

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | THURSDAY 11 | MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 32°C
Min: 22°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Maasi 27
Tithi: Thrayodashi
Star: Avittam
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam: 6 am to 7.30 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.11 am
Zohar: 12.25 pm
Asar: 3.41 pm
Maghrib: 6.19 pm
Isha: 7.29 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.19 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.20 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 4.55 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.43 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+21,814)	(+114)
1,12,84,311	1,58,213

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 671)
TN: 8,56,917 12,530

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

11,84,03,692

DEATHS

26,26,080

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

TN records 671 new Covid cases, five deaths

Chennai: Tamil Nadu's upward graph vis-a-vis new daily coronavirus cases and active numbers continued on Wednesday, with the state recording 671 new infections while five people succumbed to Covid-19. The new cases pushed the overall infections to 8,56,917, even as the recoveries at 532 were lesser than the new infections. After hovering over 500 for the past few days, the daily additions crossed the 600-mark today, while the active cases stood at 4,207.

PC Chacko quits Congress ahead of Kerala polls

New Delhi/Kochi: In a blow to the Congress in poll bound Kerala, Senior leader PC Chacko on Wednesday announced his resignation from the party, alleging group interest in deciding party candidates for the coming assembly elections. Chacko, who was a former working committee member of the Congress, is the second senior leader to quit the national party after Jyotiraditya Scindia.

COUNTER

POINT



Even now you can join our party. We will give you a ministry!

Centre creates fund for health schemes

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 10

Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidhi (PMSSN) as a single non-lapsable reserve fund for share of health from the proceeds of health and education cess.

The accruals into the PMSSN will be utilised for the flagship schemes of the health ministry including Ayushman Bharat —

● **The salient feature of Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Nidhi is that it is a non-lapsable reserve fund for health in the public account and proceeds of share of health in the health and education cess will be credited into PMSSN, the statement said**

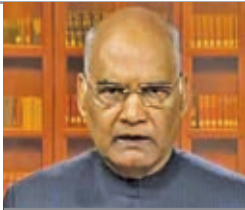
Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY); Ayushman Bharat — Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs); National Health Mission and Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) and also disaster

preparedness, and responses during health emergencies.

“In any financial year, the expenditure on such schemes of the health ministry would be initially incurred from the PMSSN and thereafter, from Gross Budgetary Support

(GBS),” official sources said.

The major benefit will be enhanced access to universal and affordable health care through availability of earmarked resources, while ensuring that the amount does not lapse at the end of financial year, they added. In the Budget speech 2018, the finance minister while announcing Ayushman Bharat Scheme, also announced replacement of existing 3 per cent education cess by 4 per cent health and education cess.



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President all praise for NEP 2020



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Biden administration won't defend Trump immigration rule

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Narain's dream of racing in Le Mans takes rebirth



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Vol. 16 No. 345 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES| ₹3.00

Poll scene hots up as AIADMK releases list

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 10

The AIADMK-led coalition Wednesday finalised its laborious constituency allocation exercise for the April 6 polls and followed it up by announcing the AIADMK's second list of 171 seats along with the names of candidates over and above the six seats that were announced a couple of day earlier.

In the DMK camp, however, hectic talks were on to arrive at an agreement over constituency allocation though the Congress announced Vijay Vasanth as its candidate for the bye election to the Kanyakumari LS constituency that fell vacant following the passing away of party leader H. Vasantakumar in August last year. Mr Vasanth is Vasantakumar's son and has acted in a few Tamil films.

The AIADMK has nominated all but three of its ministers for the Assembly elections and given seats to two of its Rajya Sabha members — K.P. Munusamy and Vaithilingam. The ministers whose names do not figure in the new list are G. Baskaran, S. Valarmathi and Nilofer Kafeel. The list has 13 women: Gokula Indira (Annanagar), P. Valarmathi (Alandur), S. Kanitha Sampath (Cheyyur), G.

Kamal releases first list

Chennai: The first list of 70 candidates of the Makkal Neethi Maalam for the April 6 Assembly elections was released on Wednesday but the names of most of the top honchos of the party, including that of founder Kamal Haasan, did not figure in that. The list almost covering the whole of TN from Chennai to Kanyakumari had the names of former IAS officer Santhosh Babu (Villivakkam), former advisor to APJ Abdul Kalam Ponraj (Annanagar) and actor Snehan (Virugambakkam). ■ **P2**

Paritha (Gudiyatham), Jothi Balakrishna Reddy (Hosur), K. Chitra (Yercaud), N. Saroja (Rasipuram), Pon Saraswathi (Thiruchengode), T. Indira Gandhi (Thuraiyur), S Jaya Bharathi (Gantharvakottai), Lakshmi Ganesan (Sivakasi), Kerthika Muniasamy (Muthukulathur) and V.M. Rajalakshmi (Sankarankoil).

Most of the prominent members of the AIADMK in Chennai have been nominated to their seats. K. Pandiarajan will contest from Avadi, Saidai S. Duraisamy from Saidapet and former IPS officer R. Nataraj in Mylapore. ■ **P2**

Serious cases against 19% MLAs: Report

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 10

Thirty-three per cent of the sitting MLAs in Tamil Nadu — 68 out of the 204 — have declared criminal cases against them, according to a report by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), a poll rights group.

Out of the total sitting MLAs from the state, 38 (19%) MLAs have serious criminal cases against them, it said. Serious criminal cases are non-bailable offences which attract a punishment of over five years of imprisonment. The report also said 157 (77%) members of the legislative assembly have declared their financial assets to be worth crores.

About 89 (44%) MLAs have educational qualification between fifth standard pass and 12th standard pass while 110 (54%) are graduates and above. Three MLAs are diploma holders, it stated.

The report said 78 (38%) MLAs are aged between 25 and 50. While 125 (61%) MLAs are between 51 and 70 years, one MLA is 77-

years-old.

Out of the 204, only 17 (8%) MLAs are women. Among the major parties, 40 (47%) out of the 86 DMK MLAs; 23 (21%) of the 109 AIADMK MLAs; four (57%) of the seven Congress MLAs have criminal cases against them.

There are serious criminal cases against 22 (26%) of the DMK; 13 (12%) of the AIADMK and two (29%) of the Congress. Thereport said that the only Independent MLA in the assembly has also criminal cases registered against them. A total of eight MLAs have cases related to attempt to murder and two MLAs have cases related to crime against women.

“As many as 76 (70%) of 109 MLAs from the AIADMK, 74 (86%) out of 86 MLAs from the DMK, five (71%) out of seven MLAs from the Congress and one MLA each from the IUML and Independent have declared assets valued over ₹1 crore,” it said. The ADR said the average assets per sitting MLA in the state assembly is worth ₹6.05 crore.

China hasn't withdrawn from several LAC positions: Top US commander

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 10

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) “has not yet withdrawn from several forward positions” at the Line of Actual Control that it had seized after the initial clashes with Indian forces, a top US military commander told the Senate Armed Services Committee in Washington on Tuesday. He also said the US and Indian navies are now securely sharing information, and India has substantially increased its acquisition of US defence gear.

Adm. Philip S. Davidson, US Navy head in the Indo-Pacific Command, said China's expansionary territorial ambitions were on display along its western border, where the PLA

● **Last month, Indian and Chinese troops had completed disengagement from Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh after a nine-month standoff**

engaged in a standoff with Indian forces along the LAC since May 2020.

He said the standoff was predicated by clashes over construction activity near the disputed border, and that PLA elements subsequently forward-deployed roughly 50,000 soldiers along the LAC, leading to a counter-deployment by the Indian Army.

“The PLA has not yet withdrawn from several forward positions it seized fol-

lowing the initial clash, and the consequent escalation of tensions between China and India resulted in casualties on both sides,” he told the committee.

He said this large-scale PLA mobilisation — which is particularly notable considering the elevation, terrain and distance involved — has stoked regional concerns that China will increasingly use force to achieve its desired outcomes.

Last month, Indian and Chinese troops had completed disengagement from Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh after a nine-month standoff. India and China are now discussing the modalities of the second phase of the disengagement in Depsang Plains, Gogra, Hot Springs and Demchok.

BJP-JJP govt wins trust vote in Haryana

Chandigarh, March 10: The BJP-JJP government in Haryana survived the floor test on Wednesday, comfortably defeating the no-confidence motion moved against it by the main opposition Congress. The motion was defeated following division of votes. At the end of a marathon six-hour discussion on the motion, Speaker Gian Chand Gupta announced in the House that 55 members had voted against the motion while 32 legislators had backed it. — *PTI*

Tirath Singh Rawat sworn in as new Uttarakhand CM

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/DEHRADUN, MARCH 10

Tirath Singh Rawat, 56, currently Pauri Garhwal MP, Wednesday was sworn in the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, replacing Trivendra Singh Rawat, who was forced to resign following discontentment over his leadership and some of his decisions, including giving the state summer capital Gairsen the status of a new division.

WB CM RUSHED TO KOLKATA HOSPITAL

Mamata ‘manhandled’ in Nandigram, cries foul

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 10

Hours after filing her nomination in Nandigram, the hot seat of the West Bengal Assembly elections, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in an explosive claim, alleged that she was attacked by a group of men in a “conspiracy” in the absence of police personnel, including the East Midnapore superintendent of police, in the constituency on Wednesday evening, leaving her injured.

The Trinamul Congress supremo, with injuries on her legs and forehead, was later rushed to Kolkata in a “green corridor” and was admitted to the Woodburn Ward of SSKM Hospital after she was wheeled in a stretcher. A five-member medical board is now in charge of her treatment. Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar who rushed to see the Chief Minister was greeted with slogans of “go back”. The TMC has launched protests across the state.

Rattled by Ms Banerjee's complaint, the Election Commission has sought a report on the serious security breach from the district administration. Ms Banerjee, who earlier planned to return to



● **Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar who rushed to see the Chief Minister was greeted with slogans of “go back”.**

Kolkata by Wednesday evening, changed her mind and decided to spend another night in Nandigram after filing her nomination papers at Haldia during the day and come back to the city on Thursday for the release of the TMC's manifesto.

