

தேசிய சீனியர் கைப்பந்தம்:

அரைஇறுதியில் தமிழக அணி தேர்வு

பெங்களூரு, ஜன. 10-

64-வது தேசிய சீனியர் கைப்பந்து சாம்பியன்ஷிப்போட்டி பெங்களூருவில் உள்ள கன்டவாரா ஸ்டேடியத்தில் நடந்து வருகிறது. இதில் நேற்று நடந்த ஆண்கள் பிரிவு அரைஇறுதியில் இந்தியன் ரெயில்வே-தமிழ்நாடு அணிகள் மோதின. விறுவிப்பான இந்த ஆட்டத்தில் ரெயில்வே அணி 25-23, 25-23, 25-19 என்ற நேர்செட்டில் தமிழக அணியை வீழ்த்தி இறுதிப்போட்டிக்கு முன்னேறியது. மற்றொரு அரைஇறுதியில் கேரளா அணி 3-2 என்ற செட் கணக்கில் பஞ்சாப்பை வென்றது. இன்று நடக்கும் இறுதி ஆட்டத்தில் ரெயில்வே-கேரளா மோதுகின்றன.

Volleyball league all set for April relaunch

ABHISHEK BAADKAR
BENGALURU, JAN. 7

After a four-year hiatus since its inception, the Indian Volleyball League is set for a rebirth. According to K. Nanda Kumar, the General Secretary, Karnataka Volleyball Association, the IVL that was launched with much fanfare four summers ago will be revived, but in a better way. "We are planning to launch the event in April. The second edition of the Indian Volleyball League will be better and we will make it more popular," Nanda Kumar said on Thursday.

The six-team affair will be played across the country and will be on the lines of the other popular sports leagues.

"We will have six franchisees bidding for different cities from India. There will be a players' auction too. We want to market the sport much better than last time after the launch," he added.

The VFI has been planning to revive the league for a couple of years now and there was extensive research done for the IVL-2.

TAMIL NADU TO MEET UP IN QF

Chennai: Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand entered the quarterfinals of the 64th senior national volleyball championship after beating Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan respectively in Bengaluru on Thursday. Uttar Pradesh will meet Tamil Nadu in the last eight while Uttarakhand will face Kerala.

Results: QF playoff: Men: Uttar Pradesh bt Andhra Pradesh 21-25, 25-21, 25-21, 19-25, 15-11. Uttarakhand bt Rajasthan 25-19, 20-25, 27-25, 25-19. **Women:** Karnataka bt Haryana 25-16, 25-21, 25-14. Andhra Pradesh bt Punjab 25-12, 25-14, 25-19.

QF line-up: Men: Kerala vs Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu vs UP, Services vs Punjab, Karnataka vs Railways. **Women:** Railways vs Karnataka, Kerala vs Andhra Pradesh, Telangana vs West Bengal, Maharashtra vs TN.

Railways defend their crown

SANDEEP MENON
BENGALURU, JAN. 10

Indian Railways ensured that the titles remained in their own cabinet after both the men's and women's team defeated Kerala in their respective finals of the Senior National Volleyball Championships at a packed Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium, on Sunday.

The Railway men had to battle tooth and nail against Kerala before coming out winners with a 19-25, 27-25, 25-20, 20-25, 16-14 verdict in two hours and 10 minutes while the women's team rallied to win 19-25, 25-21, 25-20, 25-17.

There were some ugly scenes at the end of the men's final as Jerome Vinith and Ragesh KG protested with some physical force. With the referee having given a written complaint, the duo are likely to face some consequences.

Kerala started the stronger and showed perfect tandem of attack and defence as they took the first set with relative ease.

The defending champions came back strong in the second and zoomed to a 9-7 lead before their opponents mounted a comeback, with Vinith and Akhin GS coming good, to go ahead 21-19.



Railways exult after beating Kerala in the final of the 64th senior national volleyball championship in Bengaluru on Sunday.

— SHASHIDHAR B

Relentless, Railways used the short ball tactic to save three set points before Prabhakaran smashed his way to level the tie.

The third set was another close affair with the teams level at 19-19 before mistakes from Akhin and Ratheesh KS propelled Railways to a 2-1 lead.

With their backs against the wall, Kerala, as they have shown time and again in the tournament, pulled off all the stops in the fourth set to force the decider.

Keeping with the script, it was yet another tight battle as the teams

exchanged leads and stayed level until a bad first touch by Kerala was taken advantage of by Bharnidharan to edge Railways 14-13 ahead.

Kerala, who would surely have felt some questionable decisions went against them, fought hard and saved one match point but lost out when the first referee Sanjay Kumar deemed Rohith P had overreached at the net, much to the delight of the Railway men.

Eighth straight crown for women
Earlier, Railways women's

team also claimed their 30th, and eighth straight, title.

Kerala rode on their defensive prowess of Tiji Raju and Sruthi M to take the first set. But Railways recovered from losing a set for the first time in the championship to rally.

Results: Men: Final: Railways bt Kerala 19-25, 27-25, 25-20, 20-25, 16-14. 3rd place: Tamil Nadu bt Punjab 25-15, 25-16, 25-27, 25-21. Women: Final: Railways bt Kerala 19-25, 25-21, 25-20, 25-17. 3rd place: Tamil Nadu bt West Bengal 25-16, 25-17, 25-19.

Kerala, Railways to clash for title

SANDEEP MENON
BENGALURU, JAN. 9

Defending champions Indian Railways and Kerala registered contrasting wins to set up a title clash for the Senior National Volleyball Championships, here at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium on Saturday.

In the semifinal encounter, Railways defeated Tamil Nadu 25-23, 25-23, 25-18 in a repeat of last year's final while Kerala overhauled a two-set deficit to oust Punjab 19-25, 23-25, 28-26, 25-18, 15-13.

Kerala took time to settle and were staring defeat in the face before they found their mojo. The first set saw lack of communication and some poor smashes while their star Jermoe Vinith hardly found any chance to pull off his trademark smashes.

The second saw the South state launch a spirited comeback from 9-14 down to lead 15-14. This passage of play also saw Rohith P find his finishing prowess and blocker Akin GS's serves cause a bit of problem for the opposition.

Top-class action

The other last-four tie saw some top class action with long rallies and some sizzling smashes from both

sides, something the crowd appreciated judging by the decibel levels in the stadium.

Both sides went neck-and-neck before a bizarre call by the referee, who failed to spot the ball bouncing following a smart placement by Naveen Raja Jacob, gave the edge to Railways 22-20. The defending champions then took the set with authority through S Prabhakaran's ferocious spikes.

The second saw Tamil Nadu take the early lead as Dinakaran, GR Vaishnav stood strong in defence while Ukkra Pandian ran the show. But a couple of bad services saw the tide turn as Railways stormed back, riding on performances by KJ Kapildev, Manu Joseph's and the ever consistent Prabhakaran, to level at 20-all and then wrap up the set 25-23.

The set also saw tempers flare up owing to contentious calls leading to TN coach P Sundaram being shown a yellow card while Kapildev received the same for the opposition.

Results: SF: Men: Kerala bt Punjab (19-25, 23-25, 28-26, 25-18, 15-13); Railways bt Tamil Nadu (25-23, 25-23, 25-18) **Women:** Railways bt West Bengal (25-9, 25-20, 25-13)

Tamil Nadu spike past Karnataka

SANDEEP MENON
BENGALURU, JAN. 6

Tamil Nadu came up with the goods when it mat-

tered most as they ran through Karnataka 31-29, 25-21, 25-16 in the final Senior National Volleyball championship Group B league encounter at the Stree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium on Wednesday.

With three sides finishing level on six points in the group, the win also propelled Tamil Nadu to

the top of the group on better set ratio while Services and Karnataka finished second and third respectively.

This also set up a quarterfinal clash, on Friday, between the home side and defending champions Railways while Services will take on Punjab.

Karnataka started well and kept their nose ahead for much of the first set, even holding a 14-10 lead at one time, before an error at the back court by

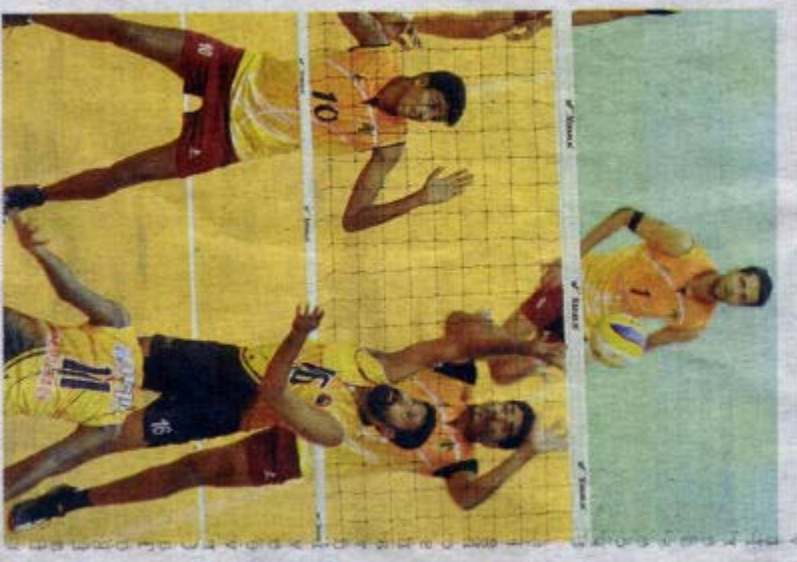
Kavikumar gave Tamil Nadu the break they craved and the P Sundaram-coached side battled to a 31-29 win after both teams had squandered three set points each. The second set saw setter Ukkra Pandian grow more and more dominant as he took charge of the proceedings as the last year's finalists took an early 6-3 lead before some inspired show by Vinay Rokhade pulled Karnataka level at 14-14.

Two teams battled tooth and nail but Pandian's serve tilted the set 25-21 in Tamil Nadu's favour.

The third set was all Tamil Nadu as Karnataka failed to withstand Pandian's guile and had no answer to Vashnav's blocking and Naveen Raja Jacob's back court smashes as they took the set, and the match, 25-16 in 70 minutes. Earlier, Punjab weathered a spirited show by Kerala to emerge 25-23, 25-23, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13

winners in a thrilling Group A encounter which lasted a tad over two hours. Despite the loss, Kerala topped the group with seven points.

Results: Men: Group A: Punjab bt Kerala 25-23, 25-23, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13. **Group B:** Services bt Rajasthan 25-20, 30-28, 25-18, Tamil Nadu bt Karnataka 31-29, 25-21, 25-16. **Women: Group A:** Maharashtra bt West Bengal 25-20, 25-23, 25-13. **Group B:** Kerala bt Tamil Nadu 25-20, 25-16, 25-19.



Tamil Nadu's M. Ukkrapandian sets up an attack against Karnataka in a group match of the 64th senior national volleyball championship on Wednesday.

NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL ■ Hosts Karnataka go down to defending champions Indian Railways in the QF

TAMIL NADU TO MEET RAILWAYS IN SF

DC CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU, JAN. 8

Tamil Nadu hammered Uttar Pradesh 25-20, 25-17, 25-17 on Friday to set up a semi-final date with Indian Railways in the 64th senior national volleyball championship here. In the other semi-final, Kerala will take on Punjab.

Tamil Nadu made light work of Uttar Pradesh. In a one-sided clash that lasted a little more than an hour, TN came up with a power-packed performance from the senior pros to knock out Omveer Maan's side.

Karnataka's campaign came to an end following a 3-1 loss to defending champions Indian Railways. At a packed Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium, title favourites Railways' collective effort thwarted the young Karnataka outfit with a 25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22 victory. Led by India skipper S. Prabhagaraj, the Railmen trounced the local team.

Punjab rode on Gurinder's all-round show to advance as they pummeled Services into submission with a 25-19, 25-23, 25-16 win. India ace Gurinder paired up with attacker Hardeep Singh to make mincemeat of Services' defence.

Earlier, attacker Jerome Vimeesh led from the front as Kerala overcame Uttarakhnad 3-2. Ably supported by setter Manu V., Kerala bagged the first two sets comfortably before a late fight-back from Vinit Kumar kept Uttarakhnad's hopes alive.

Apart from Vinit, Uttarakhnad's star blocker Mohit Sherawat came to the party to demolish Kerala in the fourth set. A revitalised Kerala, banking on their experienced seniors, wrangled up the fifth set.

Results: QF: Men: Tamil Nadu bt Uttar Pradesh 25-20, 25-17, 25-17. Indian Railways bt Karnataka 25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22. Kerala bt Uttarakhnad 25-21, 25-23, 23-25, 14-25, 15-12. Punjab bt Services 25-19, 25-23, 25-16.

Women: Indian Railways bt Karnataka 25-17, 25-3, 25-8. Kerala bt Andhra Pradesh 25-13, 25-10, 25-11. West Bengal bt Telangana 25-22, 22-25, 11-25, 25-9, 15-11. Tamil Nadu bt Maharashtra 25-23, 25-15, 19-25, 20-25, 18-16.

Action today: SF: Men: Kerala vs Punjab (3 pm). Indian Railways vs Tamil Nadu (5 pm). **Women:** Indian Railways vs West Bengal (1 pm), Tamil Nadu vs Kerala (7 pm).

K.J. Kapil Dev of Indian Railways sets up an attack against Karnataka in the quarter-final of the 64th senior national volleyball championship in Bengaluru on Friday. Railways, the defending champions, won 3-1 to set up a semi-final with Tamil Nadu. — Shashidhar B



Uttarakhand, UP men in quarters

VOLLEYBALL / Karnataka women through to the last eight

N. SUDARSHAN

BENGALURU: The Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh men's teams qualified for the quarterfinals after coming through the playoffs on day six of the 64th Senior National Volleyball Championship at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Thursday.

For Uttarakhand - one of the strongest teams in the recent times with one final and four semifinal finishes in the last six years - the 25-19, 20-25, 27-15, 25-22 defeat of last year's bronze medalist Rajasthan would have no doubt brought a sense of relief.

In the 63rd edition, it had suffered a blip as it had to field a weak team following a player-dispute and as a result had missed out on a quarterfinal berth. Uttar Pradesh, meanwhile, overcame West Bengal 25-21, 27-25, 25-15.

As a side Uttarakhand had not played competitively for a year following a ban by the Volleyball Federation of India. On the day, it had already played five sets as it had to best Haryana in the first round of the qualifying. Even as the rustiness and the tiredness both made themselves evident intermittently, the team was still able to pull through.

Uttarakhand and Rajasthan both committed more than their fair share of errors in the first two sets and ultimately ended up splitting them. Amidst this, attacker Vinit Kumar, for the former, gave a good account of himself with some powerful spikes and blocker Lavmeet Kataria shone for the latter.

The business end of third set was where the match turned. Locked at 20-20, then at 23-23, and then at 25-25, Uttarakhand fi-

nally broke Rajasthan's resistance to claim the set 27-25. Sukhinder Singh came up with the all-important block on set point.

Early in the fourth, Rajasthan wilted. Its opponent established a four-point lead and more or less maintained it to ultimately triumph.

In the women's section host Karnataka too had to grind its way through into the last eight. Early in the morning it beat Uttar Pradesh 25-13, 25-17, 25-19 and later in the afternoon - its third match in less than a day's time - knocked out Haryana 25-16, 25-21, 25-14.

Attacker K.V. Megha led the way with impressive shows in all three sets. For Haryana, captain Nisha and Sahil tried to salvage something, but with the rest of the team not holding up, all the effort went in vain.

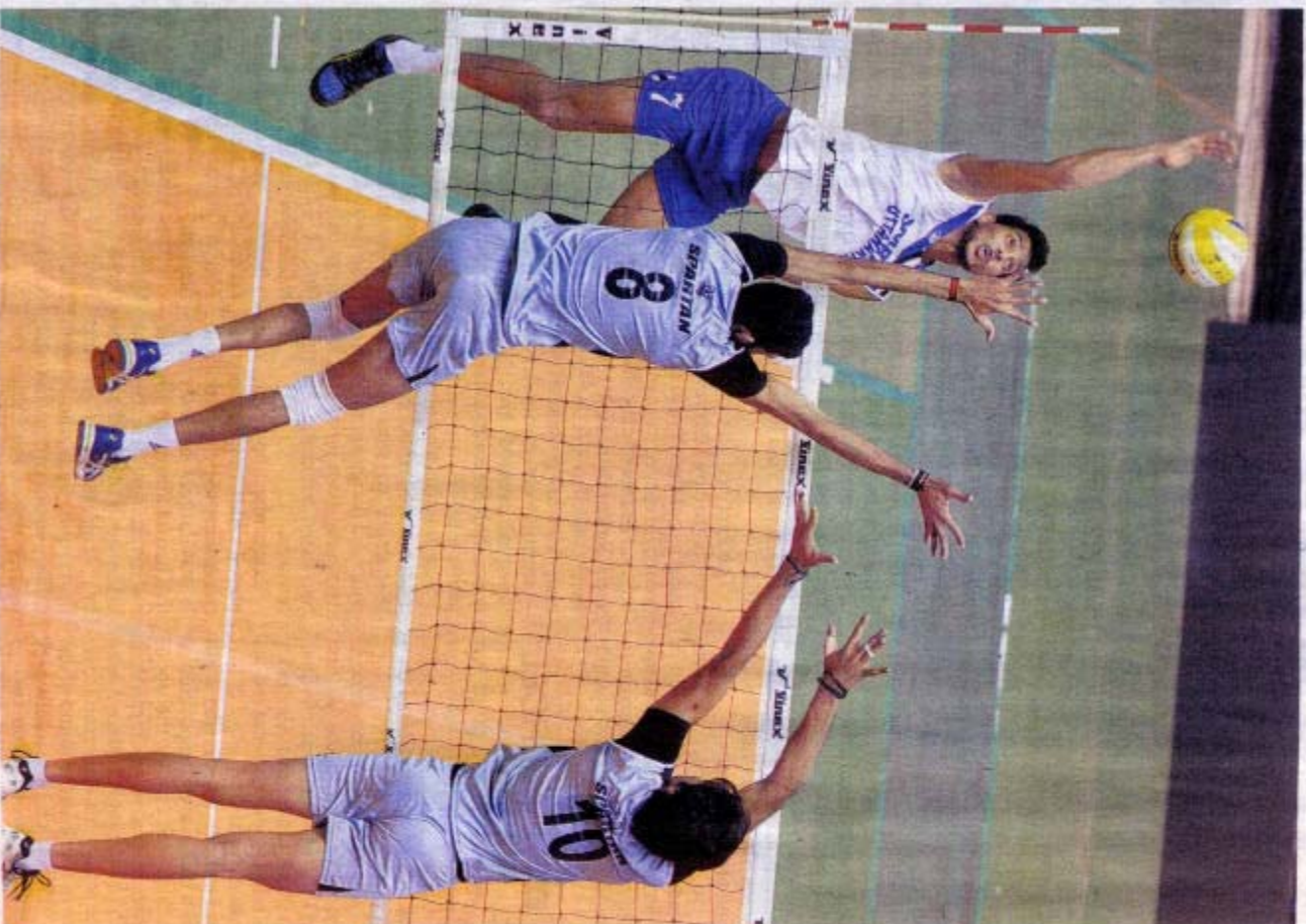
Joining Karnataka in the quarterfinals will be Andhra Pradesh which put it across Punjab in straight sets.

The results: Quarterfinal qualifiers: Round two: Men: Uttar Pradesh bt Andhra Pradesh 21-25, 25-21, 25-21, 19-25, 15-11; Uttarakhand bt Rajasthan 25-19, 20-25, 27-25, 25-22. Women: Karnataka bt Haryana 25-16, 25-21, 25-14; Andhra Pradesh bt Punjab 25-12, 25-14, 25-19.

Round one: Men: Uttar Pradesh bt West Bengal 25-21, 27-25, 25-15; Uttarakhand bt Haryana 25-20, 18-25, 25-20, 25-27, 15-10. Women: Karnataka bt Uttar Pradesh 25-13, 25-17, 25-19; Andhra Pradesh bt Himachal Pradesh 25-16, 25-13, 25-11.

Quarterfinal line-up: Men: Kerala vs Uttarakhand; Tamil Nadu vs Uttar Pradesh; Services vs Punjab; Railways vs Karnataka.

Women: Railways vs Karnataka; Kerala vs Andhra Pradesh; Telangana vs West Bengal; Maharashtra vs Tamil Nadu.



Uttarakhand's Vinit Kumar tries to get past Rajasthan blockers. — PHOTO: SAMRAJITH KUMAR G P

Grand double for Railways

N. SUDARSHAN

BENGALURU: In a nerve-wracking final that lasted two hours and ten minutes, the Railways men defeated Kerala 19-25, 27-25, 25-20, 20-25, 16-14 to win its second successive Senior National Volleyball Championship — 15th overall — at the Sree Kanteera Stadium on Sunday.

It was a grand double for the Railways for the second time in as many years as its women's team had earlier beaten Kerala 19-25, 25-21, 25-20, 25-17. It was the ever-eighth successive and 30th title overall.

In the men's final, Kerala was off to a resounding start. Defending with aplomb, it was able to keep in check the Railway attackers. On the other hand, the railwaymen compounded their problems with a non-existent first pass. Sohan Kumar, an attacker, was substituted for the third straight match and was not to be seen again. K.G. Ragesh and Vibin George impressed for Kerala, and Railways duly lost the set 25-19.

Ending on a sour note

BENGALURU: What was a well-contested final between Kerala and Railways, had to end on a sour note after the former's attacker Jerome Viniith, irked by call on the final point which dashed his side's hopes, literally jumped and grabbed the referee Saralay Kumar.

