

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | WEDNESDAY 24 | MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 33°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Panguni 11
Tithi: Ekadashi
Star: Pusam
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
Yamagandam: 7.30 am to 9 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 6.11 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 2.16 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 3.27 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+47,014)	(+275)
1,17,33,369	1,60,475

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,437)
TN: 8,69,804 12,618

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

12,45,96,272

DEATHS

27,40,161

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

West Bengal Guv says concerned about political violence ahead of polls

Kolkata: Expressing anguish over incidents of violence in the run-up to the West Bengal Assembly elections, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday asked the police and administration to remain politically neutral. "Anguished and concerned at violence @MamataOfficial in Election process. Democracy has no meaning without fair elections," he said on Twitter.

Police: 10 people killed in Colorado supermarket shooting

Boulder (Colorado): A shooting at a Colorado supermarket killed 10 people Monday, including a police officer who was the first to respond to the scene, authorities said. Police arrested a suspect, but didn't reveal his name or any details about the shooting at an evening news conference where Boulder police Chief Maris Herold fought back tears.

COUNTER POINT



Congrats! You are selected for best actor award for your performance during polls!

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Good response for Cong from public, says Dutt



Israelis return to polling station to decide Netanyahu's fate

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Cornwall blasts WI back into contention



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COVID-19

UNHRC adopts resolution against SL's rights record

■ In balancing act, India abstains from crucial vote

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/GENEVA, MARCH 23

In a setback to Sri Lanka, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva on Tuesday adopted a resolution titled "Promotion of Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka" against the country's human rights record with 22 out of the 47 countries supporting the resolution and 11 opposing it, with 14 countries including India abstaining from the voting.

Asserting its support to both "the Tamils of Sri Lanka for equality, justice, dignity and peace" and also "ensuring the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka", India said "these two goals are mutually supportive and Sri Lanka's progress is best assured by simultaneously addressing both objectives" while urging "the government of Sri Lanka to carry



U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet

forward the process of reconciliation, address the aspirations of the Tamil community and continue to engage constructively with the international community to ensure that the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all its citizens are fully protected".

Striking a balance in its explanation of vote (EoV) statement, India "supported the call by the international community for the government of Sri Lanka to fulfill its commitments on the devolution of political authority... in accordance with the 13th amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution" while at the same

time making it clear that the "the work of the (UN's) Office of the High Commissioner, Human Rights (OHCHR) should be in conformity with mandate given by the relevant resolutions of the UN General Assembly". The 13th amendment in Sri Lanka stands for devolution of power to the provinces there. India has been a supporter of the "reconciliation process" in the island nation between the majority Sinhala and the minority Tamils.

New Delhi's vote is being seen as an exercise of political balance and one key factor could be the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections since some political parties there had already made it an issue. The continuing proximity of the Rajapaksa brothers (President Gotabaya and Prime Minister Mahinda) to China could have also been another key factor in New Delhi's decision. The UNHRC resolution called upon "the (Sri Lankan) government to ensure prompt thorough and impartial investigation, if warranted, prosecution of all alleged crimes relating to human rights violations and serious violations of international human rights law". The resolution was tabled by a Core Group on Sri Lanka consisting of the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Malawi, Montenegro, and North Macedonia at the 46th Session of the UNHRC in Geneva. ■ P4

● **The resolution on 'Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka' was however adopted after 22 member states of the 47-member Council voted in its favour**

● **Walkout at Geneva to affect votes in TN**

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT CASE AGAINST SPECIAL DGP

HC directs investigation officer to file final report in 8 weeks

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 23

The Madras high court on Tuesday directed the officer investigating the complaint of sexual harassment against then special director-general of police by a woman IPS officer to make all efforts to complete the probe and file a final report in 8 weeks.

The court, however, said the court will extend the time as time limit should not lead to a hasty investigation as "it is important in this case to conduct an effective investigation".

Justice N. Anand Venkatesh, who was hearing the case, turned down a plea made by the accused to consider his stand during the investigation. "The accused person may not have any locus standi to insist the court to take into consideration his stand in the case during the course of investigation. During



this period, the court is not deciding on the merits of the case and this court is only monitoring the progress made in the investigation. The defence of the accused person comes into play only during the course of trial in criminal case. If courts are to give any finding based on the stand taken by the accused person during the course of investigation, it will directly interfere with the executive domain of the investigating officer."

Justice Venkatesh had on March 1 passed an order to monitor the progress of the probe after taking suo motu cognizance of the case.

The judge observed that the state's action placing the officer under suspension with immediate effect on an opinion of the court will bring in a lot of confidence in the investigation that was conducted by a subordinate officer. "This positive stand taken by the state will also reinforce the confidence in the minds of the general public who were keenly watching the progress of the investigation in this case," the judge added.

Justice Venkatesh said the court had carefully gone through all the status reports filed by the investigating officer and the case diary and was satisfied in the manner in which the investigation has been carried out. The court noted that the I.O has not reported any interference in the investigation and posted the case to April 30 for filing a status report.



Court upholds order for 2-year jail term to Somnath Bharti

New Delhi, March 23: A Delhi court Tuesday upheld an order sentencing AAP MLA Somnath Bharti to two years in jail for assaulting the AIIMS security staff in a case registered in 2016.

After the pronouncement of the order, Bharti was taken into custody, a lawyer said.

A magistrate court had in January sentenced him to two years in jail.

Special Judge Vikas Dhull partly dismissed Bharti's appeal and convicted him for the offences under sections 147 (rioting) read with 149 (unlawful assembly) of IPC and under section 3 (mischievous causing damage to public property) of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act.

EC team seizes gold worth ₹40 crore

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 23

Gold bars worth ₹40 crore were seized from a vehicle by the Election Commission surveillance squad at Navalur Tollgate on OMR here, a police official said.

According to the sources, the vehicle coming from the neighbouring Puducherry was intercepted by the flying squad of the Election Commission on Tuesday afternoon. The van, however, refused to stop. The police team deployed at the spot chased the vehicle and intercepted it. Inspection of

the vehicle revealed it to be carrying 80 kilograms of gold bars worth ₹ 40 cr without proper documents, a senior official said.

The driver of the vehicle was carrying no documents for legal possession of the said item. He said that the gold was being taken to a jewel-making unit in the city. However, since he could not produce valid documents, the gold was seized. The vehicle has been impounded and a probe was on. The seizures were effected in the run-up to the assembly polls to be held on April 6.



Election Commission surveillance squad that seizes gold bars worth ₹40 crore from a vehicle at Navalur Tollgate on OMR on Tuesday.

— DC



A. Mohammed John

AIADMK MP suffers heart attack during campaign, dies

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 23

AIADMK Rajya Sabha member A. Mohammed John passed away on Tuesday after suffering a heart attack while on electioneering for his party nominee in Wallajapet. He was 72. A former minister in the Jayalalithaa government, John had represented Ranipet constituency in the state assembly.

An industrialist in Ranipet, John suffered a heart attack while he was getting ready for a campaign meeting to seek votes for Ranipet AIADMK candidate, S.M. Sugumar, on Tuesday afternoon and was rushed to the nearby hospital, where he was declared 'brought dead'.

John, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2019, had earned the wrath of the local Muslim community after he voted in favour of the Citizen Amendment Bill.

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam, DMK president K.M. Kader Mohideen were among those who condoled John's death.

No compound, penal interest be charged during loan moratorium period: SC

New Delhi, March 23: In a major relief to borrowers, the Supreme Court Tuesday directed that no compound or penal interest be charged for the six-month moratorium announced last year amid the Covid-19 pandemic and the amount already recovered is to be refunded or adjusted in the next instalment of loan account.

While refusing to extend the period of moratorium, the apex court said there is "no justification" to charge interest on interest or compound interest for the period during the moratorium once the payment of instalment is deferred by last years March 27 notification. —PTI

India hammer England to take 1-0 lead

Pune, March 23: India outplayed world champions England by 66 runs in the opening Day International (ODI) here on Tuesday to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. Chasing a steep 317-run target for victory, England folded for 251 in 42.1 overs despite making a dazzling start. Rookie pacer Prasidh Krishna turned it around remarkably after being taken to the cleaners early on to register figures of 4/54 in 8.1 overs, the best by a debutant.

For England, opener Jonny Bairstow top-scored with a 66-ball 94.

Jonny Bairstow's 135-run opening stand with Jason Roy (46) put England in a commanding position before their it all unravelled for the visitors.

Earlier put in to bat, India produced a solid batting performance. Opener Shikhar Dhawan roared back to form with a 98-run effort, while skipper Virat Kohli (56), KL Rahul (62 not out) and debutant Krunal Pandya (58 not out) notched up half centuries.

Dhawan and Kohli shared a second wicket partnership of 105 runs that laid the foundation for Rahul and Pandya to accelerate.

The Pandya-Rahul combination put together 112 runs for the sixth wicket. Later, Pandya, a left-arm spinner, also picked up a wicket. —Agencies

■ More on P8

Prasidh Krishna made an impressive debut as the fast bowler took four wickets to bowl India to a 66-run win over England in the first ODI in Pune Tuesday. — AP



OTHER STORIES

Woman candidate approaches police, seeks action against abuser

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 23

A woman candidate of 'My India Party' on Tuesday sought police action against a man who sent her inappropriate videos on WhatsApp. According to police, the woman candidate of 'My India Party' for the Pallavaram assembly constituency, in a complaint to the Shankar Nagar police mentioned that she received inappropriate and vulgar videos on WhatsApp from the accused. The woman in a video alleged that the incident has caused her mental stress and demanded the police to arrest the accused within three days. The Shankar Nagar police have begun a probe.



Kani slams BJP's English, Hindi candidate list

R. VALAYAPATHY|DC TIRUCHY, MARCH 23

The DMK women wing secretary MP Kanimozhi came down heavily on the BJP for not releasing its candidates list for Tamil Nadu assembly elections in Tamil, but releasing it in English and Hindi, and the spineless ruling AIADMK could not even question this.

Kanimozhi was addressing an election meeting at Ponnalaipatti in favour of party candidate and sitting Thiruverumbur MLA Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi. She accused the government for laying the foundation for many projects, but not making any progress during the last 10 years. The state government besides failing to provide jobs for people has been very supportive of the Central government in the NEET exam, preventing many poor and down-trodden students from pursuing medical course.

She said if the DMK came to power, the government would fill up the existing 3.5 lakh vacancies and also find out new employment opportunities to the unemployed. Corruption is rampant in every field, especially in the tenders floated for various projects like smart city, highways and PWD departments, which only relatives of Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami managed to get.

She appealed to voters to vote for the DMK front candidates. Later, Kanimozhi addressed the similar meetings in favour of party's principal secretary and sitting MLA K.N. Nehru and Inigo Irudayaraj in Tiruchy west and east constituencies, respectively.

Good response for Cong from public, says Dutt

ARULOLI M | DC TIRUNELVELI, MARCH 23

The response that Congress candidates get from electorates of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry is awesomely positive, said All India Congress Committee (AICC) national secretary, Sanjay Dutt, adding that it was the same type of response towards the DMK-Congress combine during the 2019 LS polls.

Paying credits to the recent electioneering by party leader Rahul Gandhi and also DMK president Stalin's whirlwind campaign, for the positivity created among Tamil Nadu electorates, Dutt predicted a sweeping victory for the DMK headed Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) in the coming election.

Taking a dig at Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami for his statement that law and order situation in the state would turn bad if the DMK came to power, Dutt quoting the National Crime Record Bureau data about the increasing number of crime against women and children in Tamil Nadu since 2017, said that the conviction rate on crimes committed against the marginal sections of the society was very low in the state.

"This NCRB data gives us a clear picture of the highly deteriorated law and order situation in Tamil Nadu during Palaniswami's rule, said Sanjay Dutt, adding that the government also is to blame for under-utilising Nirbhaya funds, without properly implementing schemes meant for the safety and welfare of women in the state.

Recalling the police brutality against the people during the anti-Sterlite rally in Thoothukudi three years ago, and the death of the father-son duo, Jayaraj and Bennicks, caused by police torture last year in Sathankulam, Dutt stated that the state registered 35 custodial deaths since 2013, and none have been convicted so far, because of the government's indifference in punishing police officers charged of brutality.