In the evening, she visited a religious festival at Ranichak where a kirtan was performed and also made a brief address in her bid to reach out to the public.

Suddenly the Chief Minister, who is a Z-plus category protectee, and is usually surrounded by a contingent of at least 25 security personnel in close quarters, apparently fell down, according to sources close to her. She was later seen applying ice on her legs. ■ **P4**

WEST BENGAL MINISTER, TMC MLA JOIN BJP

Kolkata, March 10: West Bengal minister Bachchu Hansda and Tehatta MLA Gouri Sankar Dutta joined the BJP on Wednesday after being denied nominations for the assembly polls by the Trinamool Congress. Hansda, the Minister of State for North Bengal Development, joined the BJP in presence of its state president Dilip Ghosh.

He is a two-time MLA from the Tapan seat in the Dakshin Dinajpur district. Dutta, the MLA from Tehatta in Nadia, is a veteran politician. He also switched over to the BJP as defections continued to rock the ruling Trinamool Congress weeks ahead of the high-stakes election.

Besides, Bengali actor Bonny Sengupta also joined the BJP. His close friend and actor Koushani Mukherjee recently joined the TMC and is a candidate from the Krishnanagar Uttar seat. TMC MP Pratima Mandal's younger sister Jayanti also joined the BJP. — *PTI*

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SHORT TAKES

AIADMK fields Adi Rajaram to contest in Kolathur

From P1

The party has fielded Adi Rajaram in Kolathur, from where DMK president M.K. Stalin is likely to contest and R.S. Rajesh, a district secretary, from R.K. Nagar, which was the late J. Jayalalithaa's constituency in her last election.

The AIADMK giving away the Coimbatore South seat to the BJP, which wanted to field it national women's wing head Vanathi Seenivasan in the elections, created resentment among the party cadre in the constituency. Large number of AIADMK members gathered inside the party's local office and created a ruckus, demanding that that seat be taken back as it was their bastion.

Similarly, DMK members protested in Aranthangi after news spread that the constituency might be given away to the Congress though the official list was not yet out during the day. The rumour was that former TNCC president S. Thirunavukarasar was asking for the seat to launch his son in electoral politics. One of the DMK party protesters even tried to set himself ablaze but was prevented from doing so by others.

The 23 constituencies allotted to the PMK are mostly situated in the Vanniyar belt in the northern districts. In Chennai, it has been allotted Chepauk-Thiruvellikeni, from where DMK youth wing secretary Udhayanidhi Stalin has sought a ticket.

The BJP's 20 seats are spread throughout the state with Harbour and Thousand Lights, both considered DMK bastions, alone in Chennai city. In Kanyakumari district, the BJP will be contesting from three constituencies -- Nagercoil, Colachel and Vilavancode--besides Tirunelveli in the neighbouring district.

AI flight delayed as passenger falls sick

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 10

The passengers of a Delhi bound Air India flight, including G.Kishan Reddy, the minister of state for home affairs, were stranded at Kamarajar domestic airport for more than an hour on Wednesday morning after a 64-year-old passenger fell sick.

The passenger identified as One Dayalan (64) of Perumbur in Chennai, was one among the 147 passengers scheduled to fly to Delhi from the Chennai Airport by 6.10 am Air India flight.

However, when the aircraft was readying to take-off, Dayalan was found unconscious in his seat. The cabin crew was alerted about the incident and subsequently the Air Traffic control room was alerted.

A medical team pronounced him healthy and fit to fly. However he was deplaned as requested. Airport sources said that the aircraft later left for Delhi around 7. 05 am.

The passenger identified as Dayalan (64) of Perumbur in Chennai, was one among the 147 passengers scheduled to fly to Delhi from the Chennai Airport by 6.10 am Air India flight

Poll colours



Zonal officers and returning officers in Madhavaram CMDA engaged in the task of separating the ballot boxes and sending them to the 16 constituencies of the city.

— DC



Zonal officers undergo training in operating EVMs at Nandanam Arts College on Wednesday.

— DC



Teachers of Chennai corporation schools go on door-to-door campaign at Kolathur constituency with a plate full of fruits and flowers inviting voters to cast their vote on April 6.

— DC

Padmanabapuram constituency not allotted to AIADMK, BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT
KANYAKUMARI, MARCH 10

AIADMK camp in Kanyakumari district is not happy as the party is contesting in only Kanyakumari constituency in the district, allotting other three, Nagercoil, Colachel and Vilavancode to the BJP leaving out two Killiyoor and Padmanabapuram unallotted.

The Kanyakumari district AIADMK expected at least two including Padmanabapuram among the six constituencies in the district, for Thalavaisundaram and John Thangam. "We were taken aback as our party

was allotted only the Kanyakumari segment for Thalavaisundaram and a bit confused as Padmanabapuram has been neither allotted to us nor to the BJP," said a AIADMK functionary, who expressed his party cadres' disappointment as they were deprived of Nagercoil constituency, where AIADMK, contesting without alliance in 2016 election and polled 45,824 votes.

The BJP camp in Kanyakumari district too has a resentment over the allocation of seats for them.

"Though we have been allotted three consti-

tencies in the district, we did not opt for Vilavancode allotted to us instead of Padmanabapuram," said BJP men, who had Nagercoil, Colachel and Padmanabapuram in their wish list. The BJP functionaries are particular about getting Padmanabapuram from where the party sent its first elected member to the Tamil Nadu legislative assembly in 1996

As seat-sharing talks with the Tamil Manila Congress (TMC) are still continuing, AIADMK men suspect that Padmanabapuram along with Killiyoor might have been kept aside for TMC.

Kamal releases first list of 70 candidates

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 10

The first list of 70 candidates of the Makkal Neethi Maiam (MNM) for the April 6 Assembly elections was released on Wednesday but the names of most of the top honchos of the party, including that of founder Kamal Haasan, did not figure in that.

The list almost covering the whole of Tamil Nadu from Chennai to Kanyakumari had the names of former IAS officer Santhosh Babu (Villivakkam), former advisor to A P J Abdul Kalam Ponraj (Annanagar) and actor Snehan (Virugambakkam).

Among the 70 in the list, 10 candidates are women and one of them, Sneha Mohandoss, had handled the Twitter account of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. She was named as the party's candidate from Saidapet.

The next list, which is expected to have the names of the top leaders of the party, would be re-



Makkal Neethi Maiam (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan on Wednesday poses with 70 candidates contesting the Assembly election.

— DC

ased in a couple of days.

Though the MNM had signed an agreement with actor Sarthkumar's All India Samathuva Makkal Katchi (AISMK) and T R Pachamuthu's Indiya

Jananayaga Katchi (IJK), allotting 40 seats each to the two allies, it did not

announce candidates for the 154 constituencies in its bag probably because it was expecting more parties to join hands.

The Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), which was in an alliance with the AMMK in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections,

is said to have opened channels of communication with the MNM and might join the alliance. There was a rumour during the day that the MNM has allotted 16 seats to the SDPI, though there was no confirmation on that.

AMMK releases first list of 15 candidates

Chennai, March 10: Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam, led by TTV Dhinakaran on Wednesday released its first list of 15 candidates for the April 6 Tamil Nadu assembly elections.

Former state Ministers, P Palaniappan, G Shanmugavelu would contest from Pappireddipatti, Saidapet and Madathukulam respectively, AMMK general secretary Dhinakaran said in a party release

Former state Ministers, P Palaniappan, G Shanmizhan, and C Shanmugavelu would contest from Rasipuram and Pollachi segments respectively.

Several former MLAs have also been named in the first list of the AMMK.

Dhinakaran, nephew of late chief minister Jayalalithaa's close aide V K Sasikala, has decided to

contest the elections despite his aunt announcing her decision to stay away from politics and urging her supporters to ensure the victory of the ruling AIADMK and defeat DMK in the polls.

The AMMK has entered into a tie-up with Lok Sabha MP Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM, allotting it three seats.

Tamil Nadu with 234 assembly constituencies will have a single-phase elections on April 6 in which fronts led by arch-rivals AIADMK and DMK are the main contenders.

— PTI

Poll awareness



Tirupur district collector K. Vijayarathikeyan launches a helium-filled balloon to create an awareness on election in Tirupur on Wednesday.

— DC

Kidney patients should not shy away from vaccine: Doctors

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 10

Medical experts, speaking on the occasion of World Kidney Day which falls on March 11, said that overcoming Covid Vaccine hesitancy was important as the viral infection would result in kidney damage in 7-15 per cent of the patients. Apart from this, increasing prevalence of obesity, high blood pressure, hypertension and diabetes are the main reasons for rising cases of kidney diseases in the country.

Dr K. Sampathkumar, Senior Consultant, Mission Hospital and Research Centre said that in the case of the existing kidney patients, the mortality rate has become as high as 50 percent when infected with Covid19.

There would be all possibilities for T Nagar to become the next cluster in the city most of the shoppers who come visiting T Nagar had not maintaining the mandatory protocols like wearing masks. So authorities should take immediate action to contain the spread of the virus: B. Kannan, T. Nagar Residents' Welfare Association Secretary

It is estimated that about 10 percent of the adult population in India is either having or at the risk of developing kidney diseases, most cases remain undiagnosed. As kidneys show fewer or no symptoms of their failure for a very long time, most patients are robbed of the opportunity to avail early treatment and to control causative food and lifestyle factors to reverse or halt the progression of kidney disease.

When they come to know of their condition at the end stage, their treatment

options are restricted just to dialysis and transplantation.

"The people who have diabetes and hypertension must check kidney health without fail as about 30 per cent of them are most likely to develop kidney disease in the long run. The causes of kidney diseases are well established, and preventive measures are simple lifestyle modifications, which also include stress management and good sleep," said Dr. R. Ravichandran, a kidney expert.

Active coronavirus cases continue to rise in city

T. SUDHEESH
CHENNAI, MARCH 10

At a time when the government is intensifying the vaccination programme to contain the spread of Covid-19, active virus cases continued to rise in the city over the last 40days.

According to the data provided by the State Health Department, at least 247 new active cases were reported in the city in the last 20 days, which is an increase from 44 in the previous 20 days.