The Kerala players had earlier engaged in verbal duels with the officials over contentious calls in the third set too, and the incidents after the match seemed more of an extension of the same.

It was later learnt that the referee, after having initially filed a complaint to the VFI, withdrew it when Viniith apologised. — Principal Correspondent

Then in the second, from being 17-15 up, it lost five straight points. When Kerala earned its set, a triple set-point at 24-21, Railways was starting down the barrel. But on the last few points, Jerome Viniith's two missed spikes cost Kerala

dearly. S. Prabhakaran's splendid block on 26-25 gave Railways the set. It was a joltbreak it didn't mind. The grin on its players' faces during the changeover said it all.

NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL

The third set went on even terms till 19-19 before Kerala erred. On K.J. Kapil Dev's serve, it gave away four points and lost the set 25-20. Railways, with the two-sets-to-one lead, had gained a foothold in the match that it had badly missed until then.

However, Kerala's penchant for playing five-setters served it well. It took the fourth 25-20 as P. Rohith came up with crucial blocks and Viniith even ex-

celled with his defensive skills. In the fifth set, with much at stake, neither team was in the mood to concede. Even as Viniith kept his attacking zeal intact, the Railway's resilience was on show. Kerala put its nose in front at 10-8, only for Railways to pull itself back.

At 13-13, though, a bad first pass by Ilhero C.K. Ralteesh presented Railways with the first chance to claim the title. A Viniith smash negated it. R. Pratsoodan's fierce spike brought the second match point. It was not to be denied again, as a net overreach by Rohith pulled the curtains down for Kerala.

Like the men, the Kerala women too had started enterprisingly only to lose later. Against its much-fancied opponents, it took the first set 25-19. Attacker Nirmal played a lone hand for Railways, but the rest of the team refused the turn up.

Her fortunes started changing after centre-blocker Anusri Ghosh improved. With Nirmal keeping her level up, Railways

Men win second successive title, women take their eighth



DEFENDING WITH APLOMB: While the Railways women's team had it relatively easy, the men survived a nerve-wracking final against Kerala. — PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

bugged the second and third sets. Attacker Anjali Babu's dip, after having excelled in the first set, marred Kerala's chances.

M. Sruthi (attacker) and Tiji Raju (blocker) ensured Kerala stayed with Railways in the initial exchanges of the fourth. But a string of errors put to rest any hope the southern side had of going the distance.

The results:
Finals: Men: Railways bt Kerala 19-25, 27-25, 25-20, 20-25, 16-14; Women: Railways bt Kerala 19-25, 25-21, 25-20, 25-17.
Third-place playoff: Men: Tamil Nadu bt Punjab 25-15, 25-16, 25-27, 25-21; Women: Tamil Nadu bt West Bengal 25-16, 25-17, 25-19.

Railways stays on track

VOLLEYBALL / The defending champion takes on Tamil Nadu in the semifinals

N. SUDARSHAN

BENGALURU: Defending champion Railways held off a spirited Karnataka side 25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22 in the quarterfinal stage of the 64th Senior National Volleyball Championship at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Friday.

In Saturday's semifinal it will meet Tamil Nadu, which earlier in the day, had a cakewalk 25-20, 25-17, 25-17 victory over Uttar Pradesh.

Railways, bolstered by the return from injury of S. Prabhakaran, displayed its all-round skills right from the start. Between him, the towering Sohan Kumar and the irrepressible Manu Joseph it had three of the best attackers. But its defensive game was equally top-notch.

Led by the two regular blockers in S. Bharanidharan and Sandeep Kumar, it maintained a tight vigil at the net. Thus, it first established a 14-11 lead and then built on it impressively to bag the set by a rather comfortable 25-16 scoreline.

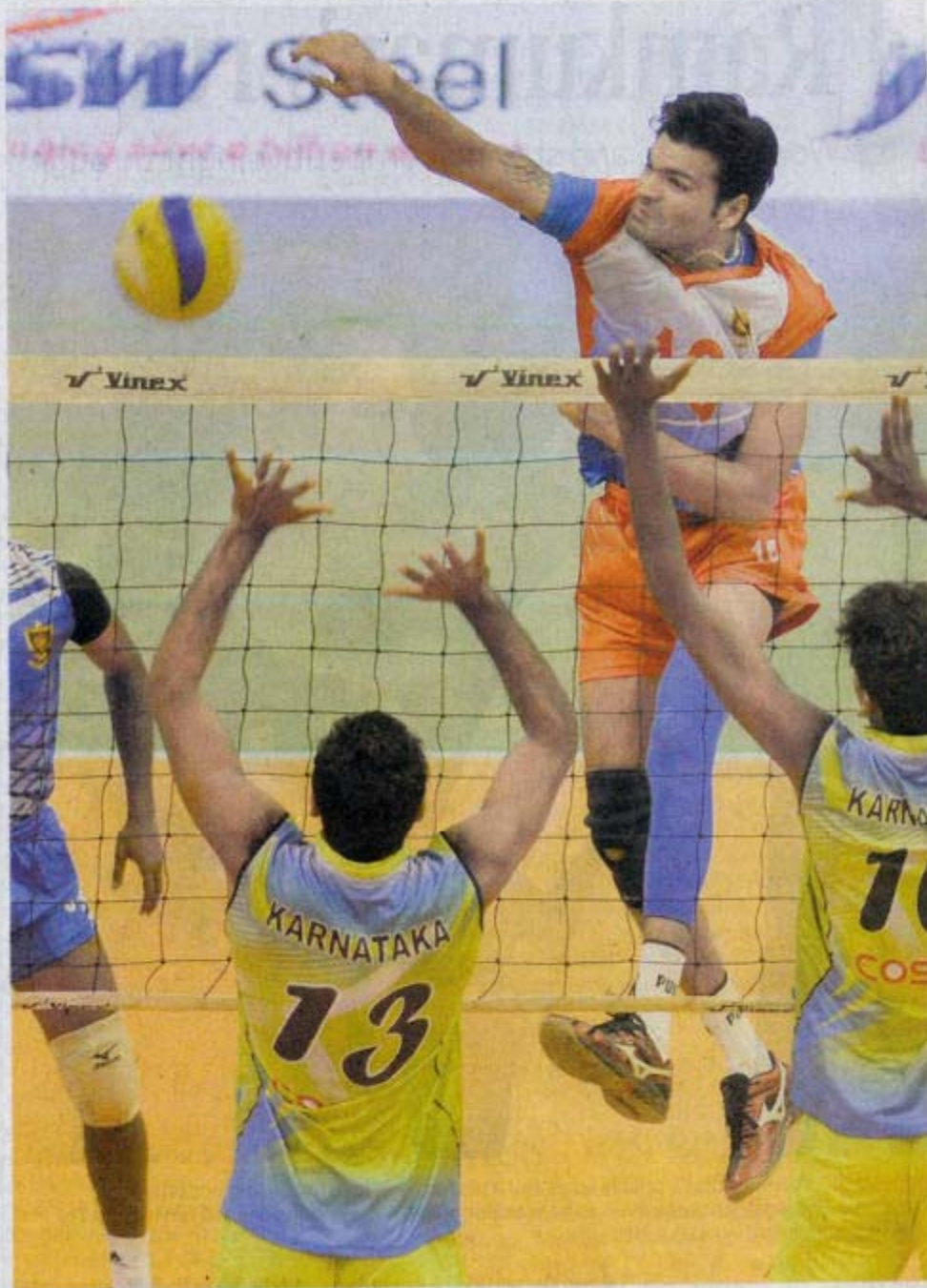
In the second set, Karnataka led by a decent margin at least three times — at 5-2, 12-9 and 19-15. On each of those occasions it let Railways back. A first pass gone awry, a serve dumped into the net or one sent out, all contributed. However, from 20-19 the host held its nerve to clinch the set 25-22.

K. Ganesh, who substituted for T.D. Ravikumar, shone for a brief while with a few good smashes.

The Railways players seemed a wounded lot, and in the third set they came out in full force. The result was first a 5-0 lead which then stretched to 11-5. Karnataka threatened to rear its head by closing the gap to a mere two points. But it was swiftly subdued as the backcourt defence from Joseph and R. Piraisoodan stood out.

Even from thereon, Karnataka refused to wither away. It clung on till the score read 17-17. At that point, Railways, yet again, upped its game. A great serve by Joseph, a deft drop by Piraisoodan and two powerful spikes by Prabhakaran sealed the deal.

The other semifinal will see Kerala meet Punjab. The former played out its second five-setter on the bounce, but this time



Railways' Sandeep Kumar (10) outwits the Karnataka defence in the senior National volleyball championship. — PHOTO K MURALI KUMAR.

came out winning. It defeated Uttarakhand 25-21, 25-22, 23-25, 14-25, 15-12.

Punjab, on the other hand, owing in no small measure to India player Gurinder Singh's rousing performance, demolished Services in straight sets.

Kerala, from being two sets up, lost a close third and imploded in the fourth. The fifth was tight till 6-6 before a three-point cushion to 9-6 gave it some

breathing space. In the closing exchanges, a timely block by Rijas and two excellent smashes by Jerome Vinith brought Kerala the win.

As in the men's section, the Karnataka women too were shown the door by Railways, but in much a more convincing fashion. The latter will now meet West Bengal in the semifinals while Kerala will take on Tamil Nadu.

The results: Quarterfinals: Men: Kerala bt Uttarakhand 25-21, 25-22, 23-25, 14-25, 15-12; Tamil Nadu bt Uttar Pradesh 25-20, 25-17, 25-17; Punjab bt Services 25-19, 25-23, 25-16; Railways bt Karnataka 25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22.

Women: Railways bt Karnataka 25-17, 25-3, 25-8; Kerala bt Andhra Pradesh 25-13, 25-10, 25-11; West Bengal bt Telangana 25-22, 22-25, 11-25, 25-9, 15-11; Tamil Nadu bt Maharashtra 25-23, 25-15, 19-25, 20-25, 18-16.

Kerala overcomes Punjab to enter final

VOLLEYBALL / Railways thwarts Tamil Nadu's challenge in the other semifinal

N. SUDARSHAN

BENGALURU: Kerala will meet defending champion Railways in the final of the 64th Senior National volleyball championship. In the semifinal matches held at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium on Saturday, Kerala came through yet another five-setter and beat Punjab 19-25, 23-25, 28-26, 25-18, 15-13, while Railways thwared Tamil Nadu's challenge 25-23, 25-23, 25-18.

