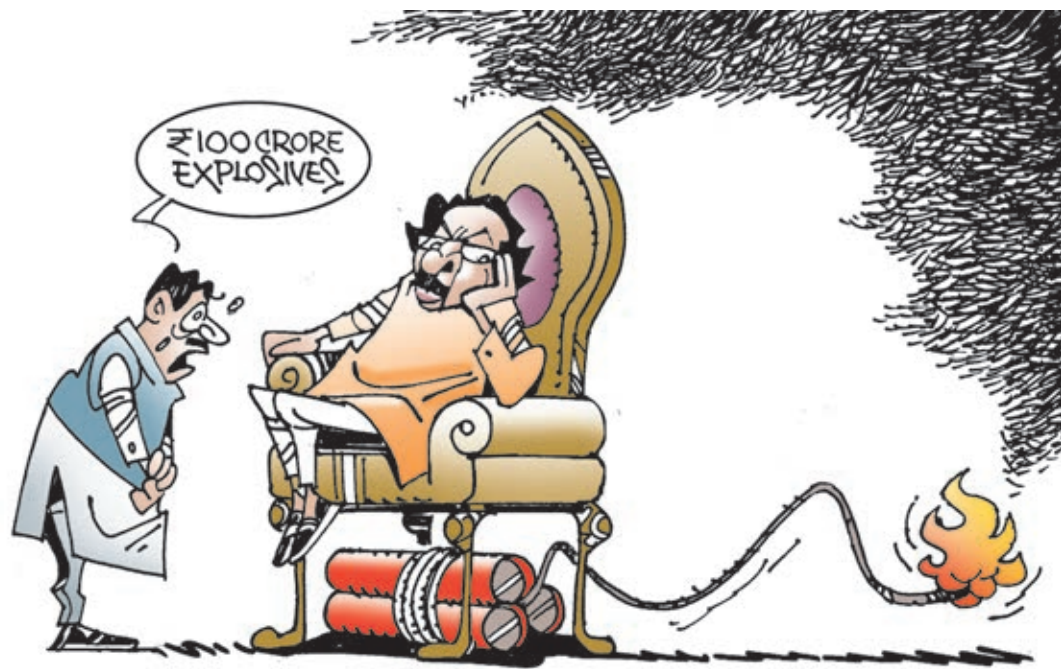
Lanka: A lost opportunity

In abstaining from the vote on the United Nations Human Right Council resolution against Sri Lanka, India may have been attempting to find a pragmatic balance. But, in not claiming the moral high ground on the issue of human rights violations against Sri Lankan Tamils, the country lost an opportunity to be the conscience keeping leader of the region. There may have been inhibiting reasons in voting for the resolution like respect for the territorial integrity of the island nation, but none was so compelling as to impose an ambivalent position on how Sri Lanka tamed LTTE's secessionist movement towards the end of the civil war when it brazenly carried out executions, including that of the minor son of LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran.

What the Sri Lankan Army did in the guise of winning a war was morally reprehensible. Considering the head of the defence forces in the war against the rebels that ended in May 2009 is now the president of Sri Lanka, it is unlikely that the probe, financed with the UN's US \$2.8 million, will get very far. It is clear that India chose the path of lesser resistance in joining the abstainers rather than the 22 nations who voted for the resolution and 11, including Pakistan and China, voting against. India's two fundamental considerations of "supporting the Tamils for equality, justice, dignity and peace and ensuring the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka", are in the realm of the pedantic.

There is no doubt the nearness of April 6 elections in Tamil Nadu influenced the decision to abstain. The perception of New Delhi varies vastly from that of Tamil Nadu, obviously influenced by the romanticism of a Tamil Eelam, or homeland. The fact remains that New Delhi voted thus only with an eye on the Tamil Nadu voter rather than the empathetic first principles in favour of a people residing in northern Sri Lanka who are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity. No Indian on Tamil can influence the court of post-war events in Sri Lanka. But to remain a silent spectator to human rights abuses reflects moral bankruptcy.

Subhani

Halt Covid complacency:
Be vigilant, keep all safePatralekha
Chatterjee

Dev 360

Around this time last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a nationwide lockdown to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Indians were given four hours' notice before the order took effect. "From 12 midnight tonight, the entire country will go under a complete lockdown," Mr Modi said. "To save India and every Indian, there will be a total ban on venturing out of your homes." The initial clampdown was for 21 days.