At least 12 new cases were registered each day in the last 20 days. The number of active cases on February 18 was 1,629 which went up to 1,876 on March 9.

As per the data, the trend shows that active cases had peaked from 1,007 on May 3 to 4,012 on May 13 to 5,461 on May 23 to 7,805 on June 3 to 18,673 on June 24 and then down to 15,814 on July 14 to 11,963 on August 3 then up to 13,223 on August 23 down to 10,645 on September 12 and up to 12,013 on October 2 and

down to October 22, November 9, November 28, December 18, January 8, and January 28.

However, the test positivity rate has also shown a spike in the last 20 days compared to the previous 20 days.

The data shows that a total of 3,508 (175 per day) persons tested positive in the last 20 days compared to 2,797 in the previous 20 days (711 additional cases).

The test positivity rate is spiralling now after a five-month-long downward

trend.

The death toll continues to show a downward trend as 38 deaths were recorded in the last 20 days.

A total of 44 death cases were reported in the previous 20 days. When it comes to the recovery rate, the data shows a total of 3,223 patients were discharged from the hospital in the last 20 days, an increase from 2,723 in the previous 20 days.

The recovery rate too shows a growth after a five-month-long decline.

The flying squad led by Ms Sumathi intercepted a parcel lorry at a police check post near Tiruchy airport on Wednesday and seized 299 eversilver vessels without any valid documents

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, MARCH 10

The officials of the flying squad and the Static surveillance team (SST) seized unaccounted money to the tune of ₹4,80,500 from three traders in three different locations in Tiruchy district.

Official sources said the flying squad officials led by special tashildar Ashok Kumar engaged in the vehicle checkup near Thuvakkudi tollgate on the Tiruchy-Thanjavur national highway and intercepted a car in which the vegetable vendor Ganthanathn of Gandarvakottai in Pudukkottai district possessed a sum of unaccounted amount ₹1, 02,500.

Another flying squad intercepted a load autorickshaw and seized unaccounted money of ₹98,000 from the occupant of the vehicle Balaji of Thevanur village.

The SST officials team intercepted a lorry near Tiruchy and seized the unaccounted money of ₹2.80 lakh from Sakar a Namakkal based trader, near Tiruchy on Tuesday, the sources added.

The police seized 103 sarees from a car during the routine vehicle checkup yesterday and seized 103 sarees from Murugan, a saree trader from Chinnalapatti in the Dindigul district.

The flying squad officials led by Ms Sumathi intercepted a parcel lorry at a police check post near Tiruchy airport on Wednesday and seized 299 eversilver vessels (*thooku vaali*) without any valid documents, the sources added.

Official sources said so far the authorities of the Tiruchy district have seized the unaccounted money to the tune of ₹9,31,820 and seized 100 bags of rice at Srirangam.

OTHER STORY

Woman IPS officer sexual harassment case: Chengalpet police transferred en masse

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH. 10

Days after a senior IPS woman officer filed a complaint with DGP J.K. Tripathy, accusing special DGP (Law and Order) Rajesh Das of sexual harassment and former Chengalpet SP D Kannan of dissuading the victim from filing a complaint along with his team, the Tamil Nadu government on Wednesday ordered the transfer of team that stopped the vehicle of the victim , with immediate effect due to the charges against them on administrative grounds.

On Tuesday evening , just a few hours after the Tamil Nadu government released an order transferring D Kannan as the Superintendent of Police, Commercial Crimes Investigation Wing CID, Chennai, the Tamil Nadu Election Commission ordered for Kannan's suspension, "considering the gravity of the case."

In another major highlight in the case on Wednesday, 19 police officers under the Former SP Kannan , who allegedly stopped the victim on Paratur toll plaza , were mass transferred.

An official statement from the Government released on Wednesday notified the transfer of 19 police officers.

HC rejects plea to remove advocate general of TN

J.STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH. 10

The Madras high court has dismissed a petition, which sought a direction to the state government to remove senior counsel Vijay Narayan from the post of Advocate General of Tamil Nadu.

A division bench comprising Justices M.M.Sundresh and S.Ananthi dismissed the petition filed by S.Ramasubramanian, which also challenged two sets of selection of appointments of law officers to Madras high court and its bench at Madurai.

The bench said, "The prayer sought for against the office of the advocate general deserves to be rejected. As rightly submitted by the Additional advocate general, the post of the advocate general derives from the Constitution and he holds the post on the will and pleasure of Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu. We are not dealing with a writ of quo warranto. Even in which case also, the scope is extremely limited with respect to disqualification per se. There is obviously a difference between a writ of certiorari and a writ of quo warranto. We are dealing with neither of these situations. This prayer has been sought for on a mere apprehension that the office of the advocate general is also involved in the malpractice".

Originally, the petitioner has applied for the subsequent filling of the post through his application dated August 13, 2018. He was not considered for any of the posts that he applied. Now, apart from challenging the selection process, he also sought various other reliefs.

N.Subramanian, counsel for the petitioner, submitted that though the application has been made for the subsequent selection, in as much as when the earlier selection was not in accordance with law and in the event of the same being set aside, he would be in a position to be considered. There was an overwhelming public interest involved. The persons, who have no sufficient practice have been considered and appointed, he added.

Additional advocate general Jayanth Muthu Raj submitted that the petitioner cannot mix a public interest litigation with a private interest litigation.

HC takes up cause of Indian fishermen

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH. 10

The Madras high court has said without being jingoistic or parochial in the matter, every effort should be made by the Union to persuade the Sri Lankan authorities to desist from taking extreme measures in case Indian fishermen, accidentally or otherwise, stray into Sri Lankan waters.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice R.Hemalatha further said it is the same restraint which ought to be exercised by Indian authorities when it comes to Sri Lankan fishermen. At the same time, Indian fishermen should be educated and, if necessary, gadgets installed that sound

an alarm ahead of the international maritime boundary line so that accidental overstepping across the Indian waters do not take place, the bench added.

The bench made these observations while disposing of a Public Interest Litigation filed by K.K.Ramesh, which sought a direction to the Union government to instruct the authorities, (A) to arrest and cease the murder accused Sri Lankan Naval Personnel and their Naval Boat who killed 4 Indian fishermen on January 18, 2021, (B) to get compensation from the Sri Lankan government to the families of the deceased fishermen and (C) to take adequate steps to protect the Tamil Nadu Fishermen and their properties from Sri Lankan

Navy (such as boats and nets).

The bench said the matter pertains to the recent killing of four Indian fishermen who had strayed into Sri Lankan waters or, at any rate, had crossed the international maritime boundary line. A counter affidavit has been filed on behalf of the Union. Such affidavit details the diplomatic efforts undertaken to ensure that there was no recurrence of such incident. It appears that a joint working group on fisheries from the two nations met on December 30, 2020 and the entire aspect was discussed threadbare. "In view of the measures indicated in the Union's affidavit, no further steps can be suggested by the court, except as indicated above," the bench added.

Two auto drivers held for abducting, abusing minor

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH. 10

Ennore all women police arrested two autorickshaw drivers for allegedly kidnapping and sexually abusing a 14-year-old girl on March 6.

Police said the girl went missing on Saturday morning. As she did not return home for a long time, her parents lodged a missing complaint with the Ennore All Women Police.

Police registered a case and began a search for the minor girl. Meanwhile, on the same day, the police team found a girl near Athipattu Perunagar flyover in a battered condition.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the two auto rickshaw drivers in the locality , allegedly abducted and took the girl to a secluded place and committed the crime. Later they fled, said the

police.

A senior police officer said the girl knew the men since they belonged to the same locality. Based on details given by the girl, the police arrested the duo identified as, S.Azhagu Raj (33), son of Subburaj and B. Ajith (23), son of Balu, from Ennore.

They were booked under the Pocco Act, the police said. The accused were produced in a court here and later sent to prison.

Revised edition of Constitution released

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH. 10

The State Official Language (Legislative) Commission released the revised version of the Indian Constitution at a function in Chennai on Wednesday. Justice C.Nagappan, retired judge of the Supreme Court, Chairman, State Law Commission released revised edition - 2021 of the Indian Constitution.

T.S.Krishnamurthy, former Chief Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India, received the book from Justice Nagappan, who highlighted significance of translation of Laws and Acts into classical Tamil language. Krishnamurthy narrated the relation between the Supreme Court, Election Commission and the Constitution.

A. Sankaran, Member, State Official Language (Legislative) Commission, explained the circumstances leading to the formation and significance of this commis-



The State Official Language (Legislative) Commission releases the updated version of the Indian Constitution in English and Tamil in the city on Wednesday.

— DC

sion and highlighted salient features of Indian Constitution and also difficulties undergone during the pandemic in releasing the book.

Addressing the gathering Justice C.Nagappan said, "I am happy to release revised version of Constitution in English and Tamil lan-

guages. It contains updated version of Constitution which also includes recent legislation and Acts. The Constitution was creation of a drafting committee headed by Dr Ambedkar. It is the largest Constitution in the world. Justice P.Kaliyaran, Chairman of the State

Official Language (Legislative) Commission and Advocate General Vijay Narayan spoke on the occasion.

While S.Baskaran, Member of the Commission welcomed the gathering, member Secretary, B.Julia Shanthi proposed the vote of thanks.

IIT-M study points to cause of Parkinson's disease

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH. 10

A study carried out by Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M) researchers reveals that energy deficiency in certain cells in the human brain may be the major cause for Parkinson's Disease (PD). This research could lead to scientists and other stakeholders focusing on improving the efficiency of energy delivery to these cells, which might finally lead to a cure for PD.

The research was undertaken at IITM Computational Neuroscience Laboratory

with a view to building a simplified model of the whole brain and using it to develop applications in medicine and engineering. The findings have been published recently in the peer-reviewed International Journal Nature Scientific Reports

Prof. V. Srinivasa Chakravarthy, Department of Biotechnology, IIT Madras, said the PD cure is still demanding an understanding of the root-cause though existing treatments are able to manage PD symptoms. "Our study was trying to address issues on the major underlying cause of SNc cell

loss in PD. As part of the study, we developed a computational model that had shown that energy deficiency might be a major cause of substantia nigra pars compacta (SNc) cell loss in PD."