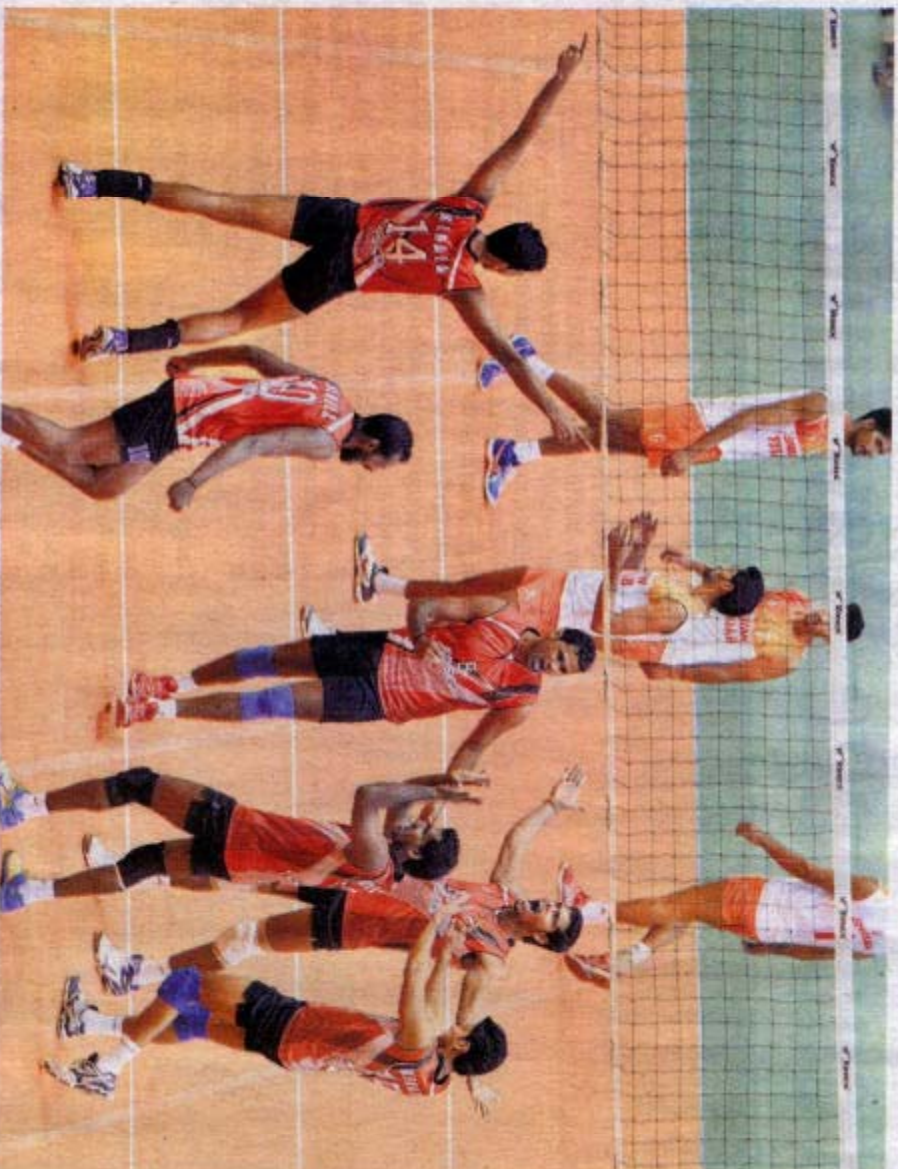
Kerala and Punjab had competed in a similarly gruelling match in the league stages too. But unlike then, it was Kerala which emerged victorious. In the first set though, the big-stage seemed to affect Kerala. It floundered in every essential facet of the game and ended up losing rather timidly.

When Punjab led 14-9 in the second, there appeared to be no way out. However, on G.S. Akhina's serve — who returned to the line-up after nursing a bruised ankle — it restored parity at 14-14. And then when it led 20-18 the tide had certainly turned. But it slipped yet again and Punjab, with a two-set lead, had established the tightest of strangleholds.

Smashing out of trouble

In the third, when Kerala let Punjab back after having led 8-3 and then 16-10, it seemed destined to go down. Though it gave itself a chance at 23-21, Punjab, through Gurinder Singh, smashed its way out of trouble.

On two further occasions when Kerala had set points, it was the India international again who bailed his side out. However, Akhin and Jerome Vi-



HIGH-FIVES: Kerala team is delighted after defeating Punjab in five sets in the semifinals. — PHOTO: K. MIRALU KUMAR

nith fetched a point each as Kerala edged the set 28-26. From then on, Kerala looked an entirely different team. Even as its blockers found a way to deal with Gurin-

der's smashes, the likes of K.G. Ragesh, an attacker, played their part. That the Punjab setters' level too dipped didn't help at all. After winning the fourth set 25-18,

Kerala survived a few nervous moments at the fag end of the fifth. It fluffed match points, two of those when the reliable Vinith missed his customary spikes. But a bad first pass

by Rajveer Singh saw him execute a deft drop and close out the match. The other semifinal, a repeat of last year's final, saw yet another clinical performance by Railways. There wasn't much separating the two sides for a majority of the first two sets. But at crucial moments the Railwaymen always held the aces. It was as much a match lost in the mind as on the court.

Bad luck

With Railways leading 21-20 in the first set, a drop by Naveen Raja Jacob looked to have touched the ground. But the referee ruled otherwise and Tamil Nadu lost the point. The tallisman in S. Prabhakaran planted two smashes on the last two points to finish off the set.

Similarly in the second with Tamil Nadu leading 19-16 and then 20-18, two more close calls went against it. Coach Sundaram was even warned with a yellow card for protesting. At 23-23, Prabhakaran spiked two more successfully and Railways had one foot in the final. The second was dragged along easily after it won the third set 25-18.

Like the men's final, the women's final too will be between Railways and Kerala. Both semifinals were straight-set affairs, with Railways beating West Bengal and Kerala defeating Tamil Nadu.

The results: Semifinals: Men: Kerala bt Punjab 19-25, 23-25, 28-26, 25-18, 15-13; Railways bt Tamil Nadu 25-23, 25-23, 25-18. **Women:** Railways bt West Bengal 25-9, 25-20, 25-13; Kerala bt Tamil Nadu 25-9, 25-17, 25-22.

Punjab pips Kerala in a pulsating contest

VOLLEYBALL / Tamil Nadu defeats Karnataka easily, tops Group B on the basis of set-ratio

N. SUDARSHAN

BENGALURU: In a pulsating five-set match lasting two hours and three minutes, Punjab edged Kerala 25-23, 25-23, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13 on day five of the 64th Senior National volleyball championship at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Wednesday.

Later, in a contest of complete contrast, Tamil Nadu forced Karnataka into submission by an easy 31-29, 25-21, 25-16 margin in just 70 minutes.

Last year's runner-up no doubt played its best match so far, as the experienced duo of setter Utkara Pandian and attacker Naveen Rajia Jacob finally found its bearings.

But Karnataka, on the day, was rank bad.

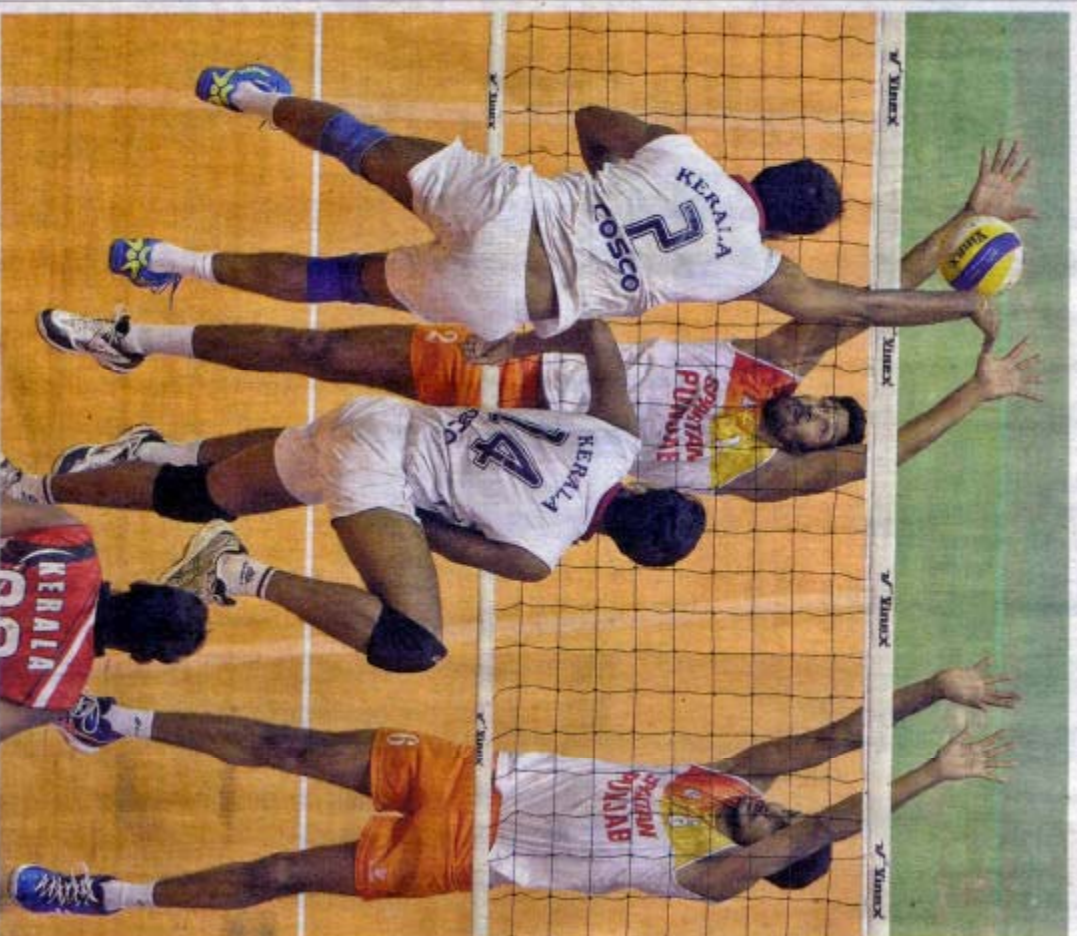
It was the last match of the league stage and even if it had won a set, it would have finished atop Group B, but instead the straight-set loss pushed it to third.

In the end, three sides finished on six points but on the basis of set-ratio Tamil Nadu was declared first, followed by Services and Karnataka.

Rajasthan, with three losses finished at the bottom.

In Group A, despite the loss, Kerala topped with seven points and was followed by Railways (6), Punjab (5) and Andhra Pradesh (0).

As a consequence Karnataka will take on defending champion Railways and Punjab will meet Services in two of the four quarterfinals.



SUPER STUFF: Punjab's Rajveer Singh and Hardeep Singh effectively block a smash from the Kerala side in the National volleyball championship on Wednesday. — PHOTOS: G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR



Tamil Nadu's Dinagarani effects a smash.

The leaders though will know their opponents only after the playoff matches on Thursday.

Early in the day, even as Kerala's centre-blocker G.S. Akhin took off from where he had left against Railways in the previous match, star-attacker Jeerome Vinith misfired for a majority of the first two sets.

Yet, they proved to be tight affairs. After falling behind in each of them, Kerala recovered but unfortunately not well enough. It lost both the sets 25

points to 23.

An injury to Akhin (twisted ankle) at the start of the second, which then forced him to sit out, didn't help. But in K.R. Rijas, Kerala found an able deputy. Vinith too regained his mojo as the side bagged the next two sets convincingly.