Dutt too criticized the chief minister who claimed himself to be a farmer, but is hand-in-glove with the Narendra Modi-led Central government in the enactment of the anti-farmers laws.

The Tamil Nadu Congress party is planning a public meeting in which Rahul Gandhi, DMK president M.K. Stalin and leaders of the other parties in the alliance, would appear before the electorate, added Dutt.

Public want politicians to draft spl manifesto for Nilgiris dt

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, MARCH 23

As the poll fever rises in the state with each passing day, residents here want political parties to come out with a special manifesto for the Nilgiris, which would address various issues here.

S. Manogaran, president, Coonoor consumer protection association, said that over the decades, various governments that ruled the state failed to bring in the much needed industrial development in the hills, which in turn led to the lack of job opportunities for local youth. Hence, there is an urgent need to focus on industrial development here, and to put the region on the development path. This apart, there is a need to

"There is a need to convert some of the existing town panchayats in the district, which are unfit to be town panchayats, into village panchayats to help them avail more funds for development"

solve the ambiguity shrouding the issue of providing patta and patta passbooks to private patta lands owned by hill residents, especially the small farmers.

"There is a need to convert some of the existing town panchayats in the district, which are unfit to be town panchayats, into village panchayats to help them avail more funds for

development," Manogaran added.

G. Janardhanan, president, Ooty town public awareness association, said that none of the political parties took efforts to revive the defunct Hindustan Photo Films manufacturing company in Ooty, a central PSE, to set up either software industry or any suitable industry there, to generate employment opportunities. There has been a long pending demand to fix the minimum support price for green tea leaf, as tea cultivation is the dominant farming sector in the Nilgiris. More efforts need to be taken to improve the tourism infrastructure in the Nilgiris to handle increasing tourist inflow to the hills, he demanded.



Vellore collector A. Shanmugasundaram on Tuesday launches Aavin milk packets with 100 per cent voting awareness message printed on the covers for ensuing Assembly election on April 6.

— K. Senthil Nathan



PMK leader Dr Anbumani Ramadoss campaigns at Avadi for Ambattur AIADMK candidate Alexander and Avadi Assembly candidate K. Pandiarajan.

— DC

Ensure no voter is prevented from exercising franchise: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 23

The Madras high court has said the Election Commission should take steps as may be reasonable and necessary to ensure that no voter is prevented from exercising his/her franchise on the ground of caste, creed, religion or any other pretext.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy made the observation while disposing of a petition filed by R.Subramanian, which sought a direction to the Chief Electoral Officer and the Thoothukudi District Election Officer to allot separate polling booths as allotted during the local body elections to the people of Scheduled Caste community at Manakkara village, Karunkulam Panchayat Union, Thoothukudi district.

The bench said directions of the nature that the petitioner seeks cannot be issued, particularly in the context of the plenary authority exercised by the Election Commission in how elections would be conducted. At any rate, it was too late in the day now to seek such directions as the elections were scheduled

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 23

The Madras high court has directed the Election Commission of India to consider and dispose of within two months, a representation, which sought to take concrete and decisive action on the issue relating to scrutinising the election manifestos of the political parties in line with the order of the Supreme Court and Model Code of Conduct.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy gave the directive while disposing of a public interest litigation filed by Coimbatore Consumer Cause.

In its petition, the petitioner also sought a direction to the Election Commission of India and Chief Electoral Officer to announce a timeline for

submitting copies of election manifestos by the political parties and for scrutinizing them and passing final orders on the Election Manifestos taking the assistance of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, in line with the objective of the instructions of the compendium of model code of conduct while issuing the election notification itself and publicize the orders in print and electronic media to create awareness among the voters.

no voter is prevented from exercising her franchise on the ground of caste, creed, religion or any other pretext", the bench added.

Stalin vows to expedite Hosur IT park work if elected to power

SANJEEVI ANANDAN | DC KRISHNAGIRI, MARCH 23

DMK leader M.K. Stalin on Tuesday promised to expedite works for the Hosur IT park if his party was elected to form the government.


Stalin was here for a meeting held at Shoolagiri, 22 kilometers from Hosur, on the Chennai-Bengaluru national highway. His campaign was for the Bargur constituency Mathialagan (DMK), Veepanahalli (candidate Murugan (DMK), Krishnagiri candidate Senkuttuvan (DMK), Hosur candidate Prakash (DMK), Thally candidate Ramachandran (CPI), and Uthangarai R. candidate Arumugam (Congress).

Adding local flavour to his campaign, Stalin announced various schemes for Krishnagiri district. He promised to fulfill the long-pending demand of workers who want to upgrade the ESI hospital in Hosur. The government health facility in Hosur, Denkanikottai and Uthangarai will be upgraded with all facilities, he added.

In addition, Stalin promised cold storage facilities for farmers in Krishnagiri, Denkanikottai and Rayakotta regions, bringing surplus water from Hosur Kelavarapalli dam to lakes in Veppanahalli and Hosur constituencies.


All villages in the six assembly constituencies of this district will get drinking water supply from the Hogenakkal drinking water project. New mineral export zone and sunflower oil extraction unit will be constructed at Pochampally

Voluntary vaccination at select polling booths?



Sanjay Pinto

Public health emergencies and straitjacket approaches do not go together. A second Covid19 wave is staring us in the face bang in the middle of a high voltage election season. Huge political rallies and people without masks, those removing them to pose for selfies, preserving the moment rather than their lives, or physical distancing is an ominous reality. If the Central Government can open up vaccination to all citizens above 18 years and send extra doses



JUSTICE FOR ALL

Lest no quarter cries foul, no political messages or slogans or party or government emblems, photographs or logos should be allowed at the venue or on vaccination certificates, to obviate any leeway for influencing voters and violating the Model Code of Conduct.

The process must not

attract relevant provisions on corrupt practices such as bribery, gratification, public meetings 48 hours before polling, printing of pamphlets or posters covered under Sections 123,126 or 127A of the Representation of People Act, 1951. In any case, polling is videographed for transparency.

At first blush, this task may seem way too daunting. We most definitely do not have resources to cover all the one lakh odd booths. But what if 10% of booths offer this facility only for eligible voters in that jurisdiction? That will still be quite a giant leap in contrast to the present baby steps being taken. The vaccination needs to be a process distinct from polling, capitalising only on the availability of willing citizens at given places.

If the incidence of adverse side effects or anaphylaxis post vaccination, so far, has been negligible, adequate precautionary measures with reinforcement from the Centre in terms of medical professionals, ambulances and tie-ups with local hospitals, both government and private on stand by, can be rustled up.

Everyday we see reports of doses of the vaccine getting wasted. In a medical crisis, can we afford a 'dog in the manger' stance by not opening it out to all age groups? Getting vaccinated against the dreaded virus is a fundamental right guaranteed to all citizens under Article 21 of the

Constitution. Cooperation by all parties for the sake of public safety will be far more tangible and meaningful than the sop opera in manifestos.

The potential chaos that one may envisage need not derail a suggestion in public interest. If the cases explode further, wouldn't shortage of ICU beds or oxygen and ventilators be far more chaotic? With a fortnight left, this exercise can still be meticulously planned and executed. Desperate situations call for desperate measures. It's worth giving 'an arm and a leg', in this case, 'an arm and a finger' on polling day to combat this pandemic.

(The writer is an advocate at the Madras high court, columnist & author)



Tirupur District Collector K.Vijayakarthekeyan along with other officials inspects the counting centre at LRG college in Tiruppur on Monday.

— DC

PM to address election meeting at Dharapuram in TN on March 30

Coimbatore, March 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address an election meeting on March 30 at Dharapuram from where BJP State unit president L Murugan is contesting the April 6 assembly elections, party sources said on Tuesday. Modi, who launched the party campaign here on February 25, is expected to arrive at the city airport at 10.20 AM and leave by helicopter for Dharapuram in Tirupur district, the sources said. After the meeting, the prime minister will return to the city around 2.20 PM and leave for Chennai.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Optometry Day fete begins

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 23

The week-long programmes organised by India Vision Institute (IVI) to celebrate World Optometry Day began on Tuesday.

Vinod Daniel, CEO, IVI said the week's focus will be on myopia and presbyopia, as well as on protecting people's eyes from harmful UV rays and professional work hazards.

"We will provide 3,000 sun-glasses to fishing communities and traffic police personnel in Chennai, and 1,500 safety glasses to stone sculptors in Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram district. IVI will work with partners to manage myopia, help create awareness, and provide ground-level support through screenings," said Mr Daniel.

More than 10 crore Indians cannot see or see well as they do not have access to a pair of glasses.

Vision screenings are being conducted in Salem and Chennai for underprivileged communities. An industry forum of senior Indian ophthalmic industry representatives is being held during the week to focus on issues concerning the eye care sector. A panel session on how 'Every Indian can have access to a pair of glasses by 2050' is also organized.

● **Vinod Daniel, CEO, India Vision Institute (IVI) said the week's focus will be on myopia and presbyopia, as well as on protecting people's eyes from harmful UV rays and professional work hazards. The week-long programmes began on Tuesday.**

Rajya Sabha returns appropriation bills for Pondy and J&K

HC directs NTA to set up more Neet exam centres

Chennai, March 23: The Madras high court on Tuesday directed the National Testing Agency (NTA) to establish adequate/more number of Neet exam centres in Tamil Nadu to enable students appear for the qualifying exam in the state itself, for the next academic year.

The first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Banerjee gave a direction to this effect while disposing of a public interest writ petition from advocate Veerapillai Ramesh of Tiruvannainallur in Villupuram district.



According to the petitioner, the NTA on February 23 invited online applications from the students to write the Neet for admission in medical courses for 2021-22.

As many as 255 exam centres had been identified throughout the coun-

try. Of them, Tamil Nadu was allotted 28 and Puducherry one. Within a few hours it was declared that all the 29 centres were full. Challenging this, the petitioner filed the present petition for a direction to the NTA to establish more exam centres in the state.

Disposing of the same, the judges directed the NTA to establish more number of exam centres in the state from the next academic year, as any such direction for the present year at this stage would create unnecessary confusion in the minds of the students.

—PTI

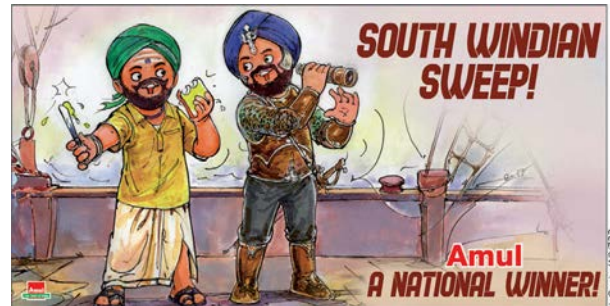
HC restraint on NCSCST and TNSHRC in ex-judge Karnan case

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 23

The Madras high court has restrained the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, New Delhi and the Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission, from taking cognizance of the representation/complaint given or to be given by Justice C.S. Karnan, former judge of the Madras high court, who was arrested in connection with allegedly making derogatory remarks against some of the sitting and former judges of the Supreme Court and High Court, against the investigating

officers, defacto complainant as well as against the Presiding Officers who are dealing with the cases and the officials who are dealing with the matters until further orders.

A division bench comprising Justices M.Sathyanarayanan and A.A.Nakkiran granted the interim injunction on the petition filed by Bar Council of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, after implementing the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the Tamil Nadu State Human Rights Commission as party respondents in the case and ordering notice to them.



Banned tobacco products seized during vehicle check

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 23

Police on Monday seized 225 kg of banned tobacco products from a vehicle during routine checks on the outskirts of the city and arrested two suspects in connection with illegal transportation for the purpose of selling.

The state government has the banned sale of gutka, pan masala and chewable food products that contain tobacco and nicotine as ingredients in Tamil Nadu. The city police have been conducting frequent raids in godowns, retail outlets and vehicle checks to curb drug sales. During a routine vehicle checkup by the Tiruninravur police, an auto-rickshaw was stopped on suspicion. As the auto driver and another man who came in the three-wheeler gave contradictory statements, the team headed by the station Inspector

● **In a routine vehicle checkup gutka weighing 225 kg were found stashed under an egg consignment, the police said. The accused have pending cases against them and they were remanded to judicial custody.**

searched the auto and found gutka.