It is quite remarkable that loss of neurons in a small nucleus like SNc can have wide-ranging, devastating effects in all the four major domains of brain function including sensory-motor; cognitive, affective, and autonomous. The sequence of the three computational studies suggests that metabolic deficiency within the basal

ganglia circuit is the common underlying factor at the sub cellular, cellular, and network level in PD. Although it is known that PD is caused by the loss of dopaminergic cells in SNc, the decisive cause of this inexorable cell loss has not clearly been elucidated before. We have a reasonably comprehensive theory of the pathogenesis of Parkinson's disease', he said.

The team led by Prof. Chakravarthy now plans to develop a therapeutic computational test bench for PD, wherein the proposed model of SNc will be the centre of a larger framework.

Gold worth ₹62.35 L concealed in knee cap, socks seized at airport

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH. 10

The customs officers at the Chennai airport seized 1.35 kg gold worth ₹62.35 lakh smuggled from a passenger arrived from Dubai on Wednesday.

According to the official press release from the department, based on intelligence, Abubacker (49) of Chennai who arrived from Dubai by Emirates flight EK-542 was intercepted at the exit.

Searching him, four plas-

tic pouches containing gold in paste form , wrapped with grey adhesive tape were found concealed in his socks and two pouches were ingeniously concealed in the kneecap support worn by him.

Total six plastic pouches

of gold paste weighing 1.52 kg were recovered. On extraction 1.35 kg of 24 K purity gold valued at ₹62.35 lakh was recovered and seized under Customs Act. The passenger was arrested, the release said. Further investigation is on.

President all praise for NEP 2020

Vellore, March 10: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a well-planned and decisive step towards recovering India's legacy of rich education system described by Mahatma Gandhi as a "beautiful tree" that was felled by what the British rulers called reforms, President Ram Nath Kovind said on Wednesday.

Prior to the British rule, India had a rich system of education which Mahatma Gandhi described as a beautiful tree and one "that was cut down by what the British rulers called reforms," he said in his address at the 16th convocation of Thiruvalluvar University here

The President said the policy brought together the best of the country's ancient heritage and the best of modern learning.



President Ram Nath Kovind at the Thiruvalluvar University convocation function on Wednesday. —DC

Recalling that the university was named after "one of the greatest saint-poets and thinkers," Thiruvalluvar, Kovind said the former was

revered for his eternal messages for the welfare of entire humanity.

"Let us salute the memory of Thiruvalluvar: Let us also

resolve to imbibe his noble teachings. Let his kural (couplets) be integral parts of your education and life," he said. Vellore was also witness to "one of the first challenges to the might of the East India Company," he said referring to the Sepoy uprising of 1806 here, adding it was one of the precursors to the country's Independence movement.

Kovind told the graduating students that the country was in a 'unique position' to offer crucial lessons to the world on how to live together peacefully and nurture nature.

"As India achieves more economic growth and more equity, the world is eagerly turning to us to learn more. Each of you has the capacity to write the next chapter in this India saga," he said.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

PM URGES ALL MPs TO TAKE PART IN 'AMRIT MAHOTSAV'

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 10

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday requested MPs and all public representatives to take part in 'Amrit Mahotsav' to mark India's 75 years of Independence, which will start from March 12 in Gujarat's Sabarmati Ashram.

While addressing the BJP's parliamentary party meeting, which was held almost after a year, the PM informed that the grand festival to commemorate the 75th year of Independence will be held at 75 locations across the country for 75 weeks.

Parliamentary affairs minister Pralhad Joshi said the PM also gave a clarion call to the MPs to reach out to people and help in carrying out the Covid vaccination drive by the government.

"Prime Minister told MPs that they should act as a facilitator in the ongoing vaccination drive like by arranging vehicles for citizens to take them to the vaccination centres, helping in making arrangements at the vaccination centres and through other possible means," said the minister while briefing the media.

PRIYANKA GANDHI BROKERS DEAL WITH RJD IN ASSAM

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MARCH 10

Despite the ongoing rumbling over seat-sharing, the Congress-led grand alliance got a boost with AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi prevailing over her party to include the Rashtriya Janata Dal in the alliance by leaving Tinsukia Assembly seat in Upper Assam. The RJD will contest one seat in the first phase of the upcoming Assembly elections in the state on March 27.

"Talks are on between central leaders of the RJD and the Congress to finalise seat-sharing agreement for the second and third phase of polling."

Opposition sceptical of Didi's claim

FROM PAGE 1

Seated on the front seat of her car, Ms Banerjee, gasping for breath, told the media: "Standing beside my car, I was doing namaskar. Suddenly four or five men blocked my car. They shoved and pushed me, leaving me injured. My legs got swollen. It is paining very much."

Asked about any foul play, she added: "It was definitely a conspiracy. The attack was deliberate. No police personnel were present there. Even the SP was not there. I will lodge a complaint with the Election Commission."

Later the Chief Minister was seen being carried out by her security team from the front seat and put in the middle of the car. Without



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee holds on to her injured leg after her campaign trial at Nandigram in Purba Medinipur on Wednesday.

referring to the BJP by name, Trinamul spokesperson Kunal

Ghosh said: "Some people do not like Ms Banerjee to win again."

Questioning Ms Banerjee's version, Barrackpore MP and BJP

leader Arjun Singh wondered: "Who will attack her being the chief minister as well as the home minister of the state? How can someone attack the CM when a distance of 2 km is cleared for her movement wherever she visits? Moreover, she is a caretaker only now. If there was really any attack on her, the IPS officers in charge of her security should be suspended immediately while those who attacked her must be hanged."

He argued: "She always lies to draw sympathy which she did this time also because she knows she will lose the polls." Congress Lok Sabha leader Adhir Chowdhury also called Ms Banerjee's claims a "stunt" to swing the public mood back in her favour.

DRDO carried out 28 successful tests in last one-year

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 10

In a major boost to indigenous development in defence sector, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has carried out 28 successful tests in the last one year.

Last week DRDO had successfully carried out a flight demonstration based on Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) technology which would help in future development of Astra Mark 3 beyond visual range air to air missile, that can strike at a range of 350 kilometres. DRDO on Monday had demonstrated that it had capability to develop desi Air Independent Propulsion

(AIP) System, which increases the capability of conventional submarines to remain submerged for longer periods.

Recently DRDO has handed over a number of major weapons to armed forces which include Astra Beyond Visual Range Missile System, 10 m Short Span Bridging System, Indian Maritime Situational Awareness System (IMSAS), Heavy Weight Torpedo (HWT) Varunastra, Border Surveillance System (BOSS) and main battle tank Arjun Mk-1A.

All systems designed and developed by DRDO are manufactured by the Indian industries which includes both public and private sectors entities.

Cop involved in Ambani case shunted from crime branch

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 10

Relenting before the persistent pressure from the opposition BJP, the Maharashtra government on Wednesday announced the transfer of top police officer Sachin Vaze from the crime intelligence unit till the inquiry into the mysterious death of auto parts dealer Mansukh Hiren is completed.

According to sources, the decision to transfer was taken after NCP chief Sharad Pawar's intervention. "The state government will conduct an impartial probe into the death of Mansukh Hiren. Sachin Vaze will be removed from the crime branch till the investigation is completed. The decision has been taken owing to the repeated demand from the opposition. We

will take appropriate action against Vaze if he is involved in this case," said state home minister Anil Deshmukh in the Vidhan Parishad.

Parliamentary affairs minister Anil Parab made the same announcement in the Vidhan Sabha. "Vaze will be transferred from the crime intelligence unit. We request the opposition to hand over all evidences in their possession to the ATS which is probing the case," he said.

The BJP had demanded action on Vaze in connection with the mysterious death of Hiren, the owner of the vehicle which was found with explosives outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence on February 25. It had refused to allow the proceedings of Vidhan Sabha to function till action taken against

Vaze. The officer was allegedly in constant touch with Hiran for several months and even the said vehicle was in his possession for six months till February 5.

Hiren's wife has also accused Vaze of playing a role in the alleged murder of her husband.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, while speaking to reporters later, said that the state government has taken a serious note of Mansukh Hiren death case and action will be taken against the perpetrators.

"We cannot hang the accused first and then hold the probe. A thorough investigation will be held before taking the action," he said.

Vaze had resigned from the police department in 2007 after his prolonged suspension in connection with another custodial death case.

Jolt to Cong. in Kerala as P.C. Chacko resigns

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI / THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 10

The Congress on Wednesday received a jolt with its senior leader from the poll bound state of Kerala P.C. Chacko calling it quits from the party. He sent in his resignation to the party chief Sonia Gandhi.

He said, "I have quit Congress and sent my resignation to the party's interim chief Sonia Gandhi. I had been deliberating upon this decision for the past many days. I come from Kerala where there's no Congress party as such. There are two parties — Congress (I) and Congress (A). It's a coordination committee of two parties functioning as the Kerala Congress unit. The "A" group was headed by former chief minister Oommen Chandy and the "I" group by state chief Ramesh Chennithala and these groups had been active for many years."

He further charged the Congress of not having internal democracy.

"There is no democracy left in Congress. The list of candidates has not been discussed with the state Congress committee. There are no panels for any discussions on polls, winnability of candidates. There have always been factions in parties, even in the Congress, but there is no point anymore," he added.

The recommendations of the groups being placed at the screening committee were being meekly accepted by the central leadership. "Under these circumstances there was no point in continuing in the Congress," he said.

Chacko, however, ruled out possibility of joining the BJP. "The BJP has no future in Kerala. It is not a party that is widely acceptable among the people of Kerala," he said.

The Congress high command is already feeling the pressure from the letter writers group who wanted

CPM NAMES 83 CANDIDATES; 33 SITTING MLAS DROPPED

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 10

The ruling CPM in Kerala on Wednesday announced 83 candidates for the forthcoming Assembly polls in the state.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his seven Cabinet colleagues figured in the CPM list. In a bid to introduce fresh faces, the party took a significant decision by dropping 33 sitting MLAs including five senior ministers of the outgoing Pinarayi Vijayan ministry.