In the fifth, after taking the first two points, Kerala lost seven on the trot. In a 15-point final set it proved too big a difference to bridge.

The results:

Men: Tamil Nadu bt Karnataka 31-29, 25-21, 25-16; Punjab bt Kerala 25-23, 25-23, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13; Services bt Rajasthan 25-20, 30-28, 25-18; Madhya Pradesh bt Bihar 25-22, 25-21, 25-21; Assam bt Gujarat 25-22, 26-24, 25-19; West Bengal bt Puducherry 25-18, 25-20, 25-19; Uttarakhnad bt Tripura 25-14, 25-11, 25-13; Himachal Pradesh bt Goa 25-20, 21-25, 25-14, 28-26; Chattisganh bt Jharkhand 25-19, 26-28, 25-18, 25-23; Pondicherry bt I&K 21-25, 25-27, 25-20, 25-16, 15-11; Haryana bt Madhya Pradesh 25-14, 25-18, 25-15; Uttar Pradesh bt Odisha 25-18, 25-19, 25-21; Chandiganh bt Himachal Pradesh 25-19, 19-25, 21-25, 25-18, 15-8.

Women: Andhra Pradesh bt Chandiganh 13-25, 25-09, 25-14, 25-18; Delhi bt Rajasthan 26-24, 20-25, 26-24, 23-25, 17-15; Maharashtra bt West Bengal 25-20, 25-23, 25-13; Kerala bt Tamil Nadu 25-20, 25-16, 25-19; Uttar Pradesh bt Madhya Pradesh 25-17, 25-18, 25-20.

On Tuesday: Men: Maharashtra bt Delhi 25-22, 25-18, 25-19; Telangana bt Jharkhand 25-15, 25-22, 25-20, 25-4, 25-6, 25-7.

UP & Uttarakhand Move Into Last 8

Express News Service

Bengaluru: Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand won their men's qualifying matches to enter the quarterfinals of the 64th national volleyball championships at the Sree Kanteerava stadium here on Thursday.

In a 95-minute encounter, Uttarakhand sent Rajasthan packing with a 3-1 victory. Uttarkhand won the first set at 25-19, but lost the second 20-25. As the teams battled it out, Uttarakhand bagged the third at 27-25 and the

QUARTERFINAL LINE-UPS

Men

Kerala vs Uttarakhand; TN vs UP; Services vs Punjab; Indian Railways vs Karnataka

Women

Indian Railways vs Karnataka; Kerala vs Andhra Pradesh; Telangana vs West Bengal; Maharashtra vs Tamil Nadu

fourth at 25-19 to make the last eight where they take on Kerala. Uttar Pradesh had to sweat it out against Andhra Pradesh winning 3-2 at 21-

25, 25-21, 25-21, 19-25, 15-11 after 110 minutes of a dingdong battle and will clash with Tamil Nadu.

Hosts Karnataka made the women's last eight grade with a 3-0 victory at 25-16, 25-21, 25-14 in 74 minutes over Haryana. Andhra Pradesh women stunned Punjab 3-0 at 25-12, 25-14, 25-19.

Railways, the men's and women's title winners last year, clash with hosts Karnataka in both the sections in what promises to be riveting affair.

Railways Maintain Dominance, TN Teams Third

by SS Shreekumar

Bengaluru: Indian Railways claimed the men's and women's titles at the expense of Kerala in the finals of the 64th national volleyball championships at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium on Sunday. Railways women won the volleyball championships for the 13th time in the last 15 years, defeating Kerala 19-25, 25-21, 25-20, 25-17, while their men's team beat Kerala 19-25, 27-25, 25-20, 20-25, 16-14.

Tamil Nadu came third in both sections, beating West Bengal 3-0 and Punjab 3-1 in the women's and men's third-place play-offs.

Referee Sandeep Kumar of



Indian Railways men and women teams celebrate | JITHENDRA M

Jharkhand was in the thick of action in the heated men's final as Kerala disputed many of his calls.

As Railways skipper Karan Choudhary lunged for an intercept, Kerala's Vinith Jerome pushed the ball in. It

was a clear foul and Railways won the point. The entire Kerala team rushed towards Sandeep, and organising secretary Nanda Kumar had to step in to shield him. The police then intervened and cleared the court.

NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL

Both teams played 'catch us if you can', taking narrow leads without sustaining them. Prabhakaran and Mannu Joseph produced some blazing smashes for Railways, and Ragesh and Jerome excelled for Kerala with their short spikes.

KJ Kapildev did well for Railways too, rattling off five points in a row on his serve to help his team win the fourth set. Mannu Joseph held serve and then got the final point.

Meanwhile, clashing with Railways in the final for the sixth straight year, the last time Kerala beat them at this stage was in

2007. Kerala won the first set at 25-19, but Railways proved to be superior and bounced claimed the next three sets in a row.

Results: Men: Railways bt Kerala 3-2 (19-25, 27-25, 25-20, 20-25, 16-14). **Women:** Railways bt Kerala 3-1 (19-25, 25-21, 25-20, 25-17).

3/4th play-off: Men: TN bt Punjab 3-1 (25-15, 25-16, 25-27, 25-21). **Women:** TN bt West Bengal 3-0 (25-16, 25-17, 25-19).



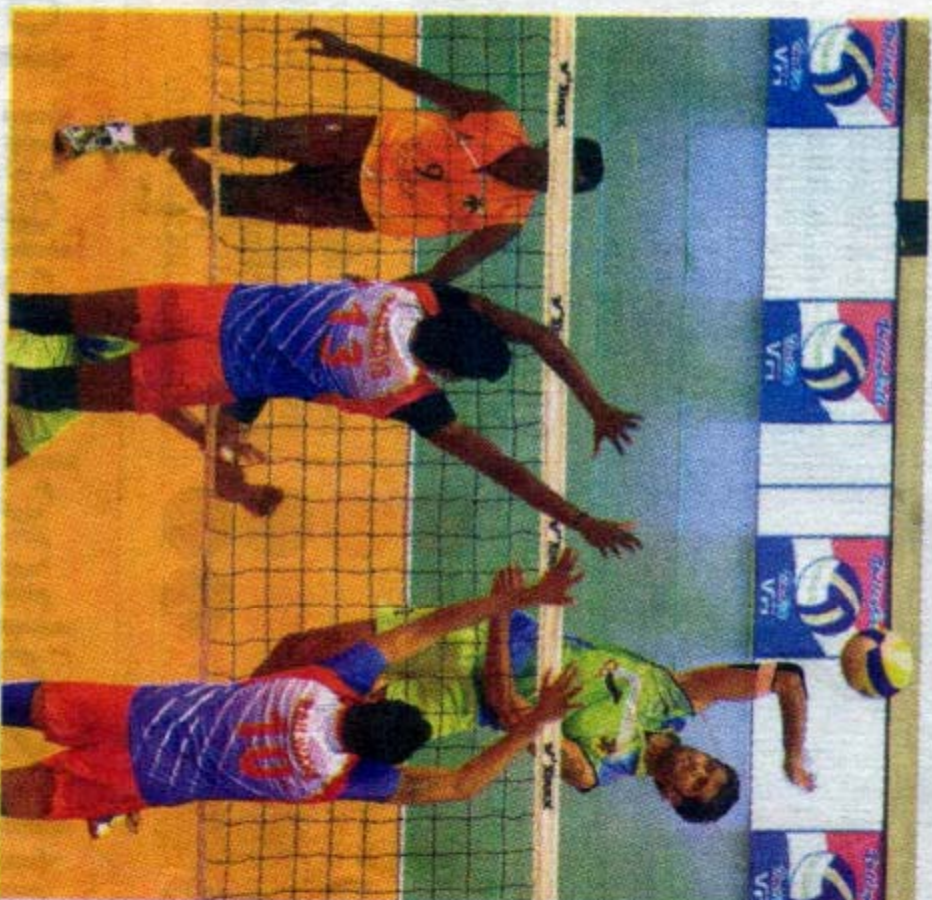
Hosts Ousted, Tamil Nadu to Face Kerala

Express News Service

Bengaluru: It's Punjab versus Kerala and Railways against Tamil Nadu in the men's semifinals of the 64th national volleyball championships, while in the women's section, Railways meet West Bengal and Kerala face off against Tamil Nadu at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium on Saturday.

In men's quarterfinal action, Railways put paid to the hopes of Fed Cup winners and hosts Karnataka 3-1, while Punjab put it across Services 3-0 after Kerala had beaten Uttarakhand 3-2 and Tamil Nadu swamped Uttar Pradesh 3-0.

Holders Railways knocked out hosts Karnataka 3-0 in the women's quarterfinals, while Kerala got past Andhra Pradesh by the same margin to make the semis. West Bengal downed Telangana 3-2 and Tamil Nadu beat Maharashtra 3-2. UP took a brief 7-3 lead,



Action from the Karnataka versus Indian Railways match | JITHENDRA M

but TN then roared back to restore parity and level scores at 16-16, before taking charge. Once they settled down, UP had no answer as they were always ahead and never looked back.

Uttarakhand provided anxious moments to Kerala as they came back from 2-0 down to level the scores, and push the match into a decider. With left-hander Ragesh producing blistering

NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL

erves, Kerala managed to wriggle out. Vbin George, Rohith and Manu combined well as they bagged the first two sets. But Mohit Sehrawat, skipper Ranjit Singh and Sukhjinder Singh did well to pick up points for the northern state, who levelled at two-all. In the decider, Uttarakhand briefly led 6-4 but pressure led to the former's downfall.

Results (all quarterfinals): Men:

Kerala bt Uttarakhand 3-2 (25-21, 25-22, 23-25, 14-25, 15-12), Tamil Nadu bt Uttar Pradesh 3-0 (25-20, 25-19, 25-17), Punjab bt Services 3-0 (25-19, 25-23, 25-16), Railways bt Karnataka 3-1 (25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22). Women: Indian Railways bt Karnataka 3-0 (25-17, 25-03, 25-08), Kerala bt Andhra Pradesh 3-0 (25-13, 25-10, 25-11), West Bengal bt Telangana 3-2 (25-22, 22-25, 11-25, 25-09), Tamil Nadu bt Maharashtra 3-2 (25-23, 25-15, 19-25, 20-25, 18-16).

Kerala Edge Out Punjab to Enter Final

by S S Shreekumar

NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL

Bengaluru: Holders Indian Railways and Kerala teams will clash in the men's and women's finals, respectively, of the 64th national volleyball championships on Sunday. In the semifinals at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Saturday, Kerala recorded a come-from-behind 3-2 victory over Punjab in a nail-biting clash. Railways proved to be far too superior for Tamil Nadu as they crushed them 3-0.

Earlier, Railways women, also defending champs, breezed past West Bengal 3-0 to make the women's final. They will take on Kerala, who slammed Tamil Nadu 3-0 with ease.

