

Annamalai may make Lok Sabha debut - Rise of BJP's 'angry young man'

NEW DELHI (ROYAL JOURNALISM) :K Annamalai is likely to be fielded in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, say sources, following a swift rise through the BJP ranks with him becoming the youngest president of the Tamil Nadu unit in 2021. The 39-year-old's name is likely to feature in the BJP's first list of 100 candidates that has been finalised by the party's central election committee, sources say. If it happens, it will be yet another achievement for the former IPS officer, known for his take-no-prisoners style, has taken on the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu head on. While Annamalai may not have any electoral success to flaunt in his CV, his aggression has given the party a big boost in an otherwise "South-mukt" BJP. Tamil Nadu BJP President K Annamalai addresses a public meeting, in Nagercoil (PTI)

YOUNGEST PRESIDENT OF TAMIL NADU BJP

Tamil Nadu politics has always been dominated by the two major Dravidian parties, DMK and the AIADMK. After the death of former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, the AIADMK is at its weakest, creating a void in the opposition space after the 2021 polls where the DMK stormed to power. The BJP, sensing an opening, entrusted 36-year-old Annamalai to lead the state unit, springing a surprise as he had joined the party only a year ago. In fact, BJP national general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh is credited with getting him inducted into the saffron party fold. Annamalai, who was

known for being a tough police officer, earning the tag "Singham Anna", was a perfect fit for the BJP as it wanted a hands-on leader to make its foray into the Southern state. The BJP drew a blank in the state in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. However, BJP's 'angry young man' had humble beginnings and hails from an agricultural family in Thottampatti of Karur district. Annamalai belongs to the Gounder community, which has pockets of influence in the Kongu region of the state. Newly appointed Tamil Nadu BJP president Annamalai being felicitated at the party's state unit headquarters, in Chennai (PTI)

MECHANICAL ENGINEER TO 'SINGHAM ANNA'

A mechanical engineering graduate who did his MBA from IIM-Lucknow, Annamalai joined the police force in 2011 and was posted in Karnataka as assistant superintendent of police. In his eight-year career, Annamalai gained a reputation of being a tough cop, leading undercover crackdowns on gutka sales and campaigning against drug abuse. He quit the force in 2019, resigning as the Deputy Commissioner (South), Bengaluru. A year later, he joined the BJP, saying he was inspired by the life and humble beginnings of PM Narendra Modi. "I am a big fan of Modi ji... He shows me that a common man can aspire to reach the top and achieve the goal, and he does not need to come from any dynasty," he had said. Since then, there has been no looking back for Annamalai and his sole focus has been to "achieve the goal" of

increasing the BJP's footprint in Tamil Nadu. In the three years that he has been at the helm of the Tamil Nadu BJP, Annamalai has become the face of the Opposition in the state, though the AIADMK is the larger party.

TAKING THE DMK ON CORRUPTION

With the faction-ridden AIADMK appearing reluctant to take on the DMK, Annamalai has launched no-holds-barred attacks on the ruling party over corruption. Last year, he released a series of audio tapes, called 'DMK Files', allegedly of former Finance Minister Palanivel Thiaga Rajan (PTR) telling a journalist that Udhayanidhi Stalin and Sabareesan (the son-in-law of Chief Minister MK Stalin) had made Rs 30,000 crore in a year. The DMK has, however, filed defamation cases against Annamalai. What has also helped him in intensifying his attack on DMK over corruption is a number of its ministers and leaders, such as Senthil Balaji, K Ponmudy, S Jagathrakshakan and EV Velu being investigated by central probe agencies. That Annamalai enjoys full backing from the BJP leadership was visible when the party stood behind him despite the AIADMK severing ties in September 2023. While a section of BJP leaders had criticised the free rein given to Annamalai, BJP leaders said the state chief was doing great work of strengthening the party. Simultaneously, Annamalai did not lose his sight on the 2024 Lok Sabha election and kicked off his "En Mann, En Makkal"