Gutka weighing 225 kg were found stashed under an egg consignment, the police said. The same was seized and the duo was arrested. The auto used for transporting the contraband was seized. The accused, M.Augustine (38) and B.Murugadoss (43), have pending cases against them. They were remanded to judicial custody.

AC bus services resume to Mahabs after three years

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 23

After nearly three years, air-conditioned government bus service from the city to Mamallapuram resumed.

A total of two air-conditioned buses with eight trips per day from Tambaram-Mamallapuram-Tambaram will be operated by the government. Sources said due to reasons like improper maintenance, high fare among others, the

city transport corporation cut down on the Air-conditioned buses plying between Mamallapuram and other parts of the city. Meanwhile, on frequent requests by the tourists and the public, the state transport corporation decided to operate two air AC buses to Mamallapuram.

Sources said that services from places like Koyambedu, Broadway, TNagar to Mamallapuram are expected to resume soon.

SHRC asks 2 cops to pay ₹ 1.5L damages to senior citizen

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 23

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed two cops, including a woman SI, to pay a compensation of ₹ 1.5 lakh to a senior citizen for assaulting him in custody three years ago.

O. Somasundaram, a senior citizen, of Valasaravakkam

worked as a constable and opted for voluntary retirement in 1996. A few months before filing the complaint, he received a message from a friend Jehangir, who was arrested by the Guindy police, stating that he wanted to meet him. He met him and gave him the number of an advocate.

He said B. Shenbagavalli, sub-inspector, and Singar-

avelu, constable of SemmENCHERRY police station, came to his house and abused and beat him up. He was taken forcibly to the police station and was detained from 11 am till 11.30 pm on October 31, 2018. In the counter, cops have denied the allegations.

On completion of trial, SHRC member Dr. A. Chittaranjan Mohandoss

said it is very painful to note that Shenbagavalli, a responsible police officer, had assaulted a senior citizen, who was also a retired constable.

The commission ordered a compensation ₹1.50 lakh and recommended the additional chief secretary, home department to take strict disciplinary action against the errant cops as per rule

jurisdictions. The Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation Bill, 2021, the Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation

Bill, 2021, the Puducherry Appropriation Bill, 2021, and the Puducherry Appropriation (Vote on Account) Bill, 2021,

were considered and returned by the Upper House of Parliament. These bills have already been passed by Lok Sabha. —PTI

Bill, 2021, the Puducherry Appropriation Bill, 2021, and the Puducherry Appropriation (Vote on Account) Bill, 2021,

Pirate gang loots Nagai fishermen mid-sea

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
NAGAPATTINAM, MARCH 23

A 15-member pirate gang snatched away catch, fishing nets, walkie-talkie and GPS instruments worth ₹2 lakh after attacking Indian fishermen fishing in the sea 13 nautical km northeast of Kodyakaraal shore in Nagapattinam district, on Monday.

Official sources said six fishermen of Serudhur fishermen hamlet in the district ventured out to sea on Sunday. As they were fishing, the pirates came in two speed boats and attempted to take away the belongings of the fishermen, at knife point.

When the fishermen resisted, the pirates severely attacked them with sharp iron rods and pushed them into the sea, and made away with the booty. About an hour later, as the fishermen were struggling for life, they were noticed by another fishermen group from Nagapattinam, who rescued them and brought them ashore and admitted them to the government hospital, Velankanni.

On information, Thanga Kathiravan, AIADMK Nagapattinam town secretary and candidate for Nagapattinam constituency, called on the injured fishermen at the hospital and consoled them. He assured them that he would take up the issue to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami through Handloom and textile minister O.S. Manian, for suitable remedy.

Format C-1				
Declaration About Criminal Cases				
(As Per The Judgement Dates 25th September, 2018, Of The Hon'ble Supreme Court In Wp (Civil) No.536 Of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union Of India & Anr.)				
Name And Address Of Candidate: K. Pandiarajan No.215, 27th Street, JB Estate Avadi, Chennai - 600 054				
Name Of Political Party		: AIADMK Anaithindiya Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam		
Name Of Election		: Legislative Assembly		
Name of Constituency		Avadi-006 constituency		
I, K.Pandiarajan , a candidate for the abovementioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents.				
(A) Pending Criminal cases				
Sl.No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated Status of Case	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1	Additional Special Court for (MP & MLA) of Tamilnadu	CC/72/2019	Pending	Section 171 F of IPC, Section 123 (2) (b) RPAct & Section 2 Prevention of insults to national honour (Amendment) Act, 2003
2	Madras High Court Madras High Court Madras High Court	CRL/OP/33597/2019 (main) CRL/MP/18526/2019 CRL/MP/18527/2019	Pending	
(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				

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SHORT TAKES

POLICE
LATHI CHARGE
RJD WORKERSNAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, MARCH 23

The RJD leaders and workers were injured in Patna on Tuesday when police lathi charged in order to stop them from marching towards the Bihar Assembly.

The situation occurred when thousands of RJD workers went on a rampage and started damaging private vehicles and also pelted stones at the police who were trying to stop their protest march. Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav and his brother Tej Pratap along with several others were later detained by the police. The RJD had organised the march on Tuesday to protest against unemployment, rising crime graph, inflation, corruption, fuel price hike and Bihar special armed police bill.

Sources said that the RJD workers turned violent after Tejashwi Yadav reached Dak Bungalow crossing to join the protest. "Don't stop, don't get tired and don't bow to the power. Our fight against unemployment and autocratic rule will continue. We will not stop till youth get their rights", Tejashwi had said in a tweet before joining the protest.

Yadav had also announced earlier that his party would be leading a protest march against several issues especially against the Bihar armed police bill inside and outside Bihar Assembly.

The police bill which was introduced a week earlier seeks to give more powers to the force. Before leading the march Tejashwi had also tweeted the famous revolutionary couplet "*Sarfaroshi ki Tamanna ab hamare dil mein hai. Dekhna hai zor kitna bazoo-e-qatil mein hai*".

REBELLION IN MP
BJP UNIT, BYPOLLS
LIKELY TO BE HITRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MARCH 23

Former minister Jayant Mallya who went into a sulk after being denied ticket by BJP for the April 17 by-elections to Damoh Assembly constituency in Madhya Pradesh, may dent the prospects of the ruling party in the polls if the party failed to pacify him, sources said on Tuesday.

Mallya, a four-time MLA from the seat, was an aspirant for party ticket for the ensuing by-elections to Damoh Assembly constituency, necessitated by the resignation of sitting MLA Rahul Singh Lodhi, from the Assembly four months ago.

Lodhi who quit Congress and joined BJP has been nominated as BJP candidate from the seat in the upcoming by-elections, much to the chagrin of Mallya who has been mounting pressure on the party leadership to either nominate him or his son Siddhartha for the constituency.

Mallya was defeated in the 2018 Assembly elections in the seat by a narrow margin of 1,100 votes by his then nearest Congress rival Lodhi. Congress has fielded Ajey Tondon.

KANGANA: I HAVE
NO CONNECTION
WITH POLITICS

Mumbai, March 23: A day after Kangana Ranaut won her fourth National Film Award, the actor said though she takes interest in matters of national importance, she has "no connection with politics at all".

Ranaut, who is known for her provocative statements, recently made headlines for her Twitter spat with actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh over the ongoing farmers protests and locking horns with the Maharashtra government after her office was demolished by the BMC.

Asked if she would join politics, Ranaut said issues related to the country affect her "directly" but that does mean she wants to take a political plunge. "For me, the world of politics is quite unknown. If today I talk about the country, nationalism, farmers or laws which directly affect me, I'm told that I want to become a politician. It's not like that. I react to everything as a citizen. I have no connection with politics, at all," the actor, who turned 34 on Tuesday, told reporters here.

She was speaking at the trailer launch of her upcoming film "*Thalaivi*", the multilingual biographical film about the life of J. Jayalalitha, former chief minister of Tamil Nadu and actor.

Bhatija & Co. looted ₹10k-cr,
will go to jail, says Shah

Home minister says Didi hasn't fulfilled even 82 of 282 promises made

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 23

Going all out against West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's MP nephew Abhishek with large-scale corruption charges, union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday accused "Bhatija & Company" of amassing central funds to the tune of ₹10,000 crore which were disbursed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for relief and rehabilitation to the state after it was devastated by Cyclone Amphan last year.

Mr Shah also made it clear that the entity would be sent to jail by a special investigation team (SIT), mentioned in the BJP manifesto, following a probe after the party forms its first government in the state.

In a blistering attack

on the Trinamul Congress supremo, he then ridiculed her for running "115 scams" in comparison to "115 schemes," run by Mr Modi while mocking her for failing to fulfill even 82 out of her 282 promises made last time.

The union home minister told a BJP rally at Gosaba in South 24 Parganas, "Modiji has been sending a lot of funds here. Cyclone Amphan hit the state. Modiji released ₹10,000 crore. Did you get anything out of it? Where did it go? Bhatija & Company amassed it. You do not need to worry. Forming an SIT the BJP government will put those, who looted each and every pie of the funds sent by Modiji, behind bars. All scams, be it on Cyclone Amphan or Bulbul or Aila, will be

probed by us through the SIT."

Mr Shah, in view of a portion of Hindu migrants' votebank in the district, also touched the party's top electoral promise. He said, "We will implement the Citizenship Amendment Act to give citizenship to the refugees after coming to power here."

According to him, "For the poor, the PM has undertaken 115 Yojana which is called scheme. But Didi has started 115 scams. The money of the poor is looted by those who take cut-money. The BJP government will bring an end to it."

Training his guns on Ms Banerjee over her false promises, Mr Shah highlighted the sops for the Sundarbans delta in the BJP manifesto.

He claimed, "Didi had announced 282 promises

but could not meet even 82 of them. In 2016 she talked of building a multiple integrated fisheries zone. Till date no one knows where it is. She should furnish an account but she would not. So you will give your account on April 1 by pressing the button of Kamal (Lotus). We had also sent ₹5,000 crore for the development of the Sundarbans. But the fund was misappropriated. In 2015, 2017 and 2019, Didi had claimed to turn Sundarbans into a district. Did it happen? Cast your vote for a BJP CM. We will make Sundarbans a district within a year."

Later the union home minister and BJP president J P Nadda led roadshows at Midnapore and Ghatal in West Midnapore respectively in the afternoon.

Vaccine for all above 45
years from April 1: Govt

FROM PAGE 1

The states are free to impose restrictions at the local level but there must be no hindrance on inter-state and intra-state movement of persons and goods, including for cross land border trade under treaties with neighbouring countries, and no separate permission or permit will be required for such movements.

The new guidelines will be effective from April 1 to April 30. In a letter to the chief secretaries, Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla asked states/UTs to take all measures to promote Covid-19 appropriate behaviour among the public, especially in crowded places and during festivals, while saying there was a general laxity in the obser-

vance of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour by people now.

Ahead of the Holi festival, the Uttar Pradesh government has issued guidelines saying that no procession can be carried out without prior permission and that people above the age of 60, children below 10 years and people with comorbidities should not be at large public gatherings. The Delhi government too has banned Holi celebrations in public places while random testing at bus and railway stations have been ordered.

Punjab CM Amarinder Singh said 81 per cent of the 401 samples sent by the state government for genome sequencing have tested positive for the UK variant of Covid-19. He urged the Centre to widen

the vaccination net to cover all those younger than 60, as the mutant virus has been found to be infecting younger people more, to break the chain of transmission. Punjab had 2,274 new detections of Covid-19 on Tuesday.

However, minister of state for health Ashwini Choubey said in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday that no new strain of Covid-19 has been detected in Mahara-

shtra, Kerala and Punjab. In a written reply, the minister said after the detection of variants of Sars-CoV-2 in Britain, South Africa and Brazil, the Indian government has put in a surveillance mechanism for int. travellers and in the community to detect these variants, and so far 795 cases of the mutant virus have been detected.

15 % quota for govt
school students in
Odisha clearedAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 23

The Odisha Legislative Assembly of Odisha on Tuesday adopted a resolution proposing reservation for government school students in higher educational institutes in the state.