The sitting MLAs were dropped complying with the norm of keeping out legislators who had won two consecutive elections.

The five top ministers who have not been given party ticket this time are industries minister and No 2 in the outgoing Cabinet E.P. Jayarajan, finance minister Dr Thomas Isaac, Law Minister A.K. Balan, PWD minister G. Sudhakaran and education minister C. Raveendranath.

Eight members of the CPM secretariat which is the highest party body in the state, will be in the fray including Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, ministers K.K. Shailaja, T.P. Ramakrishnan and M.M. Mani, M. Govindan Master, K. Radhakrishnan, P. Rajeev, K.N. Balagopal.

change in the party and the latest allegation from Chacko has only added to its woes. His exit is a huge embarrassment for the party in the state where its top leader Rahul Gandhi is an MP.

WORLD

Protesters adapt tactics after Myanmar police use violence

Forces' crackdown has failed to slow protests against the Feb. 1 coup

Mandalay, March 10: Protesters against the military takeover in Myanmar carried homemade shields and moved with more caution and agility Tuesday, adapting their tactics to the escalating violence from security forces not reluctant to use lethal force to break up crowds.

In Mandalay, the nation's second-largest city, about a thousand demonstrators emerged onto the streets, those in the vanguard carrying shields marked with a three-fingered salute, the movement's symbol of defiance. They marched for just a few minutes before dispersing to avoid a possible confrontation with riot police. Another group made a mobile protest, driving through the streets on motorbikes.

Security forces trying to stop people from gathering have used water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets most often, but also have fired live ammunition at crowds. The crackdown has left more than 60 protesters dead but has failed to slow the widespread protests against the Feb. 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

A school principal involved in the protest movement died Tuesday from unknown causes after being



Anti-coup protesters retreat from the frontlines after discharging fire extinguishers towards a line of riot policemen in Yangon, Myanmar, on Wednesday.

ng taken into custody by security forces, according to media reports and an activist who knew him. The death of Zaw Myat Lin in custody was the second in recent days.

He was a member of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party. The deaths of Zaw Myat Lin and Khin Maung Latt, a party activist detained on Saturday night.

BIMSTEC MEET: LANKA INVITES MYANMAR FM, TRIGGERS ROW

Colombo, March 10: Sri Lanka has invited the new foreign minister of Myanmar's junta to the BIMSTEC ministerial meeting next month, triggering a controversy that it is endorsing the military coup in that nation. Sri Lanka has neither endorsed or rejected the recognition of the

military regime which topped Myanmar's elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi's government on Feb. 1, just as it was to start its second term. The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy after five decades of military rule. Sri Lanka's FM Dinesh Gunawardena invited the

military regime's FM Wunna Maung Lwin, for a virtual meeting of the FMs of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand under the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) on April 1.

ference. It is the policy of the United States to take all appropriate measures to hold accountable senior officials of the Chinese government or the Chinese Communist Party who directly interfere with the identification.

No China role in Dalai succession: US

Washington, March 10: The Chinese government should have no role in the succession process of Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, the Biden Administration said on Tuesday.

"We believe that the Chinese government should

ld have no role in the succession process of the Dalai Lama," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price told reporters at his daily news conference.

"Beijing's interference in the succession of the Panchen Lama more than 25 years ago, including by

'disappearing' the Panchen Lama as a child and attempting to replace him with a PRC (People's Republic of China) government-chosen successor, it remains an outrageous abuse of religious freedom," Price said.

Previous president Don-

ald Trump in December had signed into law a bill which called for establishing a US consulate in Tibet and building an international coalition to ensure that the next Dalai Lama is appointed solely by the Tibetan Buddhist community without China's interference.

It is the policy of the United States to take all appropriate measures to hold accountable senior officials of the Chinese government or the Chinese Communist Party who directly interfere with the identification.

Biden admin won't defend Trump immigration rule

Justice Dept also dropped objections

Chicago, March 10: A Trump-era immigration rule denying green cards to immigrants who use public benefits like food stamps was dealt fatal blows Tuesday after the Biden administration dropped legal challenges, including before the Supreme Court.

Continuing to defend the rule "is neither in the public interest nor an efficient use of limited government resources," the US Department of Homeland Security said in a statement. The Supreme Court won't weigh in on the legality of the so-called public charge rule because of an agreement by the Biden administration and the parties and states challenging it.

The Justice Department also dropped objections to a ruling before the 7th US Circuit Court of Appeals, upholding a federal judge's November order striking down the rule nationwide. The moves were the latest outgrowth of the Biden administration's effort to undo Trump administration immigration policies. The new administration recently dismissed high court appeals over former President Donald Trump's effort to deny funding to so-called sanctuary communities.

The justices, at the administration's request, also put off cases they had agreed to hear over the funding of por-

tions of the wall along the border with Mexico and the policy of forcing asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for their hearings. Immigrant rights advocates celebrated Tuesday's court action on the public charge rule after years of complex legal battles in multiple states. While Trump's administration touted the rule first proposed in 2018 as a way to ensure only those who are self-sufficient come to the US, immigrant rights advocates said it amounted to a "wealth test" and public health experts said it would lead to poorer health outcomes.

"After four years of fighting the rule, from the first time it was officially announced, it is officially dead," said Aaron Reichlin-Melnick with the American Immigration Council. The high court had in late February agreed to hear a Trump administration appeal, first filed last year, of a lower court ruling against the public charge rule.

It allows the denial of permanent residency status to immigrants because of their use of food stamps, Medicaid, housing vouchers or other public benefits. The justices had agreed to hear the case even as President Joe Biden called for a "top-to-bottom" review of the rule.

On Tuesday, however, the

Biden administration withdrew the appeal, saying all parties involved agreed to dismiss the case. The administration took similar action before the appeals court in Chicago. After US District Judge Gary Feinerman's ruling striking down the rule on poll eve, US Citizenship and Immigration Services ceased applying it to all pending applications and petitions across the country.

But it changed course on Election Day after the federal appeals court allowed the rule reinstated while it considered the case. Immigrant groups opposed to the policy said that the agreement Tuesday cleared "the way at last for this unlawful rule to no longer be enforced." Previously, the Supreme Court had divided 5-4 over allowing the policy to take effect while the legal challenge continued. That legal challenge involved New York, Connecticut, Vermont, New York City and several organizations. "We dismissed this case and restored the preliminary injunction that ensures that those living in New York and in other states do not have to choose between their immigration status and securing the necessary support to survive," said New York Attorney General Letitia James in a statement.

PAK HC REJECTS PLEA AGAINST GILANI POLL WIN

Islamabad, March 10: The Islamabad High Court on Wednesday rejected a petition by Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party challenging former premier Yusuf Raza Gilani's upset win in the Senate elections, ruling that it was not appropriate to "unnecessarily drag" the judiciary in political matters.

Gilani, who contested the Senate election as a Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)

candidate, defeated ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate and Finance Minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh by securing 169 votes against 164 votes by Shaikh on Wednesday, giving a major blow to Prime Minister Imran Khan who had personally campaigned for his Cabinet colleague.

The Opposition had demanded the prime minister's resignation after the debacle following which

Khan decided to take a vote of confidence on Saturday which he won comfortably. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) heard a plea by PTI lawmaker Ali Nawaz, who alleged that Gilani, 68, was elected through vote-buying.

IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah after hearing initial arguments directed the petitioner to use the platform of the Election Commission of Pakistan where the case is already under hearing.—PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,279.51	0.50
Nifty 50	15,174.80	0.51
S&P 500*	3,900.17	0.64
Dollar (₹)	72.91	0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.12	0.22
Euro (₹)	86.63	0.24
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,286▲112	0.25
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	67.85	0.49
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.247	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.540	-0.004

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Telecos can instal only govt approved gears

The amended telecom licence norms will enable the government to control the installation of network equipment from non-trusted sources. With effect from June 15, telecom operators will be required to take permission from the National Cyber Security Coordinator (NCSC) for up-gradation of existing networks. The NCSC can impose conditions for the procurement of telecom equipment.

Over 1.54 L gram panchayats have high-speed net



Over 1.54 lakh gram panchayats are now ready to provide high-speed broadband services under the BharatNet project, telecom minister Ravi Shankar Prasad informed Parliament. Out of 5,97,618 inhabited villages in the country, a total of 5,58,537 villages have 3G or 4G mobile wireless coverage. BharatNet project is being implemented to connect all the GPs (about 2.5 lakh) by broadband/high-speed infra, he said.

Easy Trip Planners IPO subscribed 159 times

Easy Trip Planners' initial public offering was subscribed 159.33 times on the last day of subscription. The Rs 510-crore issue received bids for over 240.27 crore shares against more than 1.50 crore shares on offer. The category meant for qualified institutional buyers (QIBs) was subscribed 77.53 times, while those for non-institutional investors 382.21 times and retail individual investors 70.40 times.

Joyalukkas, IBM tie up for e-com in 11 countries

Joyalukkas, a leading jewellery retailer, has collaborated with IBM Global Business Services to design, develop and deploy a new cloud native e-commerce platform across 11 countries, including the UAE, USA, UK, Singapore, Malaysia, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman. IBM has developed for Joyalukkas a cloud enabled e-commerce platform for the retailer's evolving jewellery business.

Printed & Published by K Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed & Published at Deccan Chronicle Presses situated at SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Reg. No. TNENG/2008/25473 Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle is prohibited.

■ Restrictions on bank end after 4 years

IDBI Bank out of PCA framework

FALAKNAAZ SYED

MUMBAI, MARCH 10

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday announced that it has decided to take LIC-owned IDBI Bank out of its prompt corrective action (PCA) framework following an improvement in its financial performance.

This follows a review of IDBI Bank by the Board for Financial Supervision in its meeting held on February 18, the RBI said.

IDBI Bank was placed under the PCA framework in 2017 over its high bad loans and negative return on assets.

In the latest quarter, as of December 31, 2020, IDBI Bank's gross bad loans stood at 23.52 per cent of gross advances.