A year on, where are we? That question is the big story in our lives.

Many of us have lost loved ones, jobs, watched our savings evaporate, been sick ourselves. Most of us have no choice but to tap our inner strengths as we cope with everyday challenges in the time of a pandemic.

It is not a totally bleak picture. Vaccines are available now and we are likely to see a huge scale-up in the government's immunisation drive in the coming weeks.

But alongside, worryingly, we are also seeing a big surge in Covid-19 cases in many parts of the country and a disconcerting general disregard for safety protocols. India's new Covid-19 cases had peaked at nearly 100,000 a day in September and had been declining steadily until late last month.

Two recent surveys give us a sense of just how bad the economic situation is.

The first one relates to the situation in New Delhi, the nation's capital.

According to a recent survey by the Delhi government, the unemployment rate in Delhi was 11.1 per cent before the onset of the pandemic and it shot up to 28.5 per cent during October-November 2020, an increase of 17.4 per cent. The male unemployment rate was 8.7 per cent before the pandemic;

it increased to 23.2 per cent, an increase of 14.5 per cent. The female unemployment rate was 25.6 per cent before the pandemic and went up to 54.7 per cent, an increase of 29.1 per cent, in the same period. The average monthly income of employed persons in the city before the pandemic was ₹16,511. It dipped to ₹15,383, a reduction of 6.8 per cent in the average monthly income during October-November last year.

In the past year, on the whole, the worst-affected sectors have been construction, food and beverages, service activities, education, wholesale and retail trade, services to buildings and landscape activities, information service activities, land transport, security and investigation activities, human health activities and wearing apparel manufacturing.

The survey was conducted last year, and arguably things have improved since then.

But here is the catch, signs of economic activity do not necessarily mean that workers are getting their due wages. From my personal conversations with scores of people in the informal service sector, I know that many are still getting a fraction of their former wages and many who are without work.

In January this year, I met Naresh Kumar, 55, in one of the "pagoda" style temporary refugees in winter in the Bangla Sahib shelter run by an NGO. Mr Kumar told me

Let's face it — we are in the middle of two crises — the coronavirus pandemic and the one impacting the economy. Both intersect. We have the vaccine. But as scientists keep reminding us, it doesn't herald a full stop to the pandemic just yet.

A spike in coronavirus cases in India would dent the green shoots of the economic recovery as fresh curbs will kick in to prevent a new wave from gaining momentum. We must do everything we can to ensure that does not happen.

he used to earn his living as a waiter, mostly at weddings. For the last one and half months, he had been at the shelter. He had no work for the past year. He was picked up by a rescue van and brought to the shelter. He had no identity documents. Naresh Kumar feared going back to sleeping in the streets once the temporary shelter closed down. I wonder where he is today....

Even in tony South Delhi enclaves, it is not uncommon to find people in the beauty, wellness and hospitality industry complaining of getting less than their salary. They can't quit their jobs because there are few new opportunities in the market.

Though the unemployment rate is gradually decreasing in the city, the implementation of a job guarantee scheme is very much needed to revive the national capital's economy scarred by the coronavirus pandemic.

The survey tells us that people at the bottom of the income hierarchy were among the worst affected. Those with no or minimal education lost jobs in far greater numbers than those with a simple diploma.

This is not just in Delhi or India's big cities. Across the country, not only have the number of the poor increased, leading to a sharp spike in the global increase in poverty, a new Pew Research Centre analysis talks about the retreat of India's middle class in 2020. The middle class in India is estimated to have shrunk by 32 million last year as a direct fallout of the economic downturn, compared with the number it may have reached without the pandemic, it says.

Understandably, people are tired and craving for normalcy and economic recovery.

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LETTERS

UDDHAV MUST ACT FAST

This has reference to your editorial *Optics key, Uddhav must act fast to kill racket stink* (March 24). The silence of Uddhav and Pawar's defence of his corrupt subordinate does not speak well of their political prominence. Corruption charges have been levelled against the home minister by no less a person than a top police officer. A monthly hafta collection of ₹100 crores to the minister is quite surprising. Under the circumstances his continuance in the Cabinet is wrong. He himself should have resigned when the charges were levelled against him. He should be shown the door immediately now.