Chief minister Naveen Patnaik had introduced the resolution for 15 per cent reservation for state-run school students in the engineering and medical courses.

The CM's proposal came in the backdrop of recommendation by a High Power Committee suggesting quota for the government-run school students in the state.

"As per the pass percentage indication, 86 per cent of government high school students occupy 23 per cent in medical and 21

per cent engineering colleges. In the same breath, 12 per cent private school pass-outs occupy 57 per cent of government medical colleges 63 per cent government engineering colleges," the Chief Minister said while introducing the resolution.

He said that the reservation will help students of government high school students especially in rural belt get better avenues to stay ahead at the national level.

In 2020, the state Cabinet had proposed reservation for students who passed from government schools for admissions into various medical and engineering colleges. The government on January 7, 2021 constituted a High Power Committee for making necessary recommendations in this regard.

ODISHA WANTS INCORPORATION
OF 'AHIMSA' IN THE PREAMBLEAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 23

The Odisha Legislative Assembly of Odisha on Tuesday adopted unanimous resolution calling for incorporation of word "Ahimsa" (non-violence) in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

With the entire Odisha celebrating the centennial anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's first visit to the state on Tuesday, the Assembly passed the historic resolution as a "fitting tribute" to the Father of the Nation.

State tourism and culture minister Jyoti Prakash Panigrahi had introduced the resolution. Odisha government and out-

its crossing party lines have been urging for the inclusion of non-violence, which is the Mahatma's most propounded doctrine, in the constitution.

A special discussion was tabled in the Assembly on this occasion. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik while addressing the House during the discussion said Odisha was where Mahatma's heart was. Gandhiji had visited Odisha on eight different occasions and toured several places across the state.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, Pradipta Naik said, "Tributes to the Mahatma can only be reflected in ways how much we all have lived up to inculcate his doctrines in our lives."

Five jawans were on Tuesday killed and 12 others injured when the mini bus in which they were traveling was blown up by Maoists in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar district of Narayanpur.

Maoists triggered three command initiated improvised explosive device (IED) explosions targeting the bus carrying jawans of district reserve group (DRG) when it was passing through a bridge over a culvert in Kodenar region, leading to the tragedy, director general of police (DGP) (anti-Naxal operation) of Chhattisgarh Ashok Juneja said.

The mini-bus fell off the bridge under the impact of the explosions, he added.

While three jawans including the driver of the police bus died on the spot, two others succumbed to their injuries in the hospital.

At least 12 jawans were injured, three of them grievously.

All the 12 injured jawans were admitted in the district hospital in Narayanpur. Three of them were later airlifted to Raipur for treatment when their condition deteriorated.

This was the biggest Maoist attack on security forces in Bastar in the current year so far.

The bus was carrying around 44 DRG jawans. Narayanpur district superintendent of police Mohit Garg said.

The incident took place at around 4.15 pm.

The jawans were returning to their base camp in district headquarters of Narayanpur in the ill-fated bus after carrying out counterinsurgency operations in the region when the incident took place, Mr Juneja

UNHRC adopts resolution
against SL's rights record

FROM PAGE 1

It may be recalled that a fierce insurgency led by the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had raged in Sri Lanka since the 1980s and had finally ended in 2009 with the defeat and decimation of the LTTE at the hands of the Sri Lankan Army in a bitterly-fought war when the current Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa was the President.

In its EoV, New Delhi said, "India supports the call by the international community for the government of Sri Lanka to fulfill its commitments on the devolution of political authority, including through the early holding of elections for provincial councils and to ensure that all provincial councils are able to operate effectively, in accordance with the

13th amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution."

According to news agency reports from Geneva, meanwhile, Sri Lanka had earlier described the draft resolution as "unwarranted, unjustified and in violation of the relevant articles of the United Nations' Charter...". Sri Lanka was earlier defeated at three consecutive resolutions at the UN rights body when current PM Mahinda Rajapaksa was the country's president between 2012 and 2014. The government of (current President) Gotabaya Rajapaksa had officially withdrawn from co-sponsoring the previous resolution undertaken by the previous Sri Lankan government. Sri Lanka was assured of support from China, Russia and several Muslim countries, including Pakistan.

CASES | SURGE

Maha CM's wife in home isolation after testing Covid positive

Maha cities may face lockdown

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 23

Several cities in Maharashtra may face lockdown as the MVA government is contemplating strict measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the state.

Lockdown is the last resort, but it may be implemented if people do not follow restrictions, said health minister Rajesh Tope.

Maharashtra is witnessing the second wave of Covid, which has seen a sudden surge in coronavirus cases across the state.

Mr Tope said people

must follow Covid safety protocols if the state is to avoid another lockdown.

"Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray will have the final word in imposing the lockdown in the state. He will take the decision in discussion with senior officials after considering all the aspects," he said.

The Chief Minister had told me that if the number of daily cases in the state remains in the range of 25,000 to 30,000 for the next some days, then we will have to take some stringent steps. He is of the opinion that if the numbers continue to increase, we will have to impose lockdown in some cities. I

appeal to people to respond to Chief Minister's warning positively and follow the Covid-19 protocols such as mask wearing, hand hygiene and physical distancing to avoid lockdown, Mr Tope said.

The health minister also hinted about taking a tough decision about the local train services.

"The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has already appealed to people not to flock the trains unnecessarily. If people do not respond to it, the relaxations given to them might be reconsidered," he said. Meanwhile, one-week lockdown will be

ATS: Waze key
conspirator in
Hiren's murderSHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 23

The Maharashtra ATS has claimed that its investigation has revealed that suspended API Sachin Waze was prime conspirator in Mansukh Hiren murder and the agency is likely to seek his custody for interrogation in this case.

Meanwhile the NIA has claimed that Waze used a fake Aadhaar card to book a room in a 5-star hotel in South Mumbai a day before the Scorpio car, which was later parked near Mukesh Ambani's residence with explosives, was reported to be missing. He was seen carrying five bags in CCTV footage of the hotel.

ATS chief Jaijeet Singh on Tuesday revealed that very next day of registering the FIR in connection with the death of Mansukh Hiren, in which his wife Vimla has stated that she suspect involvement of API Sachin Waze in her husband's death, the probe officers had recorded Waze's statement in which he had refuted the claim that the Scorpio was in his use. He had also said that he didn't have any relation with Hiren and denied any role in Hiren's death, the ATS chief informed. However, the subsequent investigation revealed that Waze's statement was a lie.

According to ATS chief Singh, the probe revealed that at the instance of Waze the SIM card used in the crime was procured by bookie Ramesh Ramniklal Gaur from Gujarat. The said SIM card was bought in the name of a Gujarat based company. It has also come to light that Gaur had given this SIM card to Waze's aide, former police constable Vinayak Shinde. Shinde was sentenced to imprisonment for life in connection with the fake encounter of Ramnarayan Gupta alias Lakhnan Bhaiya. But in 2020, he was released on parole due to Covid pandemic. After coming out of jail, Shinde got in touch with Waze and started working for him.

The ATS has claimed that they have procured evidence showing their involvement in Hiren's murder. The ATS so far has recovered 14 SIM cards from the accused persons. But it has been revealed that the mobile phones that were used in the crime have been destroyed.

With the help of inputs received from interrogation of accused and suspected persons an ATS team on Tuesday returned from Union Territory Deu Daman with a seized Volvo car and suspect. This car is allegedly owned by Waze's business partner and is suspected to have been used in the crime. A team of forensic experts from Kalina Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) is inspecting this car.

Even though the accused have destroyed CCTV footage from some vital places, the ATS has seized CCTV footage of various routes and spots leading to offices and other places believed to have been used in the crime.

Speaking with the reporters at Maharashtra BJP headquarter in Mumbai, Fadnavis said, "The report has been with the government since August 2020 but till date no action on it. Seems like he shielded and protected this entire racket to save his government."

He said that instead of taking action, the MVA government transferred the officer who informed about the transfer and posting racket.

PLEA IN HC SEEKS
PROBE AGAINST
DESHMUKH, SINGHSHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 23

A Mumbai based lawyer has filed a petition in the Bombay High Court seeking an investigation by CBI and ED into the corruption allegations against Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh and also the role played by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh into this matter.

Petitioner Dr Jaishri Laxmanrao Patil has alleged that Deshmukh is not trustworthy to hold the position of home minister of state after the information that has come to light recently through a letter of Mumbai's ex-police commissioner Param Bir Singh. She has stated that as per details revealed in the letter Deshmukh was abusing his powers by calling and instructing officers to extort money from common citizens and business persons.

It has been mentioned in the petition that the home minister has been instructing the police officers to carry out official assignments and collection schemes including financial transactions as per his instructions based on his expectations and targets to collect money.

The petitioner has also stated that being a superior police officer and having powers under section 154 of CrPC, Param Bir Singh had failed to register an FIR against Deshmukh and the reasons for this inaction was a matter of the investigation.

FADNAVIS
ALLEGES GRAFT
IN TRANSFERSSONU
SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 23

Leader of opposition in Maharashtra Assembly Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday accused Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray of covering up corruption in transfers and postings in the Police department.

Fadnavis submitted the report prepared by former state intelligence commissioner Rashmi Shukla to the Union home secretary and demanded CBI investigation into the report. With the report, Fadnavis also submitted 6.7 GB data of telephone interceptions. The NCP denied the charges and alleged that Shukla was a BJP stooge.

Speaking with the reporters at Maharashtra BJP headquarter in Mumbai, Fadnavis said, "The report has been with the government since August 2020 but till date no action on it. Seems like he shielded and protected this entire racket to save his government."

He said that instead of taking action, the MVA government transferred the officer who informed about the transfer and posting racket.

The official residence of the Chief Minister, as her condition is stable. She had received the first dose Covid vaccine on March 11 at Sir J.J. Hospital, Mumbai.

Maharashtra chief minister too had received the first jab of Covid vaccine. Last week, her son Aditya Thackeray, who is also a cabinet minister in his father led MVA government, had also tested positive for the coronavirus.

Maharashtra is facing a huge surge in daily coronavirus cases. The state on Tuesday reported 28,699 cases taking the total number of cases to 25,33,026.

SHORT TAKES

CONVERSION: U.S. MAN DETAINED IN YGANDA

Kampala, March 23: Ugandan police said an American man has been detained over alleged involvement in “subversive activities” against the government.

Police said the man identified as Guy Smith was arrested in a remote town and is being detained at a police facility in Kampala. The statement gave no more details, and it was not immediately possible to get a comment from the US Embassy. Ugandan authorities accuse foreigners of meddling in the country's affairs, charges that have raised tensions between President Yoweri Museveni and the country's development partners.

VOLCANIC ASH: GUATEMALA CITY AIRPORT SHUT

Guatemala City, March 23: A shift in wind blew ash from an eruption at the Pacaya volcano over Guatemala City on Tuesday, and authorities closed the airport as ash coated planes and planes parked at the terminal. The 8,373-foot (2,552 metre) volcano, just 30 miles (50 km) south of Guatemala's capital, has been active since early February. Civil Aviation Director Francis Argueta did not say how long the closure would last.

Tourists frequently hike up to visit Pacaya's peak, but those trips have been temporarily cancelled.

Pacaya has a clear view of the nearby Volcano of Fire, which erupted in 2018, emitting a fast-moving avalanche of super-heated muck that killed at least 110 people and left about 200 missing.

OZ EAST COAST RAIN TO EASE; FLOODING ON

Sydney, March 23: Heavy rainfall was forecast to ease across Australia's east coast but floodwaters will linger for days across New South Wales state where 15,000 people were nervously waiting on Tuesday for potential orders to evacuate. Some 18,000 residents of Australia's most populous state have fled their homes since last week, with warnings the cleanup could stretch into April. New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian on Tuesday said several weather fronts continued to effect large swaths of the state.

Some parts of the state had recorded two-thirds of their annual rainfall in less than a week. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the rain emergency was expected to ease by late Wednesday.

FRANCE CALLS CHINESE ENVOY OVER COMMENTS

Paris, March 23: France's foreign ministry said it has summoned China's ambassador over “unacceptable” comments in recent days that included alleged insults and threats towards lawmakers and a researcher.

Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian tweeted on Monday that “comments of China's Embassy and actions against elected officials, researchers and European diplomats are unacceptable.”

French authorities will “firmly reiterate the message” when meeting with Chinese Ambassador Lu Shaye, he added.

The Chinese Embassy in France called a Paris-based researcher, Antoine Bondaz, “a thug” on Twitter on Friday.

Israelis vote to seal Bibi fate

Fourth poll in two years as Netanyahu's corruption charge trial continues



Yesh Atid party leader Yair Lapid and his wife Lihi vote for Israel's parliamentary election at a polling station in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Tuesday.

saries and prisoners are also properly tallied by Thursday or Friday.

Buoyed by a successful vaccination drive, one of the fastest in the world per capita, Netanyahu, 71, has put it at the forefront of his campaign claiming that under his leadership Israel has become the first country in the world to beat the Covid-19 pandemic. He yet again faces a

tough challenge of putting together a coalition post-elections with some determined “friends turn foes” looking to end his long-run. The PM has made Israel's handling of the pandemic, especially its robust vaccine drive, personal by regular appearances in nationally televised addresses towards the beginning of the pandemic and later obsessively nego-

tiating vaccine deals with pharmaceutical companies. Israel has reported 828,764 Coronavirus cases so far with 6,109 deaths.

Netanyahu's early recognition of the perils of the pandemic has been hailed by several international leaders, and also political analysts who appreciated his political acumen in identifying an opportunity in a crisis while most of

the world failed to grasp the intensity of the problem.

Netanyahu hailed the country's “green” Covid-19 vaccination passports recently, saying Israel was “coming to life”, and his latest campaign slogan, bringing Israeli society “back to life”, may be his best chance at keeping his political career alive.

— PTI

US: AstraZeneca ‘used’ dated info in vax trial

Washington, March 23: Results from a US trial of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine may have included “outdated information” and that could mean the company provided an incomplete view of efficacy data, American federal health officials said early Tuesday.

AstraZeneca said in a statement that the data it released Monday included cases up to Feb. 17, as the study rules specified, and that it was continuing to analyse cases that have occurred since then. The company said that a pre-

liminary analysis of data that has continued to roll in was consistent with what it had already reported.

It promised an update within 48 hours. AstraZeneca reported Monday that its Covid-19 vaccine provided strong protection among adults of all ages in a long-anticipated US study, a finding that some experts hoped would help rebuild public confidence in the shot around the world and move it a step closer to clearance in the US.

In the study of more

than 30,000 people, the company reported that the vaccine was found to be 79 per cent effective at preventing symptomatic cases of Covid-19 — including in older adults.

There were no severe illnesses or hospitalisations among vaccinated volunteers, compared with five such cases in participants who received dummy shots — a small number, but consistent with findings from Britain and other countries that the vaccine protects against the worst of the disease.

— AP

LANKA, CHINA INK \$1.5 BN CURRENCY EXCHANGE DEAL

Colombo, March 23: Sri Lanka will exchange currency with China under a 10 billion yuan (about \$1.5 billion) agreement aimed at promoting trade and investment between the two countries, the island nation's central bank said on Monday. So-called currency swaps allow central banks to ensure banks in their countries can borrow ready cash in any of the currencies involved.

China remains Sri Lanka's largest source of imports.

— AP

Xi, Kim reaffirm traditional alliance

Seoul, March 23: The leaders of China and North Korea are reaffirming their traditional alliance following contentious talks between top diplomats from Washington and Beijing and diplomatic isolation and economic problems in the North that have left it ever-more dependent on the Chinese.

The North's official *Korean Central News Agency* said Tuesday leader Kim Jong Un called for stronger “unity and cooperation” with China in the face of challenges posed by “hostile forces” while exchanging messages with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

According to *KCNA* and China's *Xinhua* news agency, Xi in his own mes-

sage to Kim described bilateral relations as a “valuable asset” to both countries and vowed to make unspecified contributions to the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. *KCNA* said Xi also expressed a commitment to “provide the peoples of the two countries with better life.”

Some analysts saw this as an indication that China would soon provide North Korea with badly needed food, fertiliser and other aid that had been significantly reduced amid the pandemic border closures. *Xinhua* said the leaders' messages were exchanged during a meeting between Chinese senior diplomat Song Tao and North Korean Ambassador to China Ri Ryong

Nam during a meeting in Beijing on Monday. The exchange between the leaders came as the Biden administration steps up diplomatic efforts to strengthen cooperation with Asian allies South Korea and Japan to deal with the North Korean nuclear threat and China's growing regional influence.

Top US and Chinese officials traded sharp and unusually public barbs in Alaska last week in their first face-to-face meetings since President Joe Biden took office, where Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington is united with its allies in pushing back against Chinese authoritarianism.

The contentious talks in Anchorage came after

Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin traveled to Japan and South Korea for talks that mainly focused on North Korea and China.

During his visit to Seoul, Blinken sternly criticized North Korea's nuclear ambitions and human rights record and pressed China to use its “tremendous influence” to convince the North to denuclearize. The North has so far ignored Biden's administration's efforts to reach out, saying it won't engage in meaningful talks with the United States unless Washington abandons what Pyongyang sees as “hostile” policies, which clearly refers to the U.S.-led sanctions and pressure over its nuclear program.

— AP

NIGER VILLAGE ATTACKS: 137 GUNNED DOWN

Niamey (Niger), March 23: Gunmen aboard motorcycles have attacked a series of villages near Niger's troubled border with Mali, leaving at least 137 people dead in the

deadliest violence to strike the African country in recent memory, the government has announced.

The latest village massacres come amid a dangerous escalation in attacks

following the election of Niger's new president, Mohamed Bazoum, several weeks ago.

Government spokesman Abdourahmane Zakaria confirmed on Monday the

latest killings took place on Sunday, the same day Niger's Constitutional Court officially declared Bazoum as the winner of February's election.

— AP

Certify Rana extradition, US admin to court

Washington, March 23: The Biden administration has urged a federal court to certify India's request to extradite Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, who is sought for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack.

Assistant US Attorney John J. Lulejian, in his submission before a federal US court in Los Angeles, said Rana, 59, meets all the criteria to be extradited to India for his trial in the Mumbai terror attack. On February 4, Rana's attorney had opposed his extradition. US District Court Judge in Los Angeles Jacqueline Chooljian has scheduled the extradition hearing for April 22.

“The United States respectfully requests that following the April 22, 2021, extradition hearing, the Court certify India's request for Rana's extradition for the Secretary of State's surrender decision,” Lulejian said in his court submission on

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

He has been declared a fugitive by India. “Fugitive Tahawwur Hussain Rana is wanted in India to stand trial for offences related to his role in the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India, that resulted in the death of 166 people, injury of 239 people, and damage to property in excess of \$1.5 billion,” Lulejian said.

As per the India-US Extradition Treaty, the Indian government has requested the formal extradition of Rana, and the United States has initiated this extradition proceeding. Lulejian said the criteria warranting certification of extradition are satisfied in this case. These are: the court has both personal and subject matter jurisdiction.

— PTI

10 shot dead in US supermarket

Boulder (Colorado), March 23: A shooting at a Colorado supermarket killed 10 people Monday, including a police officer who was the first to respond to the scene, authorities said. Police arrested a suspect, but didn't reveal his name or any details about the shooting at an evening news conference where Boulder police Chief Maris Herold fought back tears.

Investigators had just begun sorting through evidence and witness interviews and didn't have details on a motive for the shooting at the King Soopers store in Boulder, which is about 25 miles northwest of Denver and home to the University of Colorado, said Boulder County District Attorney Michael Dougherty. “This is a tragedy and a nightmare for Boulder County,” Dougherty said.

“These were people going about their day, doing their shopping. I promise the victims and the people of the state of Colorado that we will secure justice.” The attack was the seventh mass killing this year in the US, following the March 16 shooting that left eight people dead at three Atlanta-area massage businesses, according to a database compiled by *The Associated Press*, *USA Today* and Northeastern University.

It follows a lull in mass killings during the pandemic in 2020, which had the smallest number of such attacks in more than a decade, according to the database, which tracks mass killings defined as four or more dead, not including the shooter.

The slain officer was identified as Eric Talley, 51, who had been with Boulder police since 2010, Herold said. He went to the store after a call about shots fired and someone carrying a rifle, she said.

“He was by all accounts one of the outstanding officers of the Boulder Police Department, and his life was cut too short,” Dougherty said of Talley. Identities of the other victims were

not disclosed as police were still notifying family members.

Matthew Kirsch, the acting US attorney for Colorado, pledged that “the full weight of federal law enforcement” will support the investigation. He said investigators from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were at the crime scene, along with FBI agents. Officers had escorted a shirtless man with blood running down his leg out of the store in handcuffs but authorities would not say if he was the suspect. They did say the suspect was receiving medical care and was the only person injured who did not die. Officials have not said whether the suspect is the person who was taken from the shooting scene to Foothills Hospital in Boulder. The hospital will not release any further information on the patient, said Rich Sheehan, spokesman for Boulder Community Health, which operates the hospital. Dean Schiller told *The Associated Press* that he had just left the supermarket when he heard gunshots and saw three people lying face down, two in the parking lot and one near the doorway. He said he “couldn't tell if they were breathing.”

Video posted on YouTube showed one person on the floor inside the store and two more outside on the ground. What sounds like two gunshots are also heard at the beginning of the video. Law enforcement vehicles and officers massed outside the store, including SWAT teams, and at least three helicopters landed on the roof.

— AP

WAGE | WISE

US Labour Department invites comments from public on migrant workers

18-month delay in H-1B visa pay calculation

Washington, March 23: The Biden Administration has proposed an 18-month delay in the effective date of a final rule on calculating the prevailing wages of certain immigrants and non-immigrant workers, including those on the popular H-1B visas.

The proposed delay will provide the Department of Labour with sufficient time to consider the rule's legal and policy issues thoroughly and issue an

upcoming Request for Information and gather public comments on the sources and methods for determining prevailing wage levels, an official release said following the announcement on Monday. This proposed rule follows an initial 60-day delay announced earlier this month.

The department based that action on a January 20, 2021, White House memo, the media release

said. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The Department of Labour in its federal notification published earlier this month said that it is

considering whether to propose a further delay of the final rule's effective date and accompanying implementation periods.

The Department proposed to delay in accordance with the Presidential directive as expressed in the memorandum of January 20, 2021, from the Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff, entitled Regulatory Freeze Pending Review.

The Department invited

written comments from the public for 15 days on the proposed delay of effective date. All comments had to be received by February 16, 2021.

Published in January 2021, the final rule affects employers seeking to employ foreign workers on a permanent or temporary basis through certain immigrant visas or through H-1B, H-1B1 and E-3 non-immigrant visas, the Department of Labour

said. While the E3 visa is one for which only citizens of Australia are eligible, the H-1B1 visa is for the people from Singapore and Chile. The proposed delay will also give agency officials sufficient time to compute and validate prevailing wage data covering specific occupations and geographic areas, complete necessary system modifications and conduct public outreach.

— PTI

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DECCAN Chronicle

24 MARCH 2021

Optics key, Uddhav must act fast to kill racket stink

It is no exaggeration to say that the political situation in Maharashtra has turned fragile following on allegations levelled by a DGP rank IPS officer, Param Bir Singh, who was removed from the post of commissioner of Mumbai Police by the state government last week.

The allegations are grave. After being displaced from the post of CP, Mr Singh told chief minister Uddhav Thackeray in a letter that home minister Anil Deshmukh had ordered junior officers, including assistant sub-inspector Sachin Vaze who has been suspended for his suspected role in an explosives-laden SUV near the residence of business magnate Mukesh Ambani, to collect ₹100 crore per month, obviously sanctioning extortion.

The former CP followed up his letter with a petition in the Supreme Court on Monday, seeking a CBI inquiry in this matter and in an alleged transfer-posting racket run by Mr Deshmukh.

It is up to the apex court to consider the reliability of Mr Singh as a complainant, not least because he had been removed for not being exercising sufficient control of the police force and, by implication, letting API Vaze run amok. It may also need to be considered why the former CP had kept quiet over the alleged criminality of the home minister for over a year. Did he stand to gain through prolonged silence? At the same time, delayed disclosure — provided allegations in question are not ungrounded — cannot justify inaction.