Punjab stormed to a 2-0 lead and looked set to topple Kerala. But they hardly expected a Kerala resurgence as they stormed back to claim three straight sets.

Though the first two sets were well-contested, with

both teams not yielding an inch, Punjab's superior strike power saw them thunder down winners with regularity as Gurinder Singh, Ramandeep Singh and Hardeep Singh popped up on either flank to find vacant spots. At 25-19, 25-23, Punjab were in the driver's seat.

But a pep talk from coach Abdul Nazer saw Kerala tighten their net play and deny Punjab openings. Rath-eesh, Manu V, Ragesh and Hafeel produced brilliant displays in attack and defence. With C K Ratheesh setting up superb smashes, Kerala slowly but surely took control. At 2-2, Kerala made little mistakes and as against Uttarakhand in the quarter-finals, won the decider 15-13 to the delight of their supporters.

After some initial resistance, Railways gained control of their last four encounter, and were never in danger

of falling back. P Prabhakaran, Sandeep Kumar and Karan Choudhary played a compact game and rarely made mistakes.

Their receiving was fantastic as they never allowed the TN attack to secure points. With Prabhakaran laying it up well at on either flanks and even selling TN a few dummies, Railways surged ahead and won the first set 25-23.

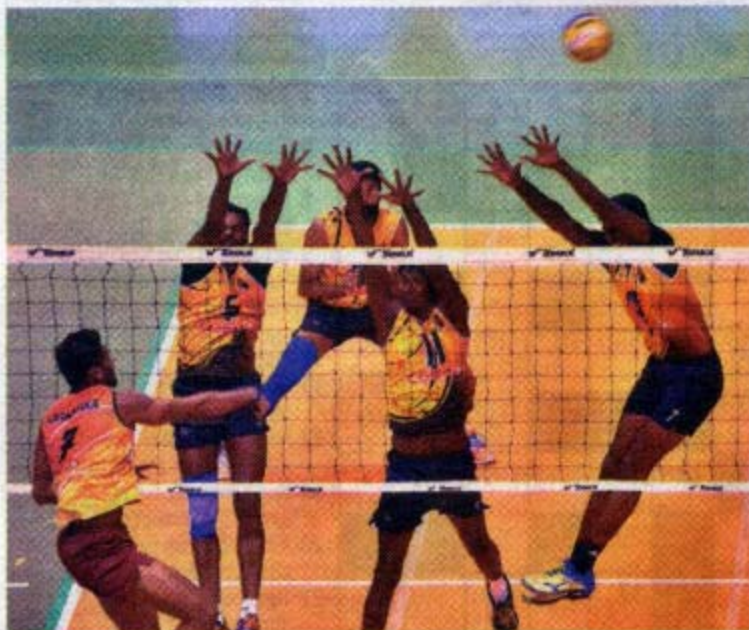
The second was the same story and though TN's Vaishnav and Riyazuddin did well to put up effective blocks, Railways found a way through the defence and won the third rather comfortably at 25-18 to romp home.

Results (all semifinals): Men: Kerala bt Punjab 3-2 (19-25, 23-25, 28-26, 25-18, 15-13); Indian Railways bt Tamil Nadu 3-0 (25-23, -25-23, 25-18). **Women:** Railways bt West Bengal 3-0 (25-9, 25-20, 25-13); Kerala bt Tamil Nadu 3-0 (25-09, 25-17, 25-22).



Action from Kerala's match versus Punjab on Saturday | JITHENDRA M

TN Spikers Smash Way to Group Pole Position



A Karnataka player gets it past Tamil Nadu blockers at the National Volleyball Championships in Bengaluru on Wednesday | JITHENDRA M

VOLLEYBALL

Express News Service

Bengaluru: Tamil Nadu steamrolled past Karnataka 3-0 to top group B in the 64th national volleyball championships at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium here on Wednesday.

Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Services ended in that order to make the last eight grade. Except for the first set, Karnataka were no match for the TN players with Sakthi Kumar and Riyazuddin putting in brilliant displays at the net. Their ability to sell dummies had Karnataka mixed up often as the ball fell into vacant spots for winners.

After leading 20-17, Karnataka surrendered the initiative. Though the teams managed to level scores till, 29-29, Tamil Nadu got the decisive set points to take the lead as Riyazuddin's smash

went off the Karnataka players for winners.

It was Tamil Nadu all the way in the second and third sets. Had TN even dropped a set, Karnataka would have topped the group on a set-score ratio but that was not to be. Punjab defeated Kerala 3-2 in a group A cliffhanger which had the large crowd roaring on delight.

Results: Men: Group A: Punjab bt Kerala 3-2 (25-23, 25-23, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13). **Group B:** TN bt Karnataka 3-0 (31-29, 25-21, 25-16), Services bt Rajasthan 3-0 (25-20, 30-28, 25-18). **Group C:** WB bt Pondicherry 3-0 (25-18, 25-20, 25-19), Maharashtra bt Delhi 3-0 (25-22, 25-18, 25-19). **Group D:** HP bt Goa 3-1 (25-20, 21-25, 25-14, 28-26). **Group E:** MP bt Bihar 3-0 (25-22, 25-21, 25-21), Assam bt Gujarat 3-0 (25-22, 26-24, 25-19). **Group F:** Uttarakhand bt Tripura 3-0 (25-14, 25-11, 25-13), Chhattisgarh bt Jharkhand 3-1 (25-19, 26-28, 25-18, 25-23), Telangana bt Jharkhand 3-0 (25-15, 25-22, 25-20).

Railways volley to a double

R.Satya@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: For the second year on the trot, Railways made it a memorable double in the 64th Senior National Volleyball Championships in front of a capacity crowd here on Sunday.

While the men overcame Kerala in a final marred by apparent refereeing errors and players showing their displeasure in a manner unbecoming of sportspersons in an edge-of-the-seat thriller 3-2, the eves overcame southern power-

SR NAT'L VOLLEY

house Kerala 3-1 to annex their eighth consecutive premier title and a mind-boggling 30th overall a couple of hours earlier.

Having begun on a poor note like their eves, Railways roared back in fine fashion to take a 2-1 lead. But Kerala didn't give up despite a few calls going against them. Ragesh was handed a yellow card for unsporting behavior by main referee Sanjay Kumar, but the five-time champions fought back in splendid style to force the issue into the decider.

TN bow out in the semis

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Railways coasted past Tamil Nadu men 3-0 (25-23, 25-23, 25-18) to seal a place in the final of the 64th Senior National Volleyball championships at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium here on Saturday. Railways will lock horns with Kerala who scripted a 3-2 (19-25, 23-25, 28-26, 25-18, 15-13) win over Punjab.

In the women's category, Tamil Nadu were no match for their counterparts from Kerala--going down 0-3 (9-25, 17-25, 22-25). Kerala will play Railways eyes in the final. Railways had eased past West Bengal 3-0 (25-9, 25-20, 25-13).

Results (Semifinals): Men: Kerala bt Punjab 3-2 ; Railways bt Tamil Nadu 3-0; **Women:** Railways bt West Bengal 3-0; Kerala bt Tamil Nadu 3-0

TN thrash Karnataka in volleyball: Fol-

lowing Karnataka men's two splendid wins earlier in the Senior National Volleyball championships in Bengaluru, the crowd, anticipating another victory, had come in large numbers. But the spectators' joy was short-lived as the hosts, who began brightly, just pressed the self-destruct button as the match wore on to surrender meekly 0-3 to neighbours Tamil Nadu on Wednesday, reports R Satya.

The win meant that Karnataka, who needed to win just a set to top the group, finished third behind their conquerors and Services. Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the two elite group toppers, will play teams that come through the playoffs on Thursday.

Tamil Nadu men make it to semis

R.Satya@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: Tamil Nadu men made it to the semifinals of the 54th Senior National volleyball championships after scoring a 3-0 (25-20, 25-17, 25-17) win over Uttar Pradesh in their quarterfinal encounter here on Friday. Tamil Nadu will face Railways in the last-four stage.

Meanwhile, it was payback time at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium. Having suffered a 0-3 defeat at the hands of Karnataka in the semis of the Federation Cup last year, Railways were gunning to get even. They avenged that defeat with a 3-1 verdict. Unfortunately, Karnataka just didn't have the firepower to quell Railways' challenge on the day. During the Fed Cup triumph, they

NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL

had towering centre-blocker Ashwal Rai in the main six. On Friday, Rai, forced to sit out by the Volleyball Federation of India (VFI) for late submission of transfer papers, was a mere spectator. The hosts were let down by the almost non-existent blocks. Both skipper Karthik and the inexperienced Bharath fetched the team just five points in the entire match. It was probably the experience of Railways setter Kapil Dev that made it easy for his team. His ability to split the rival blocks gave his attackers a free run. The other semifinal in the men's category will be between Kerala, who beat Uttarakhand in a five-set thriller, and Punjab, who eased past Services 3-0.

Semis line-up: Men: Kerala vs Punjab; TN vs Railways; **Women:** Railways vs West Bengal; Kerala vs Maharashtra/ Tamil Nadu

Results (Quarters): Men: Kerala bt Uttarakhand 3-2 (25-21, 25-22, 23-25, 14-25, 15-12); TN bt UP 3-0 (25-20, 25-17, 25-17); Punjab bt Services 3-0 (25-19, 25-23, 25-16); Rlys bt Karnataka 3-1 (25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22); **Women:** Rlys bt K'tka 3-0 (25-17, 25-3, 25-8); Kerala bt AP 3-0 (25-13, 25-10, 25-11); WB bt Telangana 3-2 (25-22, 22-25, 11-25, 25-9, 15-11)

Volleyball league all set for April relaunch

ABHISHEK BAADKAR
BENGALURU, JAN. 7

After a four-year hiatus since its inception, the Indian Volleyball League is set for a rebirth. According to K. Nanda Kumar, the General Secretary, Karnataka Volleyball Association, the IVL that was launched with much fanfare four summers ago will be revived, but in a better way. "We are planning to launch the event in April. The second edition of the Indian Volleyball League will be better and we will make it more popular," Nanda Kumar said on Thursday.

The six-team affair will be played across the country and will be on the lines of the other popular sports leagues.

"We will have six franchisees bidding for different cities from India. There will be a players' auction too. We want to market the sport much better than last time after the launch," he added.

The VFI has been planning to revive the league for a couple of years now and there was extensive research done for the IVL-2.

TAMIL NADU TO MEET UP IN QF

Chennai: Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand entered the quarterfinals of the 64th senior national volleyball championship after beating Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan respectively in Bengaluru on Thursday. Uttar Pradesh will meet Tamil Nadu in the last eight while Uttarakhand will face Kerala.

Results: QF playoff: Men: Uttar Pradesh bt Andhra Pradesh 21-25, 25-21, 25-21, 19-25, 15-11. Uttarakhand bt Rajasthan 25-19, 20-25, 27-25, 25-19. **Women:** Karnataka bt Haryana 25-16, 25-21, 25-14. Andhra Pradesh bt Punjab 25-12, 25-14, 25-19.