Sravana Ramachandran.
Chennai

TIMELY MOVE

THE GOVERNMENT'S decision to allow all above 45 years of age to take the Covid-19 vaccine from April 1 represents a major step forward in quickening the pace of vaccination and, by extension, the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a timely move when the country is staring at a possible second Covid-19 wave. It is commendable that the task force is responding flexibly to the pandemic and taking right decisions without procrastination. Now anyone who was born before January 1, 1977 becomes eligible to get vaccinated. It does not matter whether they have morbidities or not. Those who fall in the 45-59 age group form a considerable number; it is of paramount importance that they overcome vaccine hesitancy and take the jab for their protection and prevention of the transmission of the disease.

G. David Milton, Maruthancode

WALKOUT AT GENEVA

APPROPOS THE report Walkout at Geneva to affect votes in TN (March 24). In abstaining from voting on the UNHRC resolution against Sri Lanka of human rights violations purported to be genocide of Sri Lankan Tamils during the armed conflict with LTTE in 2009, the NDA government at the Centre led by BJP has shown in no uncertain terms that the BJP does not care for the Tamils in general and the Sri Lankan Tamils in particular. The resolution accused Sri Lanka of human rights violations. Despite pleas to the Central government by almost all political parties in Tamil Nadu to vote in favour of the resolution, the Centre was averse to vote for it and hence abstained from voting. The BJP which is contesting Tamil Nadu Assembly elections in April in alliance with AIADMK must be aware that its decision would affect its votes.

Manoharan Muthuswamy,
Chennai

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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka BabuWill J&K-AGMUT
cadre merger solve
Valley's problem of
sparse governance?

The merger of the Jammu and Kashmir cadre into the UT cadre, among other things, is meant to address the old problem of the acute shortage of IAS officers in the Union territory. The erstwhile J&K cadre had a stipulated strength of 137 IAS officers but currently has merely 58, of which nine are on Central deputation. The result is that practically every IAS officer in the UT is handling several portfolios, which is not exactly great news for good governance.

The problem has lingered for several years, with the result that officers of the Kashmir Administrative Service have long been handling posts reserved for IAS officers, without being promoted to the IAS. For instance, the post of district magistrate (DM) can only be filled by an IAS officer, but in

Kashmir, nine out of 20 district magistrates are from the state administrative service.

Apparently, no state administrative service officer has been inducted into the IAS since 2012, which has only accentuated the problem. While in other parts of the country there is a 37 per cent reserved quota for state service officers, in Kashmir it has become 50 per cent!

The cadre merger, the Centre hopes, will allow officers in the AGMUT cadre to be posted in J&K and Ladakh, and vice-versa. Until that happens it is the state service babus who will continue to hold most of the administrative positions in the Union territory.

A HIGH-PROFILE EXIT
P.K. Sinha, senior advisor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, quietly put in his papers but cannot stop

P.K. Sinha, senior advisor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, quietly put in his papers but cannot stop tongues from wagging. It is being said that Mr Sinha could be the next lieutenant governor of either Delhi or Puducherry.

tongues from wagging. It is being said that the former Cabinet secretary is being primed for another role by Mr Modi. Among the theories doing the rounds, it is being speculated that Mr Sinha could be the next lieutenant governor of either Delhi or Puducherry.

This may not be without precedent. Recall 2019 when Nripendra Misra, the then principal secretary

to the PMO, similarly resigned "for personal reasons" but was soon named chairman of the prestigious Ram temple construction committee.

BABU'S MIXED LEGACY

Economic affairs secretary Tarun Bajaj has been given an additional charge of revenue secretary after the retirement of A.B.P. Pandey last month. However, Mr Pandey's exit hasn't been as quiet as he may have expected. As soon as he retired, media reports appeared around the lack of progress in filling more than 400 vacancies of income tax commissioners and others, some of which have been hanging fire since 2019. It was somehow hinted that Mr Pandey did not do enough during his stint as revenue secretary to fill these vacancies. Further,

sources say, Mr Pandey drew the ire of Odisha-based IT chief commissioner D.P. Kar, who reportedly wrote to the Prime Minister demanding an inquiry against Pandey.