"The performance of IDBI Bank Limited, currently under the Prompt Corrective Action Framework (PCAF) of RBI, was reviewed by the Board for Financial Supervision (BFS) in its meeting held on February 18, 2021," the apex bank said in a release.

"It was noted that as per published results for the quarter ending December 31, 2020 the bank is not in breach of the PCA parameters on regulatory capital, Net NPA and Leverage ratio," the RBI said.

The central bank said that IDBI Bank has provided a written commitment that it would comply with the norms of minimum regulatory capital, Net NPA and Leverage ratio on an ongoing basis and has



- ▶ IDBI Bank was placed under the PCA framework in 2017 over its high bad loans and negative return on assets
- ▶ The bank has met three out of four key criteria needed to exit the PCA
- ▶ Its net NPA has stayed under 6% for 5 quarters

apprised the central bank of the structural and systemic improvements that it has put in place which would help the bank in continuing to meet these commitments.

"Taking all the above into consideration, it has been decided that IDBI Bank Limited be taken out of the PCA framework, subject to certain conditions and continuous monitoring," the RBI said.

The bank has met three out of four key criteria needed to exit the PCA. Its net NPA has remained under 6 per cent for five consecutive quarters, capital adequacy ratio has remained above the regulatory minimum of 11.5 per cent for five quarters with Tier 1 capital ratio above 8

per cent. Its leverage ratio stood at 5.71 per cent at the end of the third quarter, above the 4 per cent threshold under the PCA.

Under the PCA framework, the RBI takes regulatory action if a bank overshoots the prescribed limits on bad loans or fails to comply with capital adequacy ratios. In simple terms, if the financial and operating indicators of a bank weaken below a prescribed level, the PCA could be triggered where the RBI may require a bank to take mandatory corrective actions such as raising capital levels, restricting dividend payments, and restricting branch expansions or face restrictions on management compensation, among other measures.

Arunachalam moves NCLT against Murugappa

FC BUREAU

CHENNAI, MARCH 10

Continuing her fight against the Rs 38,000-crore Murugappa Group, Valli Arunachalam, daughter of former Murugappa Group chairman M.V. Murugappan, has approached the NCLT Chennai, seeking a waiver of the minimum shareholding requirement for filing a case against the group for alleged mismanagement and oppression.

Her family owns 8.21 per cent in Ambadi Investments, the flagship company of Murugappa Group. But only a party with at least 10 per cent shareholding can move a case on grounds of oppression and mismanagement.

If the waiver is granted, Arunachalam can sue group holding company Ambadi Investments for alleged oppression and mismanagement. Earlier, she had sent a legal notice to Murugappa family members after she was denied a board seat at Ambadi Investments.

Murugappa Group is a family-run business conglomerate that never had a female member from the family on the board. Arunachalam has been fighting for this for the last three years.

Arunachalam's plea for equal representation in the company's affairs has been denied since her father's demise a few years back.

Malls set to sport Trusted Shopping Centre mark

SANGEETHA G

CHENNAI, MARCH 10

If all goes according to the designs of a shopping centres' body, malls and shopping centres that comply with standard safety and hygiene standards will soon sport a 'Trusted Shopping Centre' tag, which will help customers to step into the complex with confidence.

The Shopping Centres Association of India (SCAI) has launched a certification programme for malls and shopping centres, but all the retailers are very enthusiastic about the proposal fearing high compliance cost.

The association has launched consumer-centric certification under the existing IRF Trusted Mark Certification scheme, which is a third-party certification on cus-



tomers service metrics and benchmarks, and will be audited by National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies under the Quality Council of India.

The certification scheme will incorporate 'new normal' checklists like compliance of safety and hygiene measures by retailers and shopping centres. These checklists will be based on guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and standard operating procedures (SOPs) specifically devel-

oped by respective trade bodies for retailers across all formats, categories and channels.

"The Indian market has 650 large and over 1,000 small shopping centres offering organised retail environment to shoppers and this 'Trusted Shopping Centre' mark certification...has been introduced to step ahead in setting global best practices towards customer services," said Amitabh Taneja, chairman, SCAI.

But some retailers don't find value in the certification. "All the retailers in a mall will have to adhere to the standards. There will also be a cost involved in getting the certification. I don't think customers come to a mall on the basis of certification. We don't see much value in it," said a retail chain executive.

NTPC's 217 MW floating solar plants by June

FC BUREAU

HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

State-run power major NTPC's southern region is gearing up to commission about 217 MW floating solar capacity, including floating plants of 100 MW at Ramagundam, this summer, a senior official said on Wednesday.

In a virtual interaction, NTPC regional executive director (south) C. V. Anand said, the capacity involves three projects in the region; "100 MW at Ramagundam, 25 MW at Simhadri, Visakhapat-



nam, 92 MW at Kayamkulam, Kerala. So, these are the floating solar we have taken up right now," he said.

A 230 MW ground solar project is also being established at Ettayapuram near Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu, according to a com-

pany release.

"Time schedule for floating solar is somewhere this financial year beginning, say May-June; by the time this all will be commissioned," Anand said.

Floating solar, he said, is a new concept and it does not require additional land.

He said the projects utilise existing water reservoirs of the company at its plants.

NTPC said the company has a significant presence in the southern region with a total installed capacity of 9125 MW.

PV sales jump 18% in Feb.; robust FY22 growth seen

MICHAEL GONSALVES

PUNE, MARCH 10

Passenger vehicle sales rose 17.92 per cent to 2,81,380 units in February as compared with same month last year, auto industry body Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, or Siam, said on Wednesday. Despatches of vehicles from factory gates to dealerships are counted as sales in India.

Passenger vehicle wholesales in February last year stood at 2,38,622 units.

The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations, or Fada, on Tuesday, said the passenger vehicles sales had showed a double-digit, year-on-year growth at 10.59 per cent to 2,54,058 units. This growth was mainly due to the low base of last year as India had started transitioning from BS-4 to BS-6 emission norms, it had said.

The Siam said two-wheeler dispatches to dealers in the country also increased 10.2 per cent to 14,26,865 units, compared to 12,94,787 units in February 2020.



Motorcycle sales last month increased 11.47 per cent to 9,10,323 units against 8,16,679 in February 2020.

Scooter sales were also up 10.9 per cent at 4,64,744 units from 4,22,168 units a year ago.

Three-wheeler sales, however, declined by 33.82 per cent to 27,331 units compared with 41,300 units a year ago.

The Fada said registration of two-wheelers and three-wheelers year-on-year fell by 16 per cent and 49.65 per cent, respectively.

According to Siam, vehicle sales across categories rose by 10.21 per cent to 17,35,584 units last month against 15,74,764 units in the year-ago period.

Crisil Research said after two years of slug-

gishness, India's automobile sector is set to post double-digit growth next fiscal, supported by improving economic growth and personal incomes.

Passenger vehicles, two-wheelers and commercial vehicles are expected to see 23-25 per cent, 18-20 per cent and 34-36 per cent volume growth, respectively, next fiscal, compared with contractions of -3.5 per cent, -12.14 per cent and -19.21 per cent, respectively, in the current fiscal, it pointed out.

Says Pushan Sharma, associate director, Crisil Research, "Our analysis of 800 listed companies shows salary cuts made in the first quarter of this fiscal have largely been restored by the manufacturing sector, while the IT sector is continuing to offer raises. Consequently, sentiment among urban consumers, who account for a crucial 65 per cent of passenger vehicle sales and 40 per cent of two-wheeler sales, has improved. This, and buoyancy in rural income, augur well."

US ban on Chinese cotton opens long-term opportunity for India

SANGEETHA G

CHENNAI, MARCH 10

The US ban on import of cotton from China's Xinjiang has opened up an opportunity for Indian cotton products. However, import duty on cotton and delay in announcing RoDTEP rates is affecting the competitiveness of Indian cotton products in the global market.

The US had announced an import ban on all cotton and tomato products from western China's Xinjiang region in January over allegations that they are made using forced labour of detained Uighur Muslims. Xinjiang accounts for 60 per cent of China's cotton products exports. China has a leading 36 per cent share of global textile exports and the ban will have a major impact on Chinese exports.

"This is a big opportunity for other textile exporters, including India. India being a strong player in cotton, it has to grab this opportunity, else it will lose out to countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam," said Kailash Lalpuria, executive direc-



tor and CEO, Indo Count.

According to Sanjay Jain, an industry veteran, garments and home textiles stand to gain from China's loss. We have a potential to double the exports of value-added cotton products. We will have to invest in world-class manufacturing facilities and increase capacities to grab this opportunity. Increased investments in garment units will help increase production in six months," he said.

However, Indian cotton products are not competitive enough in the global market and the recently imposed import duty on raw cotton has made domestic products even more costly. The recent Budget had imposed 5 per cent basic customs duty and another 5 per cent Agriculture Infrastructure

and Development Cess on cotton.

The cotton textile industry has to import extra long staple (ELS) cotton, organic cotton and contamination-free cotton to the tune of 10 to 12 lakh bales per year. India produces just 3 per cent of its consumption and has to import the deficit to meet the consumption requirements.

"This imported cotton is used for making premium products with high levels of value addition. Increase in the raw material cost will make our products costlier compared to that of our competitors," said Lalpuria.

Further, exporters are not able to price in refund under the RoDTEP scheme in their products, as the rates have not been announced. "The previous MEIS scheme was stopped and the RoDTEP scheme was introduced on January 1, 2021. It has been more than two months now and the government has not announced the rates for different products. Without knowing the rates, we are not able to quote the prices," said Jain.

QUANTITY | PLAY

High share of raw materials in exports trimming realisation

Plastic exports lag in value addition

SANGEETHA G

CHENNAI, MARCH 10

In plastic exports, India has been able to grab a slot in the top-10 global ranking in volume terms. However, its ranking falls into the top-20 when it comes to value of trade, indicating a huge gap in value addition. Industry experts say a high share of raw materials in exports is the main reason for India's lower ranking in value terms.