NCP leader Sharad Pawar, widely thought to hold the whip hand in politically shepherding the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition government, at a Delhi press conference on Monday, strongly defended Mr Deshmukh, who is from the his party. Mr Pawar appeared to stoutly refute the factual basis of Mr Singh's allegation against Mr Deshmukh.

But this supposition has been emasculated by Mr Deshmukh himself. In the public mind, now, serious doubts are apt to have arisen about the integrity of the state government although Mr Thackeray did appear to be gaining in popularity and stature since he took office in November 2019. The CM has kept mum on the Vaze-Singh-Deshmukh matter, allowing Mr Pawar to call the shots. Circumstances now do not permit him to withhold comment — and action — for long, else he will be at risk of completely losing the initiative in a wobbly situation.

At the risk of annoying NCP, the first logical step is to oblige Mr Deshmukh to step away from the position of home minister and simultaneously set in train a probe conducted by a retired Supreme Court or high court judge. Even if it is true, as many suspect, that the BJP, which has no love lost for Mr Thackeray and his party Shiv Sena, may have manipulated events behind the scene to trigger the current denouement, with a view to playing politics to return to power in Maharashtra, the CM is obliged to discharge his *raj dharma* not only politically but by being technically and constitutionally correct.

Wins for merit, politics

Controversies, politics and criticism of the incumbent government for using the National Film Awards to reward its darlings are now par for the course. Almost every year, as soon as the long list of awards is announced, congratulatory messages and carping begin a parallel race. Questions are raised about the relevance of the awards, faults are pointed out in the selection of the jury, processes and choices. And yet, National Film Awards remain the most prestigious and respected. Were it left to the devices of Mumbai's film-magazine backed awards, it would seem that India only churns out melodramas that prance around five songs.

The National Film Awards are the only truly "national" awards that celebrate cinema and artists from across the country.

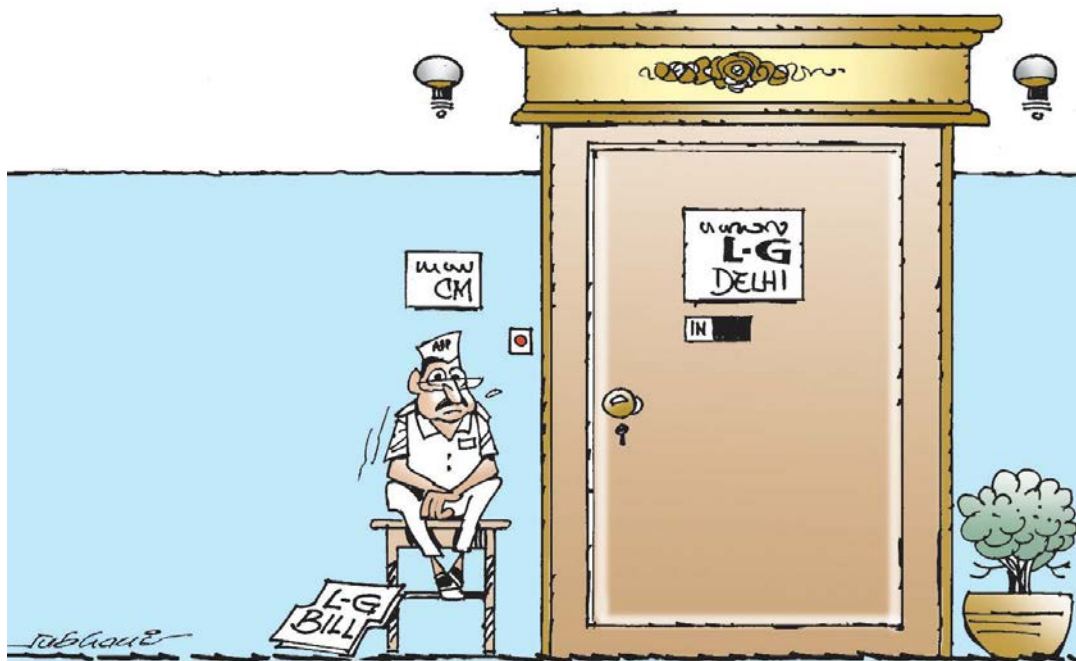
Given Indians' obsession with films and movies' power to influence, it is naive to think that the government of the day won't use the national awards to its benefit. And the 67th National Awards, announced on Tuesday for films released in 2019, is no different.

Kangana Ranaut, the BJP's most vocal flag-bearer on social media, has received her fourth national award for her performance in two films — *Manikarnika* and *Panga*. Ms Ranaut is a very talented actress, but this would be her third national award since 2014. In these six years there have been other, much better performances, but they have only been on the screen.

This year's list also includes several films that neatly align with the BJP's ideology, like the best direction award for Sanjay Puri's film *Bahattar Hoorein* (72 Virgins), and *Holy Rights*, Farha Khatun's film on Triple Talaq bagging the award for the best film on social issues.

It would be churlish to cast aspersions on the merit of these films based simply on the fact that deal with issues that are currently palatable because also included in this year's list are two sublime performances by actors portraying characters very relevant to our times. Manoj Bajpayee and Dhanush have both won the best actor award — the former for his performance in and as *Bhonsle* (Marathi), and Dhanush for his role in Vetrimaaran's Tamil film, *Asuran*. Bajpayee plays an ageing police constable who fights the rise of communalism in his chawl and Dhanush plays a dalit villager who fights off upper caste landlords to save his family. In these bleak times, that's reason enough for celebration.

Subhani



India should not fall for China's charm offensive



Abhijit Bhattacharyya

Is gullible India once again falling for the Dragon's charm offensive? After the betrayal and battering this country and its valiant forces faced at the hands of the People's Liberation Army in Galwan Valley, Pangong Tso, Depsang and Gogra/Hot Springs last summer, and at the Doklam tri-junction earlier, why do we forget this humiliation and treachery when, for good reasons of its own, the adversary puts on its benign mask and pretend to place all animosities on the backburner. How else does one deal with the words of Wang Yi, China's foreign minister, who also holds the weightier post of state councillor, as he appeared to reach out to New Delhi earlier this month: "China and India are friends. Should end suspicion." "Should not undercut each other." "Boundary dispute not the whole story", as the "rights and wrongs of the Line of Actual Control conflict clear", and "let's resolve border issues".

Too good to be true? It's all beautifully crafted, carefully scripted and tries to bypass the real issues to paint India as the villain, with the aggressor playing the victim card! The press, of course, laps it all up, and forgets to play its real role — to ask the tough questions? Of WHY China is doing this, and at the present juncture. Instead, there are headlines like: "Dragon turns dove, talks peace, partnership with India".

It is a truism — but worth repeating now — that peoples and nations which forget their own history are condemned to repeat it. Have we forgotten that when Chairman Mao's People's Republic was born in October 1949, India, which had attained independence just two ears earlier, was one of the first major countries outside

the Communist bloc to extend the hand of friendship to the new revolutionary nation? And how did Mao and his cohorts respond to Jawaharlal Nehru's overture for peace and partnership across the Himalayas? By invading Tibet in 1950, driving out the Dalai Lama into exile in 1959 and then, just three years later, trying to invade India in 1962. For Nehru, who actually believed in the concept of "*Hindi Chini bhai bhai*", it was a shock and a betrayal from which he never recovered, but what excuse do we have today for forgetting the lessons of history? Is that what Wang hopes for, that Nehru's successors in Delhi will similarly be taken in by Beijing acting nice?

But why criticise Wang alone? Is he the only one showing India in poor light? Aren't Indians themselves busy pulling down their country in the face of the Communist Party of China's ferocious aggression? It's because China's biggest consumer-supporters are inside India; along with Delhi's powerful business and trade elite. So even if India's Prime Minister ceaselessly impresses upon the nation to pursue the goal of "Atma Nirbhar Bharat", top Indian corporates are singing a different tune. Said one corporate leader: "We like to believe we are global company... and must continue to trade with China. Because if we conduct our business by excluding such a large country ... and market ... we will be poorer for the loss of that experience".

This unabashed dependence on China, and by extension of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), is all pervasive, and extends to the nation's largest corporations, whose motto clearly seems: "Company first, country later". This, of course, is

true for most large companies worldwide. No wonder several countries, from the United States to Australia, and to China, are now busy trying to rein in mega corporates who have become too big for their boots — and feel emboldened to challenge the State with impunity!

But some business deals have more serious implications than others. It was recently reported in the Indian media that "Bharti Airtel has awarded a telecom infrastructure expansion contract worth ₹300 crores to China's Huawei". What is disturbing is that Airtel's national long-distance network — which will carry inter-circle and international traffic, as well as Internet traffic and that from main landing stations — will now be run by Huawei, which has connections to the CPC.

Is this a Greek tragedy? At a time when the PLA soldiers are forcibly entering Indian territory and killing Indian soldiers, a CPC-run Chinese company will earn crores in the guise of managing sensitive, secret, critical communications deep inside India. Is this the kind of unequal war we want to engage in?

That's a basic contradiction in India today. The PM is pushing for self-reliance, while our corporate honchos appear to have another agenda.

Sadly, the matter doesn't end there. The entire world knows about China's global cyberattacks, with India being a priority target due to the CPC's deep penetration in Delhi. So, when reports emerge of a "Red Echo over India", there's

hardly a whimper, only deafening silence. It's akin to acceptance of the Dragon's malice: with Chinese malware on the rampage, targeting India's power grid utilities.

The Chinese have dug so deep within India that they have learnt to take in their stride the occasional outbursts by Delhi, with some minor glitches like a few anti-dumping duties or the ban on a few Chinese apps — which are really too insignificant for the CPC to worry about. For they know that Indians have a weakness for all things Chinese — from consumers to corporate bosses — just as in the nineteenth century the Middle Kingdom was addicted to Indian produce. Today, in a bewildering role reversal, Indians seem totally addicted to Chinese cars, computers, cellphones, toys and lamps.

At the same time, the rising anti-Chinese sentiments among some sections are giving birth to new forces and alliances like the "Quad". Has Delhi suddenly become the pivot for both the success and failure of China's geostrategic goals in 2021? As Xi Jinping's CPC looks ahead to celebrating its centenary on July 1, 2021, this year is critical to establishing the success of "Xi's Way" in its capitalist wonderland. Beijing thus suddenly feels the need to mend fences, but can Delhi take advantage of such overtures, and for once act in its own self-interest?

Post-script: As the "Quad" raises the heat, the Dragon is at it again, trying to blackmail soft target Delhi. A new dam on the Brahmaputra will control the waters flowing into India, and no Indian will get a Chinese visa without a "Made in China" Covid-19 jab. Can India reciprocate, using the same formula to deny Indian visas to aspiring Chinese without an India-made jab? How long can India take this Chinese blackmail, humiliation and battering?

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College. The views expressed are personal.

The Chinese have dug so deep within India that they have learnt to take in their stride the occasional outbursts by Delhi, with some minor glitches like a few anti-dumping duties or the ban on a few Chinese apps...

LETTERS

BEING HUMAN

This is with reference to your editorial *Let Myanmar refugees stay* (March 23). Dalai Lama and his loyalists who escaped the onslaught of China are happily rehabilitated in HP and Karnataka. During Bangla liberation in 1971, millions of refugees were provided succour in our country. Angela Merkel of Germany won accolades for opening borders to millions of refugees from Syria and Iraq. As a neighbour, India is placed in a comfortable position to provide shelter and assistance to several Myanmar citizens who escaped the onslaught of its illegal military ruler. We are bounden to support Ang San Su Kyi, Nobel peace prize winner to come back to power when democratic process is restored.

Parthasarathy Mandadi, Tirupati

WELCOME DECISION

THE DECISION of the Indian government to allow citizens above 45 years without co-morbidities to get vaccinated against Covid-19 from April 1 is welcome, especially at a time when the infection rate is on the rise. The government should ensure that all pandemic protocols are followed at vaccination sites and enough stock of vaccines are available (at both private hospitals and government vaccination centres). People should be educated by the government on the importance of getting vaccinated.