Yet, others point out that the same Mr Pandey was among the few babus who successfully led three crucial institutions of the Modi sarkar — department of revenue, goods and services tax network and the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). As revenue secretary, Mr Pandey led significant tax reforms undertaken by the government. The detractors waited for the man to retire before raising issues that troubled them during his tenure.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

SHORT TAKES

Shuttler forced out of Orleans tour

Paris: An unnamed Indian woman shuttler was on Tuesday forced to withdraw from the Orleans Masters after a team entourage member tested positive for Covid-19 and she was identified as a close contact. In a statement, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) said that a total of three players have been withdrawn from the event which began with the qualifiers here. "An Indonesian women's doubles pair has been withdrawn after one player tested positive to the mandatory PCR test conducted on Monday," the BWF stated. "An Indian women's singles player has been withdrawn after a team entourage member tested positive to the mandatory PCR test. The singles player was identified as a close contact of the entourage member and as a result the player has been withdrawn from the tournament," it added. — *PTI*

SAI asks PCI to submit report

Bengaluru: Sports Authority of India on Wednesday sought a report from the Paralympic Committee of India after it emerged that facilities here at the National Para Athletics championship are not wheelchair-friendly and Covid-19 protocols are also "not being adhered to". A qualification event for the Tokyo Paralympics, the tournament to be held from March 24 to 27 was shifted here from Chennai at a short notice on March 20, leading to discrepancies in the conduct of the event. SAI has asked the national federation to immediately sort out the issues. "It has been brought to the notice of Sports Authority of India that the facility in Bengaluru at which the Para Athletics National Championships is not wheelchair-friendly and that Standard Operating Procedures for prevention of Covid-19 are not being adhered to," SAI said in a statement. — *PTI*

Blatter banned by FIFA again

Zurich: Sepp Blatter was banned for a second time by FIFA on Wednesday for financial wrongdoing, seven months before the 85-year-old former president's first ban expires. Blatter has recently been in poor health and was put in an induced coma for one week after undergoing heart surgery in December. FIFA said its ethics committee banned both Blatter and former secretary general Jerome Valcke for six years and eight months for financial wrongdoing linked to awarding themselves contractual bonuses worth millions of dollars. Both men, who also face criminal proceedings in Switzerland, will start serving the new bans when their current ones expire. Blatter and Valcke were previously banned for six years and 10 years, respectively, in separate cases. Blatter's first ban expires in October and Valcke's initial ban will be served in October 2025. — *AP*

Venus bows out of Miami Open

Miami: Venus Williams crashed out of the Miami Open on Tuesday, losing her first round game in straight sets to Zarina Diyas of Kazakhstan. Diyas advanced to a second round meeting with Swiss 11th seed Belinda Bencic after completing a 6-2, 7-6 (12/10) victory in 1hr 28min on the Hard Rock Stadium's Grandstand court.

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

European Qualifiers for 2022 World Cup: Bulgaria vs Switzerland from 10.30 pm on Sony Ten 2; Spain vs Greece from 1.15 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2; Italy vs Northern Ireland from 1.15 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 3; England vs San Marino from 1.15 am (Friday) on Sony Six; Germany vs Iceland from 1.15 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1

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SHOULDER SLIPS

Shreyas out of England ODIs, likely to miss IPL 1st half

Pune, March 24: India batsman Shreyas Iyer was on Wednesday ruled out of the ongoing ODI series against England and left in serious doubt for the first half of the IPL starting next month after dislocating his left shoulder in the opening game here.

The incident happened in the eighth over of the England innings when Shreyas dived on a drive hit by Jonny Bairstow off pacer Shardul Thakur.

He looked in tremendous pain as he left the field clutching his shoulder.

"It is unlikely he will play first part of IPL," a BCCI source said.

On Tuesday, the BCCI had stated, "Shreyas Iyer subluxated (partially dislocated) his left shoulder in the 8th over while fielding. He has been taken for further scans," the source added.

He captains Delhi Capitals in the IPL, which begins on April 9.

Shreyas had led Delhi Capitals to the final in the previous edition of the league. It could take as much as six weeks to recover from shoulder dislocation and much longer in case a surgery is required.