The country occupies seventh position in the global ranking behind major exporters like China, the US and Germany in plastic goods shipping when considered volume-wise. But in value of exports, the



country drops steeply to the 18th position, according to a study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, or Unctad.

The lag in value compared to volume is prominent in intermediate forms of plastics, intermediate manufactured goods, final manufactured goods and synthetic textiles. In the case of

intermediate forms of plastics, it is 6th in volume of exports but 15th in value.

"The problem lies in value addition. While our total exports are valued over \$11 billion, almost \$6 billion comes from export of raw materials and about \$5.5 billion from finished goods. When more than 50 per cent of our exports consist of

raw materials, their trade will fetch lesser value compared to countries which ship finished goods," said Deepak Ballani, director general of All-India Plastic Manufacturers' Association.

According to Ballani, the industry understands that it should focus on value addition, as it brings better revenues for the exported goods as well as create more jobs. "However, we are not able to compete with countries like China, which can churn out products much faster than us."

There are over 50,000 units producing plastic products and 95 per cent of them are micro, small and medium enterprises.

Procuring the latest technology both in terms of software and equipment is a pain point for these smaller companies. Further, they are not able to attract adequate finance for adapting the latest technologies and scaling up production.

Moreover, better prices in the international market forces the raw material and intermediate product makers to rather export their goods than sell them locally to the manufacturer of finished goods.

Higher duty on some of the raw materials is also affecting the competitiveness of the manufacturer of finished goods. The pandemic has further worsened the shortage of raw materials.

INDIAN TECH STOCKS PLAY CATCH WITH US TECH RALLY



RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

MUMBAI, MARCH 10

Indian tech stocks rallied on Wednesday after mammoth overnight gains of 3.69 per cent in the US tech stock index Nasdaq Composite and 4.03 per cent in Nasdaq 100, as US bond yields trended lower after a well-received US debt auction and the path cleared for a \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill.

IT stocks outperformed Sensex and Nifty's gain of 0.5 per cent. The BSE IT Index gained 1.58 per cent while NSE's Nifty IT Index gained 1.67 per cent.

Mid-cap IT stocks gained more than the large-cap IT names.

The top gainers among Nifty IT Index were L&T Infotech (6.30 per cent), Coforge (earlier NIIT Technologies) (5.82 per cent), Mindtree (5.38 per cent) and Mphasis (3.43 per cent).

The large-cap gainers included Wipro (1.57 per cent), Infosys (1.56 per cent) and HCL Technologies (1.42 per cent).

"With Technology stocks doing well on the Nasdaq stock market, the day clearly belonged to Midcap IT as the street demonstrated increased appetite today for Technology," said S. Ranganathan, head of research, LKP Securities.

"Global cues were positive as bond yields pulled back following a well-received US debt auction, thus easing concerns about rising inflation. The US House of Representatives voted to advance President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill, clearing the way for the measure to be considered on Wednesday, when it is expected to pass," said Siddhartha Khemka, head-retail research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

SHORT TAKES

Sharath crashes out in quarters

Doha: Veteran Sharath Kamal bowed out of the World Table Tennis Star Contender series after going down in straight games to World No. 12 Dmitrij Ovtcharov in the men's singles pre-quarterfinals here on Wednesday. Sharath, ranked 32nd, lost 9-11 8-11, 6-11 to the German in a lop-sided contest. Sharath showed consistency in the first game against Dmitrij, who recently won the WTT Contenders title, and came close. But he could never get under the skin of a man who was in superb form. He looked good again the second but could not overcome the blues. In the end, the third game was so easy for the German that he didn't need to make any extra effort to complete the task. Dmitrij will take on Swede Anton Kallberg in the quarterfinals on Thursday. — PTI

Mohammedan SC held by Punjab

Kolkata: Punjab FC snatched a remarkable 3-3 draw after Mohammedan SC scored two goals in as many minutes in the second half in a thrilling I-League clash here on Wednesday. Chencho Gleytshen's brace was cancelled out by Faisal Ali and Pedro Manzi strikes in the second half. Azharuddin Malik then gave Mohammedan the lead again only for Ashish Jha to score the equaliser for Punjab in the 88th minute. Punjab FC showed intent and played like they had to prove something, in the opening minutes of the match. — PTI

Regd. No.
TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by
K. Sudhakar on behalf of
Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited
and Printed at
Deccan Chronicle Presses situated
at SP 3, Developed Plot, Industrial Estate,
Guindy, Chennai - 600 032.
RNI Registration No: TN ENG/2005/14987
Ph Nos: 22254747, 22254748, 22254750,
22254751
Editor: KAUSHIK MITTER

RENAISSANCE

Narain's dream of racing in Le Mans takes rebirth

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR
CHENNAI, MARCH 10

It's a painful memory. However, Narain Karthikeyan can't help but laugh at his own misfortune whenever he recalls his first experience at the prestigious 24 Hours of Le Mans in 2009. A freakish injury had ruled Narain out of the French endurance race with just a few minutes to go for the start.

After parking his machine on the starting grid, Narain had jumped the pit-wall in an attempt to take a shortcut to the restroom, only to slip and dislocate his shoulder. He ended up being a spectator, with a sling on, as his teammates finished a creditable seventh.

"I will not go to the toilet for a week," laughed Narain as he confirmed Racing Team India's entry in the 2021 Le Mans on Wednesday.

The 24 hours of Le Mans to be held in August is an iconic event on the international motorsport calendar. Along with Indy 500 and the Monaco Grand Prix, the French event is among the crown jewels of racing.

The 44-year-old from Coimbatore, with almost three decades of experience, can't wait to jump into the car. 23-year-old Arjun Maini and San Diego-based techie-turned-racer Naveen Rao are his teammates.

"With an all-Indian team, it has turned out to be a dream project. Now, I think, a lot of people are



Narain Karthikeyan

aware of Le Mans after the release of the *Ford vs Ferrari* movie," he said.

After finishing the 2019 season on a high with a stellar win in SuperGT, Narain had an opportunity to continue his racing profession in Japan for the eighth year

in a row, but the Covid-19 travel restrictions wreaked havoc on his plans.

For someone who began travelling as a teen and spent the next two decades criss-crossing the world, the lockdown proved to be a big challenge. "In 2019, I did 32

To put Narain's longevity into perspective; his teammate Arjun wasn't even born when Narain won the Formula Asia title in 1996.

trips to Japan. At the beginning of the lockdown, it was okay. The whole world had come to a standstill and I had no complaints. Then, my mind started playing games. I had to do something because calling it a day was never an option. But I definitely wanted to cut down the programme," he explained.

"I know, I am not getting younger. And, I have other priorities as well. I have to balance my racing career, my family life and business. I like taking up new challenges and the Le Mans presents a great opportunity," he said.

To put Narain's longevity into perspective; his teammate Arjun wasn't even born when Narain won the Formula Asia title in 1996. So what keeps him going?

"I really don't know how to put it in words. My life has always revolved around racing. I recently underwent a fitness assessment under Ramji Srinivasan (strength and conditioning coach of India's 2011 World Cup winning team). He told me that my reflexes are as good as they were 10 years ago. In terms of speed, I feel I am still competitive," added Narain.

VARUN FAILS FITNESS TEST, INJURED NATARAJAN IS AT NCA

Ahmedabad, March 10: Leg-spinner Varun Chakravathy's failure to clear fitness tests has ruled him out while pacer T. Natarajan is racing against time to be battle-ready, making him doubtful for at least the early part of India's five-match

T20 series against England starting here on Friday.

Chakravathy has repeatedly failed to clear the fitness test at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru while yorker specialist Natarajan is yet to join the

squad here due to an apparent "shoulder niggle".

"Chakravathy was selected because he recovered from his shoulder injury that ruled him out of the Australia series. He did his rehab at the NCA and started throwing nor-

mally. However, he has failed to clear the YoYo test mark stipulated for a 2km run at least twice," a senior BCCI source said.

The question now being asked is why did the Chetan Sharma led committee select such a player, who, after the month of

October, hasn't played even one competitive game for his state Tamil Nadu. "How do you assess his match fitness based on games that he played five months back? I guess Varun Chakravathy is a lesson for selectors," said the source. — PTI

COFFEE-BREAK

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



Aries: Try connecting with people who can help you in your career. Work hard to ensure some of your plans are realised. Avoid telling others how to do their jobs.



Taurus: Chance encounters with influential people result in good outcomes. Expect some improvement. A problem with parents or family elders will sort out for good.



Gemini: Today's not favourable for gambling. Money-wise, you're not in a hurry, mainly because you have confronted your position and know exactly how you must proceed.



Cancer: Money and career matters dominate today, with emphasis on money, loans and investments. Career fetches high momentum. Creativity is more effective.



Leo: Problems with siblings, friends or neighbours may get you emotional; adopt a practical approach. Today emphasise on business, career, success and personal objectives.



Virgo: Your family relationships may sour suddenly. Avoid contradictory issues tactfully. Focus on work, so it bears fruits in the end. Social activities increase. Your personal objectives move forward.

You share your b'day with

Anton Yelchin is an American actor. He is known for his roles in the films like *Star Trek*, *Taken*, *Huff*, *5 to 7*, *Fright Night*, *Hearts in Atlantis*, *Green Room* amongst others. He also voiced *Clumsy Smurf* in the *Smurfs* films.



Libra: Expect short trips to meet relatives, catch up on personal correspondence, add to your knowledge or attend seminars. You'd join a club or begin a hobby.



Scorpio: Expect minor blocks in money dealings; analyse big monetary dealings carefully. Don't gamble too much today. Expect minor health problems today.



Sagittarius: Work hard with persistence, and clarity brings better results. Today marks prosperity, advancement and progress. Shelved travel plans revive.



Capricorn: Expect problems with health, children, acquaintances and finances. Marital issues, finances, education and health are focal points today. You'd be involved in educational projects.



Aquarius: Check what changes brighten your surroundings. Recovering pending dues may improve monetary health. Love life brings happiness. Money inflow remains better than expected.