QF line-up: Men: Kerala vs Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu vs UP, Services vs Punjab, Karnataka vs Railways. **Women:** Railways vs Karnataka, Kerala vs Andhra Pradesh, Telangana vs West Bengal, Maharashtra vs TN.

Tamil Nadu spike past Karnataka

SANDEEP MENON
BENGALURU, JAN. 6

Tamil Nadu came up with the goods when it mattered most as they ran through Karnataka 31-29, 25-21, 25-16 in the final Senior National Volleyball championship Group B league encounter at the Sri Kantevar Indoor Stadium on Wednesday.

With the sides finishing level on six points in the group, the win also propelled Tamil Nadu to the top of the group on better set ratio while Karnataka finished second and third respectively.

This also set up a quarterfinal clash on Friday between the home side and defending champions Railways while Services will take on Punjab.

Karnataka started well and kept their nose ahead for much of the first set, even holding a 14-10 lead at one time before an error at the back court by Ravikumar gave Tamil Nadu the break they craved and the P Sundaram-coached side battled to a 31-29 win after both teams had squandered three set points each. The second set saw Pandian Pandian grow more and more dominant as he took charge of the proceedings as the last year's finalists took an inspired show by Vinay Rohbade pulled Karnataka level at 14-14.

The teams battled tooth and nail but Pandian's serve tilted the set 25-21 in Tamil Nadu's favour. The third set was all Tamil Nadu as Karnataka failed to withstand Pandian's guile and had no answer to Vishnav's blocking and Naveen Raja Jacob's back court smash as they took the set, and the match, 25-16 in 70 minutes. Earlier, Punjab weathered a spirited show by Kerala to emerge 25-23, 25-23, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13 winners in a thrilling Group A encounter which lasted a tad over two hours. Despite the loss, Kerala topped the group with seven points.

Results: Men: Group A: Punjab bt Kerala 25-23, 25-23, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13. **Group B:** Services bt Rajasthan 25-20, 30-28, 25-18, Tamil Nadu bt Karnataka 31-29, 25-21, 25-16. **Women: Group A:** Maharashtra bt West Bengal 25-20, 25-23, 25-13. **Group B:** Kerala bt Tamil Nadu 25-20, 25-16, 25-19.



Tamil Nadu's M. Ukkrapandian sets up an attack against Karnataka in a group match of the 54th senior national volleyball championship on Wednesday.

NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL ■ Hosts Karnataka go down to defending champions Indian Railways in the QF

TAMIL NADU TO MEET RAILWAYS IN SF

DC CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU, JAN. 8

Tamil Nadu hammered Uttar Pradesh 25-20, 25-17, 25-17 on Friday to set up a semi-final date with Indian Railways in the 64th senior national volleyball championship here. In the other semi-final, Kerala will take on Punjab.

Tamil Nadu made light work of Uttar Pradesh. In a one-sided clash that lasted a little more than an hour, TN came up with a power-packed performance from the senior pros to knock out Omveer Maan's side.

Karnataka's campaign came to an end following a 3-1 loss to defending champions Indian Railways. At a packed Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium, title favourites Railways' collective effort thwarted the young Karnataka outfit with a 25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22 victory. Led by Prabhakar S. Prabhakar, the local team.

Punjab rode on Gurinder's all-round show to advance as they submitted Services into submission with a 25-19, 25-23, 25-16 win. India ace Gurinder paired up with attacker Hardeep Singh to make an onslaught of Services' defence.

Earlier, attacker Jeetendra Vinodh led from the front as Kerala overcame Uttar Pradesh 3-2. Abhy supported his senior teammates to comfortably bag the first two sets comfortably before a late flopback from Vinodh kept Uttarakhanda's hopes alive.

Apart from Vinodh, Uttarakhanda's star blocker Mohit Sheerwat came to the party to demoralise Kerala in the fourth set. A revitalised Kerala, banking on their experienced seniors, wrapped up the fifth set.

Results: QF: Men: Tamil Nadu bt Uttar Pradesh 25-20, 25-17, 25-17; Indian Railways bt Karnataka 25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22; Kerala bt Uttarakhanda 25-21, 25-23, 23-25, 14-25, 15-12; Punjab bt Services 25-19, 25-23.

Women: Indian Railways bt Karnataka 25-17, 25-3, 25-8; Kerala bt Andhra Pradesh 25-13, 25-10, 25-11; West Bengal bt Telangana 25-22, 22-25, 11-25, 25-9, 15-11; Tamil Nadu bt Maharashtra 25-23, 25-15, 19-25, 20-25, 18-16.
Action today: SF: Men: Kerala vs Punjab (3 pm); Indian Railways vs Tamil Nadu (5 pm); Women: Indian Railways vs West Bengal (1 pm); Tamil Nadu vs Kerala (7 pm).

KJ Kapil Dev of Indian Railways sets up an attack against Karnataka in the quarter-final of the 64th senior national volleyball championship in Bengaluru on Friday. Railways, the defending champions, won 3-1 to set up a semi-final with Tamil Nadu. — Shashidhar B



Uttarakhand, UP men in quarters

VOLLEYBALL / Karnataka women
through to the last eight

N. Srinivasian

BENGALURU: The Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh men's teams qualified for the quarterfinals after coming through the playoffs on day six of the 64th Senior National Volleyball Championship at the Sri Kanteerava Stadium here on Thursday.

For Uttarakhand - one of the strongest teams in the recent times with one final and four semifinal finishes in the last six years - the 25-19, 20-25, 27-15, 25-22 defeat of last year's bronze medalist Rajasthan would have no doubt brought a sense of relief.

In the 63rd edition, it had suffered a blip as it had to field a weak team following a player dispute and as a result had missed out on a quarterfinal berth. Uttar Pradesh, meanwhile, overcame West Bengal 25-21, 27-25, 25-15.

As a side, Uttarakhand had not played competitively for a year following a ban by the Volleyball Federation of India. On the day, it had already played five sets as it had to beat Haryana in the first round of the qualifying. Even as the rustiness and the tiredness both made themselves evident intermittently, the team was still able to pull through.

Uttarakhand and Rajasthan both committed more than their fair share of errors in the first two sets and ultimately ended up splitting them. Amidst this, attacker Vinit Kumar, for the former, gave a good account of himself with some powerful spikes and blocker Lavpreet Kadiani stone for the latter.

The business end of third set was where the match turned. Locked at 20-20, then at 25-25, and then at 25-25, Uttarakhand fi-

nally broke Rajasthan's resistance to claim the set 27-25. Subh-justar Singh came up with the all-important block on set point.

Early in the fourth, Rajasthan with its opponent established a four-point lead and more or less maintained it to ultimately triumph.

In the women's section host Karnataka too had to grind its way through into the last eight. Early in the morning it beat Uttar Pradesh 25-18, 25-17, 25-19 and later in the afternoon - its third match in less than a day's time - knocked out Haryana 25-16, 25-21, 25-14.

Attacker K.V. Meena led the way with impressive shows in all three sets. For Haryana, captain Nisha and Sahil tried to salvage something, but with the rest of the team not holding up, all the effort went in vain.

Joining Karnataka in the quarterfinals will be Andhra Pradesh which put it across Punjab in straight sets.

The results: Quarterfinal qualifiers: Round two: Men: Uttar Pradesh bt Andhra Pradesh 21-25, 25-21, 25-21, 19-25, 15-18; Uttarakhand bt Rajasthan 25-19, 20-25, 27-25, 25-22; Women: Karnataka bt Haryana 25-16, 25-21, 25-14; Andhra Pradesh bt Punjab 25-12, 25-14, 25-19.

Round one: Men: Uttar Pradesh bt West Bengal 25-21, 27-25, 25-15; Uttarakhand bt Haryana 25-20, 18-25, 25-20, 25-27, 15-10; Women: Karnataka bt Uttar Pradesh 25-13, 25-17, 25-18; Andhra Pradesh bt Himachal Pradesh 25-16, 25-13, 25-11.

Quarterfinal line-ups: Men: Kerala vs Uttar Pradesh; Tamil Nadu vs Uttar Pradesh; Services vs Punjab; Kanoyas vs Karnataka.

Women: Kanoyas vs Karnataka; Kerala vs Andhra Pradesh; Rajasthan vs West Bengal; Maharashtra vs Tamil Nadu.



Uttarakhand's Vinit Kumar tries to get past Rajasthan blockers. — PHOTO: SAADUDDIN KHANAN 6

Railways stays on track

VOLLEYBALL / The defending champion takes on Tamil Nadu in the semifinals

N. SUDARSHAN

BENGALURU: Defending champion Railways held off a spirited Karnataka side 25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22 in the quarterfinal stage of the 64th Senior National Volleyball Championship at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Friday.

In Saturday's semifinal it will meet Tamil Nadu, which earlier in the day, had a cakewalk 25-20, 25-17, 25-17 victory over Uttar Pradesh.

Railways, bolstered by the return from injury of S. Prabhakaran, displayed its all-round skills right from the start. Between him, the towering Sohan Kumar and the irrepressible Manu Joseph it had three of the best attackers. But its defensive game was equally top-notch.

Led by the two regular blockers in S. Bharanidharan and Sandeep Kumar, it maintained a tight vigil at the net. Thus, it first established a 14-11 lead and then built on it impressively to bag the set by a rather comfortable 25-16 scoreline.

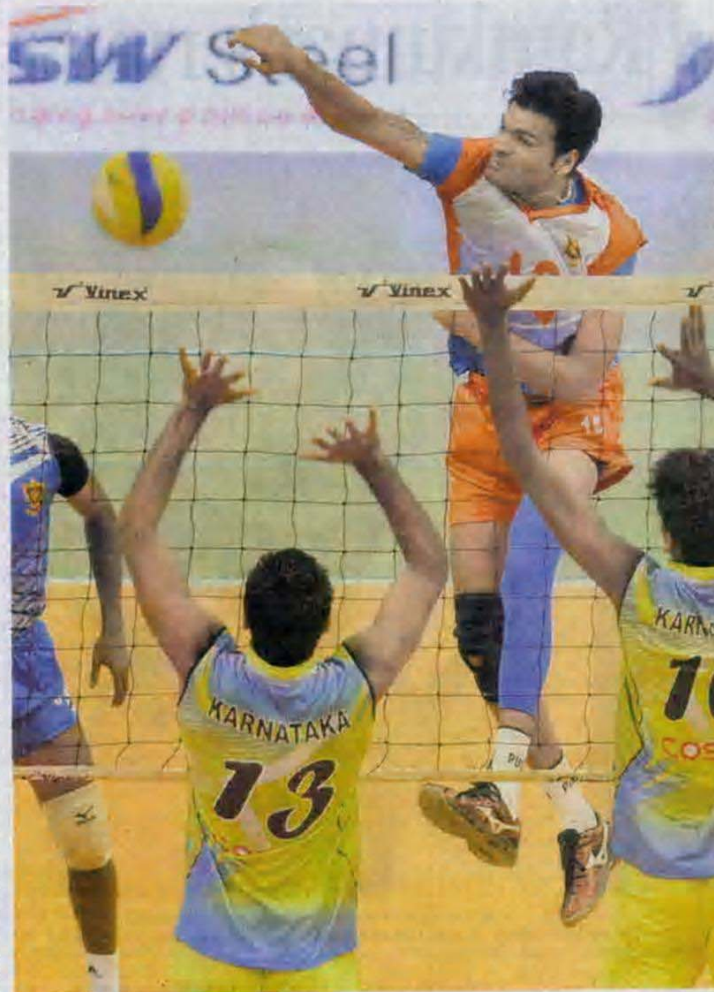
In the second set, Karnataka led by a decent margin at least three times — at 5-2, 12-9 and 19-15. On each of those occasions it let Railways back. A first pass gone awry, a serve dumped into the net or one sent out, all contributed. However, from 20-19 the host held its nerve to clinch the set 25-22.