In his absence, the DC captaincy could be handed to either Rishabh Pant, Australian Steve Smith or R. Ashwin.

EOIN, SAM INJURED TOO

Meanwhile, England skipper Eoin Morgan and Sam Billings are doubtful for the second ODI against India here on Friday after sustaining injuries in the series-opener, dealing a



India's Shreyas Iyer (left) walks off the field after injuring himself while fielding during the first One-Day International against England at Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Tuesday.

— AP

fresh blow to the side's floundering campaign.

The visitors suffered the setbacks in their 66-run defeat after the skipper split the webbing between his right thumb and index finger that required four stitches. In another incident, Billings injured his collarbone following an awkward dive to stop a boundary.

"We're going to wait 48 hours and see how it

is...give as much time as needed to hopefully be available for Friday," Morgan said.

England skipper Morgan said his batting would not be 100 per cent given the injury and fielding too is a concern with a split webbing.

Billings, who had dislocated his left shoulder to miss their triumphant campaign in the 2019 World Cup, too batted in

the stiff run chase, and scored 18.

"I haven't spoken with Sam about his batting so I don't know in his instance... In mine, it's never going to be at 100 per cent but it's not that I can't hold a bat," Morgan said.

Down 0-1, the world champions face a must-win situation in the second of the three ODIs here on Friday.

— PTI

Super Kings pay tribute to armed forces in new jersey

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI, MARCH 24

Chennai Super Kings have redesigned their jersey for the first time since the inaugural 2008 edition.

Unveiled on Wednesday, the new-look jersey features camouflage as a tribute to India's armed forces and three stars atop the much-loved franchise's logo.

CSK hold the country's armed forces close to the heart and showed their appreciation by presenting a cheque of ₹2 crore at the start of the 2019

IPL season.

The team's talismanic skipper, MS Dhoni, is an honorary Lieutenant Colonel in the Territorial Army and also trained with the Parachute Regiment in 2019.

The camouflage on the shoulders is bordered with gold bands that signify the high standards set by the team both in terms of consistency and fair play – CSK won the IPL fair play award six times in 11 seasons.

The three stars denote the three IPL titles won in 2010, 2011 and 2018. Super Kings qualified for

the playoffs in 10 seasons and made it to the final eight times.

"It has been on our mind for some time now to find ways to raise awareness about the significant and selfless role of the armed forces. The camouflage is an appreciation of their service... they are the true heroes," CSK CEO KS Viswanathan said.

The IPL team with a legion of loyal fans also released a short video of talismanic skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, launching the new jersey on its *Twitter* feed.



India's Hardik Pandya (left) greets teammate Krunal Pandya before the start of the first One-Day international (ODI) match against England at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Tuesday.

— AFP



Chinky Yadav poses with her gold medal in the Women's 25m Pistol event at the Shooting World Cup in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Chinky, Aishwary dazzle with gold

New Delhi, March 24: Chinky Yadav upstaged the experienced Rahi Sarnobat and the fancied Manu Bhaker to win gold as India swept the women's 25m pistol event of the ISSF shooting World Cup here on Wednesday, highlighting the country's depth of talent in the sport.

The 23-year-old Yadav prevailed over Sarnobat, 30, 4-3 in a shoot-off after their scores were tied at 32, taking India's gold tally to nine in the event. Bhaker, aged only 19, shot 28 to settle for the bronze medal before being eliminated, leaving her two other compatriots to fight for the top prize at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

Yadav led the pack after first 20 targets with a score of 14. She was followed by Bhaker at second with 13. Then, the shooter from Bhopal led with a score of 21 and pulled away from the rest, even as the seasoned Sarnobat clawed her way back into the finals after struggling in bottom half. In the finals, Yadav

shot all the five targets twice — in the first competition stage's second series and the sixth series of the elimination stage — after beginning with two.

Meanwhile, young Indian shooter Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar claimed the gold medal in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions event, consolidating the host nation's top standing in the ISSF World Cup here on Wednesday.

The 20-year-old from Bhopal shot 462.5 to win the top prize ahead of Hungary's star rifleman Istvan Peni (461.6) and Denmark's Steffen Olsen (450.9) at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range. This was India's eighth gold medal at the ongoing marquee event.