padayatra, which covered all the 234 constituencies of Tamil Nadu, on July 8, 2023. Theyatra culminated earlier this week in Tiruppur, with PM Modi attending the event. "Tamil Nadu is at the cusp of a historic political change," PM Modi said, with Annamalai beside him. Annamalai's padayatra drew crowds from all over the state, an attestation of his growing recognition achieved beyond social media. Throughout his padayatra, Annamalai's messaging has been on connecting with the Tamil people. "I will not let my Tamil people fall prey to the nefarious politics that has plagued this state for long. I am here to walk with you," he reportedly said at one of his rallies. Recently, in an interview with India Today TV, political strategist Prashant Kishor said the vote share of the BJP would go into double digits in Tamil Nadu -- anything between 7 per cent and 15 per cent. Kishor credited Annamalai for the BJP establishing a stronger base in the state. While Annamalai has pitchforked the BJP as the principal opposition in Tamil Nadu while navigating through the intricacies of the state's political landscape, it remains to be seen if it pays electoral dividends for the party.

Nitin Gadkari serves legal notices to Mallikarjun Kharge, Jairam Ramesh, demands written apology within 3 days



New Delhi: Union minister Nitin Gadkari has sent legal notices to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and general secretary Jairam Ramesh for sharing alleged defamatory content about him on the party's official X account. Balendu Shekhar, Gadkari's lawyer, said the BJP leader was shocked to see that a 19-second-long video clip was taken out of his interview with a news portal. The clip, his lawyer said, concealed the context and the meaning of his words. Per the notices, Nitin Gadkari's interview was twisted and distorted. His lawyer accused the Congress leaders of carrying out a sinister

act with the sole intent and ulterior motive of fanning and creating confusion, sensation and disrepute. "While pursuing the said sinister act, my client's interview has also been twisted, distorted, and presented on your handle 'X' by uploading the above video, which is bereft and devoid of contextual meaning. The same has been done deliberately and consciously with a selected piece of Hindi captions," his lawyer wrote in the notice.

What was in the video?

The video was a clip taken out of Nitin Gadkari's interview with The Lallantop. The Congress posted the clip on X with the caption: "Aaj gaon, mazdoor aur kisan dukhi hai. Gaon mein achhe roads nahi hai, peene ke liye shudh pani nahi hai, achhe aspatal nahi hai, achhe schools nahi hai -- Modi sarkar ke mantri Nitin Gadkari (Villages, labourers and farmers are unhappy today. Villages do not have roads, drinking water, good hospitals and schools -- Nitin Gadkari, a minister in the Modi government)."

Nitin Gadkari claims sinister act

by Kharge, Ramesh

Nitin Gadkari's lawyer said Kharge and Ramesh, two of the most influential leaders of the Congress, were aware of the context of the remark in which the former was trying to highlight the efforts of the Narendra Modi government in bringing about development in the country. He said the video with the Hindi caption was posted to malign Nitin Gadkari's reputation. "My client was shocked to know, hear, and see the contents and post on the microblogging site 'X' from your party's (Indian National Congress) official handle at 9:36 AM on March 1, 2024, on which you noticees deliberately posted 19 seconds of audio and visual clipping by concealing the contextual intent and meaning of the client's interview," it said. "The same sinister act has been done with sole intent and ulterior motives to fan and create confusion, sensation, and disrepute to my client in the eyes of the public at large, as well as a futile endeavour to build fissure and rift in the solidarity of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which is all poised to win the trust of

people in the upcoming general election under the leadership of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi," added the notice. His lawyer wrote in the notice that the caption of the interview was completely false and scandalous. "The contents of the piece of the video clip, which is devoid of contextual intent of interaction as well as a captioned Hindi title, are completely false, scandalous, factually incorrect, are completely afterthought, and are an intentional attempt by you noticees to insult and demean my client, coupled with your intent to provoke members of the Bharatiya Janata Party to develop an ideological rift with my client," read the notice.