Pisces: Communication is better at home and at work. Job position shows progress. You'd focus on education, travel, and financial matters. Avoid promising more than you can deliver.



bridge
PHILLIP
ALDER

MISLEAD PARTNER AND DECLARER

Fan Lebowitz said, "Remember that as a teenager you are in the last stage of your life when you will be happy to hear that the phone is for you."

It was once believed that a teenager would never win an open world bridge championship. But it happened back in 2013, when Michal Klukowski from Poland captured the Rosenblum Cup at the age of 17. Two years later, he won the Bermuda Bowl, the most presti-

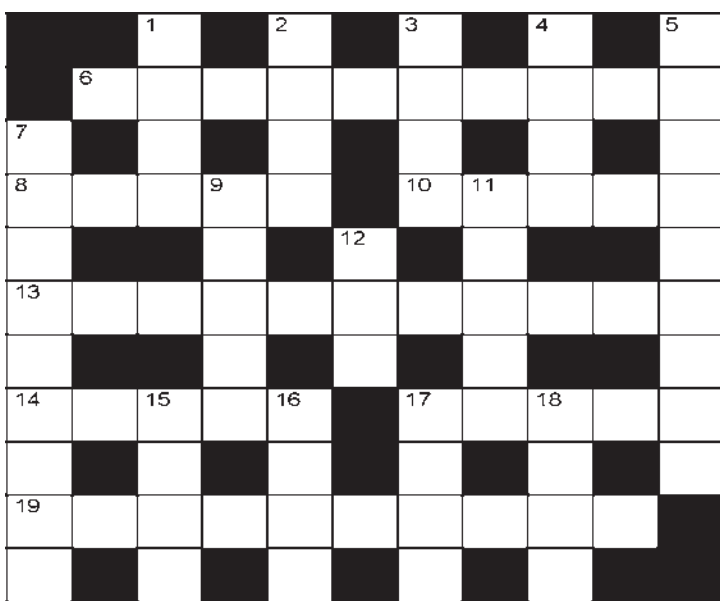
gious world title.

Klukowski surely would have found the best defense on this deal. What happens in four hearts after West leads the spade ace?

North's two-spade cue-bid announced a heart fit and at least game-invitational values (at most eight losers).

When the deal was originally played, the first trick went spade ace, four, two, six. Then came the spade king; jack, three, nine. For want of any-

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across
6. Naval vessel (10)
8. Stock market collapse (5)
10. Prize open (5)
13. Forerunner (11)
14. Auctioneer's hammer (5)
17. Complete reversal (1,4)
19. Miss Bengal (anag) (10)

Down
1. Heroic tale (4)

2. Hankering (4)
3. Coral bank (4)
4. Blacken (4)
5. Coming out (9)
7. One taking blame for others (9)
9. Wetland plant (5)
11. Beginning (5)
12. Pretend (3)
15. Flower holder (4)
16. Citrus fruit (4)
17. Hideous (4)
18. Arm bone (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Varies, 3. Snag, 7. Cube, 8. Bureau, 10. Sloping, 13. Pannier, 16. Oyster, 17. File, 18. Dare, 19. Mantis.
Down: 1. Vice, 2. Rubble, 4. Need, 5. Grubby, 6. Running, 9. Apparel, 11. Second, 12. Resist, 14. User, 15. Pegs.

Word Mine

T
O E G
R R E P A

TODAY'S RATINGS: 30 AVERAGE; 35 GOOD; 40 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

Dealer: South
Vulnerable: East-West
North: 1H, 2H, 3H, 4H, 5H, 6H, 7H, 8H, 9H, 10H, 11H, 12H, 13H, 14H, 15H, 16H, 17H, 18H, 19H, 20H, 21H, 22H, 23H, 24H, 25H, 26H, 27H, 28H, 29H, 30H, 31H, 32H, 33H, 34H, 35H, 36H, 37H, 38H, 39H, 40H, 41H, 42H, 43H, 44H, 45H, 46H, 47H, 48H, 49H, 50H, 51H, 52H, 53H, 54H, 55H, 56H, 57H, 58H, 59H, 60H, 61H, 62H, 63H, 64H, 65H, 66H, 67H, 68H, 69H, 70H, 71H, 72H, 73H, 74H, 75H, 76H, 77H, 78H, 79H, 80H, 81H, 82H, 83H, 84H, 85H, 86H, 87H, 88H, 89H, 90H, 91H, 92H, 93H, 94H, 95H, 96H, 97H, 98H, 99H, 100H, 101H, 102H, 103H, 104H, 105H, 106H, 107H, 108H, 109H, 110H, 111H, 112H, 113H, 114H, 115H, 116H, 117H, 118H, 119H, 120H, 121H, 122H, 123H, 124H, 125H, 126H, 127H, 128H, 129H, 130H, 131H, 132H, 133H, 134H, 135H, 136H, 137H, 138H, 139H, 140H, 141H, 142H, 143H, 144H, 145H, 146H, 147H, 148H, 149H, 150H, 151H, 152H, 153H, 154H, 155H, 156H, 157H, 158H, 159H, 160H, 161H, 162H, 163H, 164H, 165H, 166H, 167H, 168H, 169H, 170H, 171H, 172H, 173H, 174H, 175H, 176H, 177H, 178H, 179H, 180H, 181H, 182H, 183H, 184H, 185H, 186H, 187H, 188H, 189H, 190H, 191H, 192H, 193H, 194H, 195H, 196H, 197H, 198H, 199H, 200H, 201H, 202H, 203H, 204H, 205H, 206H, 207H, 208H, 209H, 210H, 211H, 212H, 213H, 214H, 215H, 216H, 217H, 218H, 219H, 220H, 221H, 222H, 223H, 224H, 225H, 226H, 227H, 228H, 229H, 230H, 231H, 232H, 233H, 234H, 235H, 236H, 237H, 238H, 239H, 240H, 241H, 242H, 243H, 244H, 245H, 246H, 247H, 248H, 249H, 250H, 251H, 252H, 253H, 254H, 255H, 256H, 257H, 258H, 259H, 260H, 261H, 262H, 263H, 264H, 265H, 266H, 267H, 268H, 269H, 270H, 271H, 272H, 273H, 274H, 275H, 276H, 277H, 278H, 279H, 280H, 281H, 282H, 283H, 284H, 285H, 286H, 287H, 288H, 289H, 290H, 291H, 292H, 293H, 294H, 295H, 296H, 297H, 298H, 299H, 300H, 301H, 302H, 303H, 304H, 305H, 306H, 307H, 308H, 309H, 310H, 311H, 312H, 313H, 314H, 315H, 316H, 317H, 318H, 319H, 320H, 321H, 322H, 323H, 324H, 325H, 326H, 327H, 328H, 329H, 330H, 331H, 332H, 333H, 334H, 335H, 336H, 337H, 338H, 339H, 340H, 341H, 342H, 343H, 344H, 345H, 346H, 347H, 348H, 349H, 350H, 351H, 352H, 353H, 354H, 355H, 356H, 357H, 358H, 359H, 360H, 361H, 362H, 363H, 364H, 365H, 366H, 367H, 368H, 369H, 370H, 371H, 372H, 373H, 374H, 375H, 376H, 377H, 378H, 379H, 380H, 381H, 382H, 383H, 384H, 385H, 386H, 387H, 388H, 389H, 390H, 391H, 392H, 393H, 394H, 395H, 396H, 397H, 398H, 399H, 400H, 401H, 402H, 403H, 404H, 405H, 406H, 407H, 408H, 409H, 410H, 411H, 412H, 413H, 414H, 415H, 416H, 417H, 418H, 419H, 420H, 421H, 422H, 423H, 424H, 425H, 426H, 427H, 428H, 429H, 430H, 431H, 432H, 433H, 434H, 435H, 436H, 437H, 438H, 439H, 440H, 441H, 442H, 443H, 444H, 445H, 446H, 447H, 448H, 449H, 450H, 451H, 452H, 453H, 454H, 455H, 456H, 457H, 458H, 459H, 460H, 461H, 462H, 463H, 464H, 465H, 466H, 467H, 468H, 469H, 470H, 471H, 472H, 473H, 474H, 475H, 476H, 477H, 478H, 479H, 480H, 481H, 482H, 483H, 484H, 485H, 486H, 487H, 488H, 489H, 490H, 491H, 492H, 493H, 494H, 495H, 496H, 497H, 498H, 499H, 500H, 501H, 502H, 503H, 504H, 505H, 506H, 507H, 508H, 509H, 510H, 511H, 512H, 513H, 514H, 515H, 516H, 517H, 518H, 519H, 520H, 521H, 522H, 523H, 524H, 525H, 526H, 527H, 528H, 529H, 530H, 531H, 532H, 533H, 534H, 535H, 536H, 537H, 538H, 539H, 540H, 541H, 542H, 543H, 544H, 545H, 546H, 547H, 548H, 549H, 550H, 551H, 552H, 553H, 554H, 555H, 556H, 557H, 558H, 559H, 560H, 561H, 562H, 563H, 564H, 565H, 566H, 567H, 568H, 569H, 570H, 571H, 572H, 573H, 574H, 575H, 576H, 577H, 578H, 579H, 580H, 581H, 582H, 583H, 584H, 585H, 586H, 587H, 588H, 589H, 590H, 591H, 592H, 593H, 594H, 595H, 596H, 597H, 598H, 599H, 600H, 601H, 602H, 603H, 604H, 605H, 606H, 607H, 608H, 609H, 610H, 611H, 612H, 613H, 614H, 615H, 616H, 617H, 618H, 619H, 620H, 621H, 622H, 623H, 624H, 625H, 626H, 627H, 628H, 629H, 630H, 631H, 632H, 633H, 634H, 635H, 636H, 637H, 638H, 639H, 640H, 641H, 642H, 643H, 644H, 645H, 646H, 647H, 648H, 649H, 650H, 651H, 652H, 653H, 654H, 655H, 656H, 657H, 658H, 659H, 660H, 661H, 662H, 663H, 664H, 665H, 666H, 667H, 668H, 669H, 670H, 671H, 672H, 673H, 674H, 675H, 676H, 677H, 678H, 679H, 680H, 681H, 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