The other Indians in the final, veteran Sanjeev Rajput and Niraj Kumar, finished sixth and eighth respectively. After an impressive start following which he led for a while, Tomar slipped in the standings but fought back strongly with a 10.4, 10.5 and 10.3 in the standing elimination stage. — *PTI*

PT USHA, GURBACHAN NAMED SELECTION COMMITTEE HEADS

New Delhi, March 24: Sprint legend P. T. Usha has been given charge of the junior selection committee, while hurdling great Gurbachan Singh Randhawa will head the senior panel in the latest appointments announced by the Athletics Federation of India.

The 56-year-old Usha won multiple medals in the Asian Games in 100m, 200m, 400m and 4x400m besides finishing fourth in 400m hurdles in 1984 Olympics.

Other members of the junior committee are Soma Biswas, Anand Menzes, Satbir Singh, Sandeep Sarkaria, Sunita Rani, Rama Chandran, Joseph Abraham, Harwant Kaur, M. D. Valsama and Kamal Ali Khan. — *PTI*

Ingram stands tall to sink LA Lakers

Los Angeles, March 24: Brandon Ingram scored 36 points as the New Orleans Pelicans took full advantage of LeBron James' injury absence to pummel the Los Angeles Lakers 128-111 on Tuesday.

Ingram sent his former team sliding to defeat in a one-sided game at New Orleans' Smoothie King Center.

The Lakers were rocked on Saturday by an injury to James which has left the

four-time NBA champion facing several weeks on the sidelines. With Anthony Davis and Marc Gasol already out injured, the depleted Lakers have now lost three consecutive games to fall to fourth place in the Western Conference standings at 28-16.

The Pelicans meanwhile remain in the hunt for a playoff berth after a win that sees them improve to 19-24.

— AFP

CITY CLIPS

the the TVS ITF juniors under-18 tennis tournament. She will now meet Amodini Naik in the quarter-finals.

Results: Boys: Singles: 2nd Round: Denim Yadav (IND) bt Aryan Shah (IND) 7-5, 6-3; Ronin Lotlikar (IND) bt Daksh Prasad (IND) 6-3, 6-1; Agriya Yadav (IND) bt Raghav Harsh (IND) 7-6(5), 6-3; Dhruv Hirpara (IND) bt Anup Bangargi (IND) 6-1, 6-3; Yuvan Nandal (IND) bt Kiruthik Kalyaan AS (IND) 6-2, 6-1; Dhananjay Athreya (IND) bt Manas Dhamne (IND) [5] 6-3, 6-3; Aayush P. Bhat (USA) bt Kabir Chhabria (IND) 6-1, 6-2; Monil Lotlikar (IND) bt Akarsh Gaonkar (IND) 5-7, 6-3, 6-2.

Men's doubles: Quarter-finals: Anup Bangargi (IND)/Rishivandhan Sadeeshkumar (IND) bt Dhanush Patel (IND)/Agriya Yadav (IND) 6-3, 6-3; Dhruv Hirpara (IND)/Aryan Shah (IND) bt Adhirit Awal (IND)/Cahir Warik (IND) 6-1, 6-4.

Gals Singles: 2nd Round: Riyah Dugar

(IND) bt Saniya Manoj Masand (IND) 7-5, 6-1; Arunkumar Lakshmi Prabha (IND) bt Madhurima Sawant (IND) 7-5, 6-0; Sonal Paygonda Patil Patil (IND) bt Kristi Boro (IND) [8] 6-1, 6-2; Lakshanya Vishwanath (IND) bt Amina Sailbayeva (USA) 2-6, 6-0, 6-3; Naisha Srivastav (IND) bt Naga Roshne Arunkumar (IND) 6-4, 6-4; Pushti Laddha (IND) bt Nandini Dixit (IND) 6-2, 6-2; Amodini Naik (IND) bt Saina Deshpande (USA) 1-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Vijender moves up

Vijender Rao of Snook Inn defeated Mylapore Club's Vijayaram 3-2 in the seventh round of the Saleem Snooker Academy-Jhillmill all-India open snooker tournament.