Nitin Gadkari demands written apology

Nitin Gadkari has demanded the removal of the video from X and a written apology within three days. "This legal notice is calling you to remove/delete the above mentioned post from your microblogging site 'X' forthwith and in any event, not later than 24 hours of the receipt of this legal notice, coupled with a written apology

Himanta Sarma wants Rahul Gandhi to 'go ahead' with his yatra. Here's why

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma launched a fresh attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and his ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, claiming the party is facing setbacks wherever the campaign passes through. Addressing the BJP's Vijay Sankalp Yatra in Telangana on Tuesday, Sarma said, "Wherever the (Bharat Jodo) Nyay Yatra is crossing through, Congress is collapsing there... Now, they are going to UP but they are experiencing differences with Akhilesh Yadav. Wherever the Nyay Yatra goes, there will be 'Anyay' (injustice) with Congress." The Assam Chief Minister may have been alluding to seat-sharing

talks between Congress and ally Samajwadi Party reportedly hitting a dead-end ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. Incidentally, the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is presently traversing Uttar Pradesh. Sarma continued, "Rahul Gandhi is touring India on his Bharat Jodo Yatra. I say, go ahead. When he went on an India tour for the first time, he lost the elections in three states. This time he will lose the entire country." Sarma further criticised the Gandhi scion, questioning his leadership and achievements. "Rahul Gandhi says what did Prime Minister Modi do? And Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi hold a road show on the National Highway built by

Prime Minister Modi... Rahul Gandhi has learned nothing in this world except lies. Sometimes I wonder if he has any brains." Sarma's remarks come amidst the ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, which aims to cover 6,700 km through 15 states in the lead-up to the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. His criticisms about the campaign's effectiveness also hold a grain of truth. The yatra, which started in strife-torn Manipur and is set to conclude in Mumbai, has already covered Bihar and West Bengal. And in both these states, Congress has witnessed reversals very recently. In Bihar, JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar



broke away from the Mahagathbandhan alliance, comprising the RJD and Congress, to join hands with the BJP and form the government. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee also declared that her party, the Trinamool Congress, will fight the Lok Sabha election on its own in the state.

Isro successfully tests engine that will take Indians to space

In a big move towards the development of the Gaganyaan mission, the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) successfully tested the cryogenic engine that will power Indian astronauts to space. The Indian space agency completed the human rating of its CE20 cryogenic engine that will power the cryogenic stage of the Launch Vehicle Mark II (LVM3) to space. The heavy-lift vehicle has been chosen to launch Indian astronauts on the maiden flight of the Gaganyaan mission. The test, the seventh of a series of vacuum ignition tests, was conducted at the High Altitude Test Facility at ISRO Propulsion Com-

plex, Mahendragiri, where engineers simulated the flight conditions. "The ground qualification tests for the human rating of the CE20 engine involved life demonstration tests, endurance tests, and performance assessment under nominal operating conditions as well as off-nominal conditions w.r.t thrust, mixture ratio, and propellant tank pressure," Isro said in an update. "With the latest test, the ground qualification tests of the CE20 engine for the Gaganyaan program have been completed." To qualify the CE20 engine for human rating standards, four engines have undergone 39 hot firing tests under different operating conditions for a



cumulative duration of 8810 seconds against the minimum human rating qualification standard requirement of 6350 seconds," Isro said. The Indian space agency in 2023 conducted the test launch of the Test Vehicle (TV-D1), a single-stage liquid rocket. The TV-D1 test flight was a crucial part of the Gaganyaan mission, which

aimed to demonstrate India's capability for human spaceflight by sending a crew of three individuals into a 400-kilometer orbit for a three-day mission and ensuring their safe return by landing in the waters of the Indian Ocean. The test flight was to assess the mid-flight crew escape system of an early version of the Gaganyaan crew module. The TV-D1 vehicle used a modified VIKAS engine with a Crew Module and Crew Escape System mounted at its front. It stood at 34.9 meters tall and had a lift-off weight of 44 tonnes. Its structure was a single-walled unpressurized aluminum structure with a simulated thermal protection system.