M.C. Vijay Shankar, Chennai

FREEBIE CULTURE

THE CULTURE of 'freebies' started and perfected by the chiefs of the two major Dravidian political parties in Tamil Nadu under the cover of 'populist schemes', has indoctrinated the rural voters and brought about a well-rounded welfare ideology in the state. Dole-outs are nothing short of bribes, and that a government has no imperium to create private assets out of public funds. Free distribution of goods is not a substitute for a truer welfare model that seeks to achieve growth through enhancing productive resources in the economy. It provokes rancour that both these parties have spent crores of tax-payers' money to provide free stuff, and in the process left the state's revenue-deficit soaring. The peculiar nature of Tamil Nadu politics makes a few things harder to comprehend. Conventional wisdom dictates that rampant populism and widespread corruption are not only endemic to politics, but are antithetical to economic growth and human development. But in Tamil Nadu, they coexist comfortably, and that is the bane of this State.

R. Sivakumar, Chennai

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Maleeha Lodhi



US peace plan for Afghanistan to face critical challenge ahead

The Biden administration has launched its first diplomatic initiative to accelerate the Afghan peace process even as it continues its review of Afghan policy. This is reflected in a leaked letter from secretary of state Antony Blinken to President Ashraf Ghani that sets out its proposed plan. It is also evident from the discussion draft of a peace agreement shared by the US with Afghan parties and the regional diplomacy now underway by special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad.

These moves signal three things — a renewal of US commitment to withdrawal from Afghanistan, its desire to do so after securing a peace settlement among the warring Afghan parties and the willingness to use pressure to quickly achieve this. This raises several questions. Is the Biden administration overreaching with an ambitious plan that it wants to accomplish in a limited timeframe? In deciding to mount pressure on the parties does the US have the leverage to get them to agree? Is the proposed "new, inclusive" interim government an achievable goal as bitter foes will have to share power? With Washington having drafted a peace agreement, albeit for discussion, will Afghan parties take ownership of this?

The Biden team is vigorously engag-

ing Kabul, the Taliban and other Afghan leaders in discussions over the peace plan and the May 1 deadline for US withdrawal with the proviso that final decisions will emerge once the review concludes. President Joe Biden has said that meeting the May 1 deadline will be tough but it won't be extended by "a lot longer". Meanwhile, the Taliban have warned against any delay in this deadline and of an unspecified "reaction" if this happens.

The US diplomatic initiative — according to the leaked letter — has four elements. One, a meeting to be convened by the UN of representatives of Russia, the US, Pakistan, Iran and India to forge regional consensus to support the peace plan. Two, a draft peace agreement to expedite negotiations on a settlement and ceasefire. A key proposal is to set up a transitional government once agreement is reached. Three, Turkey to host a meeting between the two sides to seal a peace deal. And four, a 90-day reduction in violence to avert a spring offensive by the Taliban. This plan is punctuated by the US warning that it is considering full withdrawal of forces by May 1 but not ruling out other options.

By clearly communicating that a political settlement is a priority — not just the military withdrawal, as it was for president Trump — a prudent path

seems to have been outlined especially as diplomatic parleys underway will shape the conclusions of the US review.

Regional consensus to back a peace deal is clearly necessary. This is also a way for Washington to ensure that Iran is included in the diplomatic process. No timeframe has been set for this. But the UN will have to deftly play the role expected of it. Moscow, while welcoming the transitional government idea, has not said anything on the US plan and is embarked on its own regional diplomacy including a peace conference hosted last week on Afghanistan. The Pakistan-India dynamic also has to be kept in view; Islamabad has already conveyed its misgivings over India's inclusion in the proposed conference to US officials.

With two new processes now envisaged in addition to that in Doha it would be important not to allow the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha to be diluted or complicated by the proposed new ones. They should facilitate the Doha process and not replace it. The principal diplomatic effort should remain in the Doha talks.

Washington is clearly in a hurry. Trying to force the pace of the peace process reflects US frustration with the stalled intra-Afghan talks. It also shows impatience with President Ghani's obstructive tactics, evident from the

tough tone of Blinken's letter. The tight timeframe in which the US wants a settlement done and dusted aims to compel the two sides to negotiate seriously. Even so the expectation for negotiations to yield an expeditious outcome runs up against an ineluctable reality that the tough compromises needed for an agreement are unlikely to emerge quickly just because Washington has set a deadline. The US can intensify pressure on both sides but that doesn't mean it has enough leverage over them to reach a speedy settlement. A senior Afghan official recently told PBS that the US has adopted a "fast food" approach, forcing everybody to consume something that is "too quick to succeed".

There is also the question of whether in order to expedite the process Washington has overprescribed the elements of an agreement — drafting one itself rather than letting it emerge from negotiations. This lays it open to being viewed as an "imposed" solution. While the US says it is not seeking to dictate terms and its peace agreement is a discussion draft it is yet to be determined whether Afghan parties see it the same way.

The idea of a transitional government, vehemently opposed by Ghani, makes sense before a more permanent government can be installed following

adoption of a new constitution and elections. But can the two sides and other Afghan leaders show the accommodation needed for a workable power-sharing arrangement? In an initial response a Taliban spokesman asserted that interim governments have proven ineffective in the past but the Taliban have yet to take a firm position.

Pakistan's interest lies in the success of intra-Afghan talks that can produce a negotiated end to the war and a lasting settlement before the full withdrawal of US forces. That is what Islamabad means by its repeated calls for a "responsible withdrawal". It does not want its neighbour to descend into political chaos or a civil war, and sees an inclusive post-settlement government in Kabul as the best way to ensure peace and stability. It seeks assurances that Afghan territory will not be used against Pakistan. US officials have also been told that Islamabad stands ready to do what it can to help the peace process. It is however up to the Afghan parties to seize the moment as the US plan starts to unfold and faces critical tests in the months ahead.

*The writer is a former Pakistani ambassador to the United States and the UN
By arrangement with Dawn*

SHORT TAKES

Bottas eyes better show this season

Paris: After finishing even further behind his Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton last season, Valtteri Bottas took stock. If he ever wants to really challenge for the Formula One championship, he realized, he needs a stronger mindset. "I've realized that a lot of that is the mental side of things," Bottas said. "I'm trying to be mentally at my best, trying to find the right way of approaching every single Grand Prix weekend, (finding) more of the 'flow' state."

When Nico Rosberg wrestled the F1 title from his then-teammate Hamilton after an intense battle in 2016, he put much of his success down to mental strength. Bottas has not mounted a serious challenge in the same way. Bottas started the past two seasons brightly with victories, only for his challenges to quickly fade as Hamilton imposed his superiority. — *AP*

Espargaro ready for Honda debut

Doha: The 2021 MotoGP World Championship is about to commence, Pol Espargaro is excited for his first race on the RC213V after a strong test as Stefan Bradl lines up alongside him. Sunday will see the lights go out on the Grand Prix of Qatar and begin another thrilling MotoGP World Championship season. After a difficult 2020, the Repsol Honda Team enter the new season with rejuvenated determination and desire to return to the front. This will be the first of two races at the 5.4-kilometre-long Losail International Circuit, Round Two coming the following week.

A productive test has Espargaro and his side of the garage feeling positive ahead of the first race but has set no expectations for the weekend, wanting to focus on continuing to deepen his understanding of the Honda.

Zlatan returns to Sweden squad

Stockholm: An unusually reserved and humble Zlatan Ibrahimovic had to hold back the tears on Monday as he arrived in Sweden ahead of his return this week to the Swedish national squad after nearly five years away.

Veteran striker Ibrahimovic showed a more sensitive side to his usually brash public persona when he was asked about what his two teenage sons, Maximilian and Vincent, thought of his international comeback.

"It's not a good question you're asking. I had Vincent here, who actually cried when left him. But it's OK, it's OK," he said with tears in his eyes. Sweden's most successful player, the AC Milan forward retired from international football with 116 caps and 62 goals for his national team. — *AFP*

Marseille fans jailed for violence

Marseille: Four people were handed jail terms on Monday and two were cleared on charges stemming from violent incidents outside Ligue 1 football club Marseille's training centre in January. The leaders of two hardcore Marseille fan groups, a secretary who helped the organisation and a fan carrying fireworks, were handed custodial sentences of up to a year in jail. — *AFP*

Live on TV

SHOOTING

World Cup: 50m Rifle 3P Men Final from 9.30 am; 25m Pistol Women Final from 11.15 am; 50m Rifle 3P Women Final from 3.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

European Qualifiers for 2022 World Cup: Turkey vs The Netherlands from 10.30 pm; Portugal vs Azerbaijan from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; France vs Ukraine from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Six; Belgium vs Wales from 1.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1

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EXTRAODINAIRE

Rookies Krishna, Krunal shine as India begin ODI series with a bang

Pune, March 23: Debutants Krunal Pandya and Prasidh Krishna made the big stage their own to give an all-round India a convincing 66-run victory over world champions England in the first ODI of the three-match series here on Tuesday.

After under-fire opener Shikhar Dhawan delivered with a solid 98, Krunal (58 not out off 31) smashed the fastest fifty by a debutant to fire India to 317 for five following England's decision to field.

At 135 for no loss in the 15th over, with Jason Roy (46 off 35) and Jonny Bairstow (94 off 55) going strong, England seemed to be running away with the chase before Krishna (4/54) and Shardul Thakur (3/37) shared seven wickets between them to script a winning comeback.

The 25-year-old Krishna's figures were the best by an Indian debutant as England's innings ended at 251 in 42.1 overs. Considering the nature of the surface, it was a commendable effort from the Indian bowlers, who carried on from the T20 series to defend gettable targets with remarkable ease.

Krishna, who leaked 37 runs in his first three overs, came back strongly and troubled the batsmen with his ability to generate extra bounce.

Thakur once again provided the breakthroughs when the team needed and senior pro Bhuvneshwar Kumar too chipped in with a couple of wickets towards the end.

England had the game in the bag but were guilty of throwing it away, failing to build on the flier of a start given Bairstow and Roy.

Earlier, Dhawan and Virat Kohli (56 off 60) shared 105 runs for the second wicket before Krunal (58 not out off 31) and K L Rahul (62 not out off 43) sent England on a leather hunt with their unbeaten 112-run stand off 57 balls to take the team



India's Shikhar Dhawan en route to his 98 against England in the first one-day international at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Tuesday.

— *AFP*

SCORECARD

India: Rohit Sharma c Jos Buttler b Stokes 28, Shikhar Dhawan c Morgan b Stokes 98, Virat Kohli c Moeen b Mark Wood 56, Shreyas Iyer c (sub) Livingstone b Mark Wood 6, K.L. Rahul (not out) 62, Hardik Pandya c Bairstow b Stokes 1, Krunal Pandya (not out) 58. Extras (lb-3, w-5) 8. **Total (for 5 wkts, in 50 Overs) 317.** **FoW:** 64-1, 169-2, 187-3, 197-4, 205-5. **Bowler:** Mark Wood 10-1-75-2, Sam Curran 10-1-48-0, Tom Curran 10-0-63-0, Ben Stokes 8-1-34-3, Adil Rashid 9-0-66-0, Moeen Ali 3-0-28-0.

England: Jason Roy c sub (SA Yadav) b Prasidh Krishna 46, Jonny Bairstow c Kuldeep Yadav b Thakur 94, Ben Stokes c sub (Shubman Gill) b Prasidh Krishna 1, Eoin Morgan (c) c Rahul b Thakur 22, Jos Buttler lbw b Thakur 2, Sam Billings c Kohli b Prasidh Krishna 18, Moeen Ali c Rahul b Kumar 30, Sam Curran c sub (Shubman Gill) b K. Pandya 12, Tom Curran c Kumar b Prasidh Krishna 11, Adil Rashid c Rahul b Kumar 0, Mark Wood (not out) 2. Extras (lb 3, w 10) 13. **Total (all out in 42.1 overs) 251.** **FoW:** 1-135, 2-137, 3-169, 4-175, 5-176, 6-217, 7-237, 8-239, 9-241, 10-251.

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 9-0-30-2, Prasidh Krishna 8-1-54-4, Shardul Thakur 6-0-37-3, Krunal Pandya 10-0-59-1, Kuldeep Yadav 9-0-68-0.