Results: Round 7: Vijender Rao (Snook Inn) bt Vijayaram (Mylapore Club) 3-2; Vadivelu (Snook City) bt Sikkander (QBC) 3-2; Hari Prabhu (CueZone) bt Shriram (Thiruppur) 3-0; Kamal (CueZone) bt Arun Kumar (Maharashtra) 3-0.

Round 6: Sajiv Mathew (Towers Club) bt Mohan (QBG Shooters) 3-0; Shriram (Thiruppur) bt Gopinath (Madurai) 3-1; Kamal (CueZone) bt Mahesh Aditya (Karnataka) 3-1; Dilip (CueZone) bt Dinesh (QBG Shooters) 3-0; Aashish Jain (SLVS) bt Fahd (Buddies) 3-0; Radhesh (Towers Club) bt Julvan (Pondy) 3-1; Prathish (TNBSA) bt Manoj (Towers Club) 3-2; Yeshwanth (Cue Zone) bt Akbar Hussain (Karnataka) 3-0; Damu Menon (TNBSA) bt Harish (SSA) 3-0; Sanjay (SSA) bt Gautham (Snook City) 3-0; Karthik (Red 15) bt Karuna (Cue Zone) 3-0.

Round 5: Kamal (CueZone) bt Sathish Kumar (TNCA) 3-1; Dilip (CueZone) bt Swaminathan (TNBSA) 3-1; Sikkander (QBC) bt Prakash (QBG Shooters) 3-2; Ashish Jain (SLVS) bt Shabir (QBC) 3-0; Manoj (Towers Club) bt Irfan Akhtar (Kerala) 3-2; Mohan (QBG Shooters) bt Amin (CueSports) 3-1; Karthi (QBG Tricks) bt Anooob (Kerala) 3-1; Shriram (Thiruppur) bt Sarfaraz (Presidency Club) 3-0; Harish (SSA) bt Nares (Snooker Point) 3-1; Gautham Ajeet (Snook City) bt Ashwin (Towers Club) 3-1.

Akash hits century in Madras Indian triumph

G. Akashkumar smashed a century as Madras Indian Cricket Club beat Universal Recreation Club to win the TNCA sixth division championship league match.

Brief scores: III-Division: Sea Hawks Cricket Club 89 in 37.1 overs (S. Samuel 34 (not out); Gurjapneet Singh 4/25, E. Umasankar 3/9) lost to Egmore Recreation Club 90/2 in 21.5 overs (R. Anirudh Seshadri 40).

II-Division-Plate (Final): CromBest Recreation Club 264/9 in 50 overs (N. Mohammed Ashik 50, C. Sathanarayanan 49, Shubhang Mishra 31; P. Prashanth 4/63) bt Southern Railway Institute 124 in 42.5 overs (S. Parthasarathy 3/28, L. Ganesh 3/18).

V-Division (Championship Play-off): Kumbhat Cricket Club 237/8 in 50 overs (R. Prathosh 126, D. Aswath 35; V. Tharun Kumar 5/55, M. Dinakaran 3/83) bt Kamyuth Club 154 in 31.2 overs (S. Sachin

73; G. Siddharth 3/68, K. Praveen Kumar 3/31).

V-Division (Relegation Play-off): IAF (Tambaram) 181 in 36.1 overs (Sagar Sharma 68, Virender Singh 58; Siddharth Prakash 4/48, C.N. Ananthakrishnan 3/65; Devendar Soni 3/36) lost to Shivaji Cricket Club 182/2 in 23.3 overs (Asif Ahmaed Yousuf 56, Siddharth Prakash 50; Minerva Cricket Club 219/9 in 50 overs (E. Surender 103 (not out); C. Herald Prabhudas 3/45) lost to Youth Centre Cricket Club 220/8 in 49.4 overs (V. Taher Moiz 78, Hussain J Darbar 39, Mustansir Rohawala 50 (not out); P. Jayaram 3/41).

VI-Division (Championship): Universal Recreation Club 139 in 29.2 overs (T. Viswanathan 4/37) lost to Madras Indian Cricket Club 140/3 in 15.4 (G. Akashkumar 100).

Riyah storms into quaterfinals

Riyah Dugar beat Saniya Manoj Masand 7-5, 6-1 in the second round of