Pakistan government grants financial autonomy to its Intelligence Bureau

Pakistan's caretaker government has fulfilled a longstanding demand of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) by granting it the status of a full-fledged division, allowing it complete financial autonomy, according to media reports on Tuesday. The decision was taken by Prime Minister Anwaar-ul Haq Kakar on Monday, the reports said. "The IB division will work directly under the Prime Minister with its office to be established in the cabinet division," according to a notification. The IB director general will be the ex-officio secretary to the di-

vision, the Dawn newspaper reported quoting the notification. "The IB earlier worked under the cabinet division and faced multiple problems, especially in financial and administrative matters. It is believed that the decision will also end interference of other departments and individuals in IB's working," it said quoting a senior official of the PM Office. Before the status change, the secretary of the cabinet division had been notified as the principal accounting officer for the IB and all expenditures of the bureau were scrutinised by the finan-

cial adviser of the cabinet division. Similarly, the bureau has been empowered to take its own decision regarding the transfer, posting, and promotion of his officials, the report said. 'Beheaded' charge

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party on Tuesday said that it will initiate criminal proceedings against PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb for her remarks that jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan should have been "beheaded" in 2014 to rid the country of a "fitna" (anarchist). Marriyum said Khan should have



been beheaded after they staged a protest in Islamabad in a bid to topple the Nawaz Sharif government.

Termination from job because a woman got married is coarse case of inequality: Supreme Court

NEW DELHI (ROYAL JOURNALISM): Terminating the employment of a woman on the ground that she has got married is a "coarse case of gender discrimination and inequality", the Supreme Court remarked recently, as it directed the Centre to pay a compensation of ₹60 lakh to a former military nurse who was removed from service under a now-defunct Army order that provided marriage as a ground for such action. A bench of justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta's directive on February 14 came while hearing a case in which a permanent commissioned officer former Lt Selina John of military nursing service (MNS) was removed from service by the army in August 1988. The release order said her job was terminated on the grounds that she got married in April that year and she had obtained a low grade in the annual confidential report (ACR). The termination order was



passed under a 1977 Army instruction titled "Terms and conditions of service for the grant of permanent commissions in the Military Nursing Service", which was later withdrawn in 1995. In March 2016, John's release order was set aside by the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT), Lucknow, which directed her reinstatement with back wages. In August that year, the Centre challenged the appeal in the top court. Dismissing the Centre's appeal, the bench said: "We are unable to accept any submission that the re-

spondent - Ex. Lt. Selina John - could have been released/discharged on the ground that she had got married. Such rule was ex-facie manifestly arbitrary, as terminating employment because the woman has got married is a coarse case of gender discrimination and inequality." It added: "Acceptance of such patriarchal rule undermines human dignity, right to non-discrimination and fair treatment." The order also cited past judgments of the top court to stress that no law or regulation can permit gender bias, and rules considering marriage of women employees and their domestic involvement as a ground for disqualification would be unconstitutional. Taking into consideration that John had since worked for a brief time as a nurse with a private organisation, the top court modified the AFT order and granted full and final settlement of her claims by ordering the Centre to compensate her with a sum of

₹60 lakh. "We direct the appellants (Union government/Army) to pay compensation of ₹60 lakh to the respondent within a period of eight weeks," the bench said. In case the payment is not made within the said period, an interest of 12% per annum will be charged on the amount from the date of the order till the date of payment, it added. The rule included in the 1977 army provided that "Termination of appointment in MNS" could be done on three grounds - on the opinion of the medical board to be unfit for service, on getting married, and for misconduct. While challenging her termination before the AFT, John submitted that she was not given a hearing or even a warning about her low grading of ACR. She alleged that the order was the outcome of personal bias against her as the principal matron under whom she worked had opposed her marriage with an army officer.