● **After under-fire opener Shikhar Dhawan delivered with a solid 98, Krunal Pandya (58 not out off 31 balls) smashed the fastest fifty by a debutant to fire India to a strong 317 for five following England's decision to field after winning toss.**

SECOND I ODI

BANGLADESH BLUNDERS GIFT NZ SERIES WIN

Christchurch (New Zealand), March 23: New Zealand secured a series-clinching five-wicket win in the second one-day international against Bangladesh on Tuesday after a string of fielding errors dashed the tourists' hopes of victory. Black Caps skipper Tom Latham scored an unbeaten 110 after being dropped twice with New Zealand chasing 272 at Christchurch's Hagley Oval.

New Zealand batsman Jimmy Neesham was also given a life, with the errors undoing Bangladesh's good work in making 271 for six after losing the toss and being put into bat.

Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal was left frustrated after seeing his side come close to a maiden victory on New Zealand soil.

"We should have won this game. We created chances but we just couldn't hold on to those dropped catches," he said. "We hardly ever win games but in this kind of situation we have to make sure that we do everything 100 percent. I'm disappointed."

Tamim top-scored for the tourists with 78 and Mohammad Mithun contributed an unbeaten 73 off 57 balls.

Latham's 110 came off 108 balls and was his fifth ODI century, while Devon Conway's 72 helped anchor the innings.

The Black Caps reached the target after 48.2 overs, finishing on 275 for five to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match ODI series. — *AFP*

Brief scores: Bangladesh 271/6 in 50 overs (Iqbal 78, Mithun 73 n.o., Santner 2/51) lost to **New Zealand 275/5** in 48.2 overs (Latham 110 n.o., Conway 72, Mahedi 2/42).



India's Angad Veer Singh Bajwa (left) and Ganemat Sekhon pose with their gold medals in the skeet mixed team event at the World Cup in New Delhi on Tuesday.

India's gold rush continues at WC

New Delhi, March 23: The gold rush continued for Indian shooters at the ISSF World Cup here as Ganemat Sekhon and Angad Vir Singh Bajwa claimed the skeet mixed team top honours on the fifth competition day here on Tuesday.

The 20-year-old Ganemat and 25-year-old Angad, who had topped the qualification with a score of 141, produced another good show to beat the Kazakh pair of Olga Panarina and Alexandr Yechshenko 33-29 in the gold medal showdown. It was the only final lined up for the day.

With this, table-topper India's gold haul at the ongoing event went up to seven. The hosts have also won four silvers and as many bronze medals for a total of 15 medals so far in the tournament.

Another Indian pair of Parinaaz Dhaliwal and Mairaj Ahmad Khan, however, missed the bronze medal by a whisker at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range on Tuesday.

Qatar's Reem A Sharshani and Rashid Hamad claimed the bronze medal with a score of 32 against the Indian team's 31. The duo had produced a perfect score in the final four shots even as 19-year-old Dhaliwal crumbled under pressure and missed a shot to miss out on a third place finish.

In the gold medal match, the 25-year-old Angad, world no.62, looked in fine form as he produced a near-perfect show, missing just one out of his 20 shots even as Ganemat stumbled six times.

It was a nail-biting showdown as India and Kazakhstan were level at 16-16 after the first set of 20 targets.

Ganemat got her act together in the second half, producing perfect next four shots and even though Angad missed one, Olga and Alexander both missed two each to give India a 23-20 lead.

In the final four shots, Angad once again produced a confident performance and even though Ganemat missed her last shot, it didn't matter as the Kazakhs were guilty of missing three.

It was the Ganemat's third medal in the ongoing tournament, having claimed a silver along with Parinaaz Dhaliwal, Karttiki Singh Shaktawat in the women's skeet final on Monday.

Indian men won the skeet team event, while the women settled for silver. — *PTI*

● **Ganemat and Angad produced another good show to beat the Kazakh pair of Olga Panarina and Alexandr Yechshenko 33-29 in the gold medal showdown. It was the only final lined up for the day.**

India women end series on high

SHAFALI REGAINS TOP SPOT IN T20 RANKINGS

Dubai, March 23: Big-hitting teenage Indian batter Shafali Verma rose a rung to reclaim the top spot in the ICC women's T20 rankings, riding on her fine performances in the ongoing series against South Africa at home.

The 17-year-old, who grabbed the top position for the first time after helping her side reach the knockout phase of the T20 World Cup last year in Australia, has leapfrogged Australia's Beth Mooney with scores of 23 and 47.

The Indian team, however, has conceded a decisive 0-2 lead to the visitors in the three-match series. South Africa opener Lizelle Lee is another one to gain in the rankings even though the big-hitting opener lost her top spot in the ODI rankings within a week of replacing England's Tammy Beaumont, the ICC said in a statement. — *PTI*

SA Women clinched the three-match T20I series 2-1, having won the first two matches. Chasing 113 for victory,

the 17-year old Shafali went on a rampage from the word go by picking up 18 runs (3 fours and a six) off the first over bowled

by Shabnim Ismail. She smashed three more sixes in the next three overs, including two off Nadine de Klerk's second over.

The South Africa bowlers came in for severe punishment from Shafali as she produced a wide array of shots during her audacious hitting show.

Nondumiso Shangase ended the young Indian opener's knock by having her caught by Ismail in the deep in the ninth over. But by then, the match was as good as over in India's favour.

Mandhana showed her class by producing the final flourish, taking India to 114/1 in 11 overs. **Brief Scores: South Africa 112/7** in 20 overs (Sune Luis 28; Rajeshwari Gayakwad 3/9) lost to **India 114/1** in 11 overs (Shafali Verma 60, Smriti Mandhana 48 not out).

ANBALAGHAN'S ALL-ROUND SHOW HELPS CAPTAIN CC THRASH VALAVANUR CC

Chennai, March 23: Anbalaghan (85 & 6/9) sparked in Captain CC's 158-run win over Valavanur CC in the first division of the Villupuram DCA league.

Brief scores: I-Division: Friends CC 312 in 48.2 overs (K. Lakshmanan 39, P. Karthick 44, V. Ezhilarasan 64 (not out); T. Kuthubudeen 3/62, K. Vinoth 3/68) bt Sakthi CC 84 in 24.4 overs (B. Raji 7/32); Ammu CC 197 in 44.1 overs (V. Anbu 56, S. Sivaraj 58; A. Saravanan 5/50) bt Vikravandi CC 175 in 38.3 overs (K. Arun Kumar 30, S. Chandrakanth 44, K.Thirunavukarasu 42; A. Prabakaran 5/38); Captain CC 184 in 39.2 overs (S. Anbalaghan 85; A. Parthiban 3/46, S. Mohan Raj 3/36) bt Valavanur CC 26 in 11.2 overs (A. Sriganesh 3/13; S. Anbhagan 6/9).

II-Division: SRCTA 168/6 in 25 overs (V. Krishnaraj 32, R. Sukanthan 53 (not out), D. Vivekanandh 29) lost to SG CC 172/5 in 23.1 overs (M.K. Stalin 45, J. Santhosh Kumar 28, R. Sathiyaraj 34).

III-Division: Siga Mang "B" 90 in 15.4 overs (V. Rajasekaran 49; A. Jayabalan 4/16, M. Mohan Raj 4/15) lost to TVS CC 91/5 in 12.3 overs (D. Sathish 52).



Anbalaghan



West Indies' Rahkeem Cornwall celebrates his half century against Sri Lanka in North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda, on Monday. — *AFP*

before opening into an array of expansive strokes upon the arrival of the second new ball.

His unbeaten 60 has come of 79 balls with two sixes and nine fours embellishing an entertaining innings. — *AFP*

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 169 in 69.4 overs vs **West Indies 268/8** in 101 overs (Cornwall 61, Lakmal 5/47).

Cornwall blasts WI back into contention

North Sound (Antigua and Barbuda), March 23: Rahkeem Cornwall blasted a maiden Test half-century and dominated an eighth-wicket partnership of 90 with Joshua da Silva to lift the West Indies to 268 for eight in their first innings, a lead of 99 runs, at the close of the second day of the first Test at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Monday.

Outstanding seam bowling by Suranga Lakmal, who claimed his fourth five-wicket innings haul in 64 Tests, had restricted the home side to 171 for seven just after tea in reply to the tourists' modest first-day effort of 169.

However the burly Cornwall, selected primarily for his off-spin bowling but also well-known for his powerful hitting in the domestic game, joined wicketkeeper-batsman da Silva in first resisting the best efforts of the Sri Lankan bowlers



Madras Gymkhana 'C', winners of the Sanmar-TNTA city club E Zone championship.

Madras Gymkhana win 'E' Zone league

Chennai, March 23: Madras Gymkhana 'C' beat Indira Nagar Club 'J' 2-1 to emerge victorious in the final of the 'E' Zone Sanmar-TNTA city club league championship. **Results: 'E' Zone:** Madras Gymkhana 'C' bt Indira Nagar Club 'J' 2-1 (Rajeev Mohan/Giri Raghavan bt J. Hariraman/Rohan George 6-0, 6-1; Suraj Saravanan Raman/Manas Vibhu bt Madhavan Rama Narasiyan/Ravikumar Ramamurthy 6-1, 6-2; Mohamed Riyaz/Giridar Gowrishankar lost to K. P u g a l e n d h i Kumaraswamy/Biswa Narayan 2-6, 3-6).

Kiruthik in second round

Kiruthik Kalyaan defeated Samarbir Sidhu in the men's singles to move into the second round of the TVS ITF juniors under-18 tennis tournament at Madurai. **Results: Main Draw-1st Round: Boys singles:** Yuvan Nandal (IND) bt Carl Holder (FRA) 6-4, 3-6, 6-3; Manas Dhamne (IND) bt Adhirit Awal (IND) 6-2, 6-2; Anup Bangari (IND) bt Arjun Premkumar (IND) 6-2, 6-3; Dhruv Hirpara (IND) bt R. Rishiv Andhan Sadeeshkumar (IND) 6-2, 7-5; Ayush P. Bhat (USA) bt Cahir Warik (IND) 6-3, 6-4; Kiruthik Kalyaan (IND) bt Samarbir Sidhu (IND) 6-4, 3-6, 6-4.

Girls singles: Riyah Dugar (IND) bt Mirudhula Palanivel (IND) 6-1, 6-4; Madhurima Sawant (IND) bt Kashmira Manohar (IND) 6-1, 6-3; Sonal Paygonda Patil Patil (IND) bt Miruthula Mahalakshmi Krishnarajan (IND) 6-3, 6-3; Shireen Ahamed (IND) bt Meenakshi Lava Kumar (IND) 6-2, 6-2; Amodini Naik (IND) bt Pari Chavan (IND) 6-4, 4-0; Kristi Boro (IND) bt Kashish Kant (IND) 6-0, 6-3.

Boys doubles: Yuvan Nandal (IND)/Denim Yadav (IND) bt Arjun Gohad (IND)/Jaishnav Shinde (IND) 6-3, 6-7(6) [10-7]; Carl Holder (FRA)/Devaharshith Neelam (USA) bt Kabir Chhabria (IND)/Akarsh Gaonkar (IND) 6-2, 6-4; Dhruv Hirpara (IND)/Aryan Shah (IND) bt Dhananjay Athreya (IND)/Daksh Prasad (IND) 4-6, 6-1 [10-7]; Monil Lotlikar (IND)/Raghav Harsh (IND)/Ritvik Nadikude (IND) 7-5, 6-0; Dhanush Patel (IND)/Agriya Yadav (IND) bt A.S. Kiruthik Kalyaan (IND)/Nithis Baalaji Latha Nallusamy (IND) 7-5, 3-6 [10-6]; Ayush P. Bhat (USA)/Maanav Jain (IND) bt Siddharth Madhavan (IND)/Rakshak Tarun Vivekananthan (IND) 6-0, 6-2; Adhirit Awal (IND)/Cahir Warik (IND) bt Manas Dhamne (IND)/Dev Kanbargimath (ROU) 7-5, 6-4; Anup Bangari (IND)/Rishiv Andhan Sadeeshkumar (IND) bt Albert Segura Onichtchenko (ESP)/Samarbir Sidhu (IND) 6-7(5), 6-1 [10-7].