K. Ganesh, who substituted for T.D. Ravikumar, shone for a brief while with a few good smashes.

The Railways players seemed a wounded lot, and in the third set they came out in full force. The result was first a 5-0 lead which then stretched to 11-5. Karnataka threatened to rear its head by closing the gap to a mere two points. But it was swiftly subdued as the back-court defence from Joseph and R. Piraisoodan stood out.

Even from thereon, Karnataka refused to wither away. It clung on till the score read 17-17. At that point, Railways, yet again, upped its game. A great serve by Joseph, a deft drop by Piraisoodan and two powerful spikes by Prabhakaran sealed the deal.

The other semifinal will see Kerala meet Punjab. The former played out its second five-setter on the bounce, but this time



Railways' Sandeep Kumar (10) outwits the Karnataka defence in the senior National volleyball championship. — PHOTO X MURALI KUMAR.

came out winning. It defeated Uttarakhand 25-21, 25-22, 23-25, 14-25, 15-12.

Punjab, on the other hand, owing in no small measure to India player Gurinder Singh's rousing performance, demolished Services in straight sets.

Kerala, from being two sets up, lost a close third and imploded in the fourth. The fifth was tight till 6-6 before a three-point cushion to 9-6 gave it some

breathing space. In the closing exchanges, a timely block by Rijas and two excellent smashes by Jerome Vinith brought Kerala the win.

As in the men's section, the Karnataka women too were shown the door by Railways, but in much a more convincing fashion. The latter will now meet West Bengal in the semifinals while Kerala will take on Tamil Nadu.

The results: Quarterfinals: Men: Kerala bt Uttarakhand 25-21, 25-22, 23-25, 14-25, 15-12; Tamil Nadu bt Uttar Pradesh 25-20, 25-17, 25-17; Punjab bt Services 25-19, 25-23, 25-16; Railways bt Karnataka 25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22.

Women: Railways bt Karnataka 25-17, 25-3, 25-8; Kerala bt Andhra Pradesh 25-13, 25-10, 25-11; West Bengal bt Telangana 25-22, 22-25, 11-25, 25-9, 15-11; Tamil Nadu bt Maharashtra 25-23, 25-15, 19-25, 20-25, 18-16.

Punjab pips Kerala in a pulsating contest

VOLLEYBALL / Tamil Nadu defeats Karnataka easily, tops Group B on the basis of set-ratio

N. SUBASHAN



RECALCULATED: In a pulsating five-set match lasting two hours and three minutes, Punjab edged Kerala 25-23, 25-23, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13 on day five of the 64th Senior National volleyball championship at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Wednesday.



Later, in a contest of complete contrast, Tamil Nadu forced Karnataka into submission by an easy 31-29, 25-21, 25-16 margin in just 70 minutes.

Last year's runner-up, no doubt played its best match so far, as the experienced duo of setter Utkara Parandam and attacker Navreen Kujur jacob finally found its bearings.



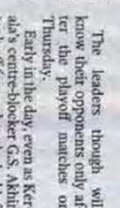
But Karnataka, on the day, was rank bad.

It was the last match of the league stage and even if it had won a set, it would have finished atop Group B, but instead the straight-set loss pushed it to third.



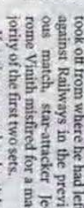
In the end, three sides finished on six points but on the basis of set-ratio Tamil Nadu was declared first, followed by Rajasthan and Karnataka.

Rajasthan, with three losses finished at the bottom.



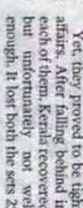
Early in the day, even as Kerala's centre-blocker G.S. Akhina took off from where he had left against Railways in the previous match, star-attacker Iqbal Kaur misfired for a majority of the first two sets.

As a consequence, Karnataka will take on defending champion Railways and Punjab will meet Services in two of the four quarter-finals.



Yet, they proved to be tight affairs. After falling behind in each of them, Kerala recovered but unfortunately not well enough. It lost both the sets 25 points to 23.

An injury to Akhina (twisted ankle) at the start of the second, which then forced him to sit out didn't help. But in K.R. Rajak, Kerala found an able deputy. Vinith too regained his mojo as the side bagged the next two sets convincingly.



In the fifth, after taking the first two points, Kerala lost seven on the trot in a 15-point final set it proved too big a difference to bridge.

The results:



Men: Tamil Nadu vs Karnataka 31-29, 25-21, 25-16; Punjab vs Kerala 23-25, 25-23, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13; Services vs Rajasthan 25-20, 30-28, 25-18; Madhya Pradesh vs Bihar 25-22, 25-21, 25-21; Assam vs Gujarat 25-22, 26-24, 25-19; West Bengal vs Puducherry 25-18, 25-20, 25-19; Uttar Pradesh vs Tripura 25-14, 25-11, 25-13; Himachal Pradesh vs Goa 25-20, 21-25, 25-14, 28-26; Chhattisgarh vs Jharkhand 25-19, 26-28, 25-18, 25-23; Pondicherry vs J&K 21-25, 25-27, 25-20, 25-16, 15-11; Haryana vs Madhya Pradesh 25-14, 25-18, 25-15; Uttar Pradesh vs Odisha 25-18, 25-19, 25-21; Chandigarh vs Himachal Pradesh 25-19, 19-25, 21-25, 25-18, 15-8.

Women: Andhra Pradesh vs Chhattisgarh 13-25, 25-09, 25-14, 25-18; Odisha vs Rajasthan 26-24, 20-25, 26-24, 23-25, 17-18; Maharashtra vs West Bengal 25-20, 25-23, 25-15; Kerala vs Tamil Nadu 25-20, 25-16, 25-19; Uttar Pradesh vs Madhya Pradesh 25-17, 25-18, 25-20.

On Tuesday: Men: Maharashtra vs Delhi 25-22, 25-18, 25-19; Rajasthan vs Jharkhand 25-15, 25-22, 25-20, 25-20.



Women: Uttar Pradesh vs J&K 25-4, 25-6, 25-7.

SUPER STRIKE: Punjab's Rajveer Singh and Hardeep Singh effectively block a smash from the Kerala side in the National Volleyball Championship on Wednesday. — PHOTOS: S.A. SAMANTH KUMAR

NATL VOLLEYBALL

UP & Uttarakhand Move Into Last 8

Express News Service

Bengaluru: Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand won their men's qualifying matches to enter the quarterfinals of the 64th national volleyball championships at the Sree Kanteerava stadium here on Thursday.

In a 95-minute encounter, Uttarakhand sent Rajasthan packing with a 3-1 victory. Uttarakhand won the first set at 25-19, but lost the second 20-25. As the teams battled it out, Uttarakhand bagged the third at 27-25 and the

QUARTERFINAL LINE-UPS

Men

Kerala vs Uttarakhand; TN vs UP; Services vs Punjab; Indian Railways vs Karnataka

Women

Indian Railways vs Karnataka; Kerala vs Andhra Pradesh; Telangana vs West Bengal; Maharashtra vs Tamil Nadu

fourth at 25-19 to make the last eight where they take on Kerala. Uttar Pradesh had to sweat it out against Andhra Pradesh winning 3-2 at 21-

25, 25-21, 25-21, 19-25, 15-11 after 110 minutes of a dingdong battle and will clash with Tamil Nadu.

Hosts Karnataka made the women's last eight grade with a 3-0 victory at 25-16, 25-21, 25-14 in 74 minutes over Haryana. Andhra Pradesh women stunned Punjab 3-0 at 25-12, 25-14, 25-19.

Railways, the men's and women's title winners last year, clash with hosts Karnataka in both the sections in what promises to be riveting affair.

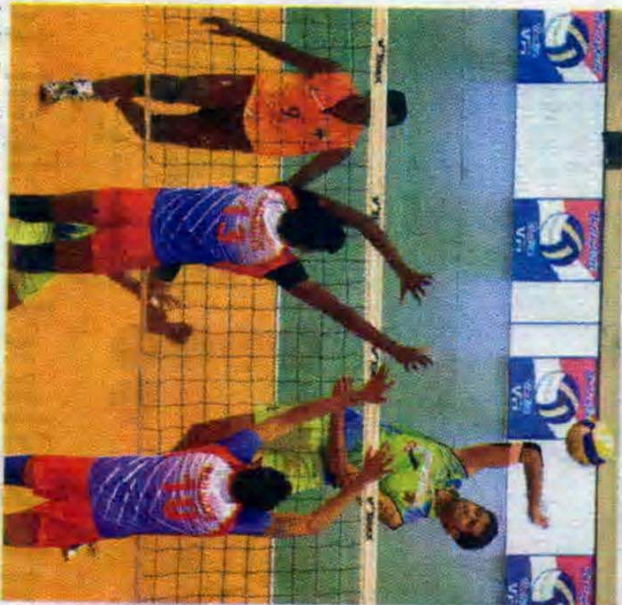
Hosts Ousted, Tamil Nadu to Face Kerala

Express News Service

Bengaluru: It's Punjab versus Kerala and Railways against Tamil Nadu in the men's semifinals of the 64th national volleyball championships, while in the women's section, Railways meet West Bengal and Kerala face off against Tamil Nadu at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium on Saturday.

In men's quarterfinal action, Railways put paid to the hopes of Fed Cup winners and hosts Karnataka 3-1, while Punjab put it across Services 3-0 after Kerala had beaten Uttarakhnad 3-2 and Tamil Nadu swamped Uttar Pradesh 3-0.

Holders Railways knocked out hosts Karnataka 3-0 in the women's quarterfinals, while Kerala got past Andhra Pradesh by the same margin to make the semis. West Bengal downed Telangana 3-2 and Tamil Nadu beat Maharashtra 3-2. UP took a brief 7-3 lead,



Action from the Karnataka versus Indian Railways match | JITHENDRA M

but TN then roared back to restore parity and level scores at 16-16, before taking charge. Once they settled down, UP had no answer as they were always ahead and never looked back.

Uttarakhand provided anxious moments to Kerala as they came back from 2-0 down to level the scores, and push the match into a decider. With left-bander Ragesh producing blistering

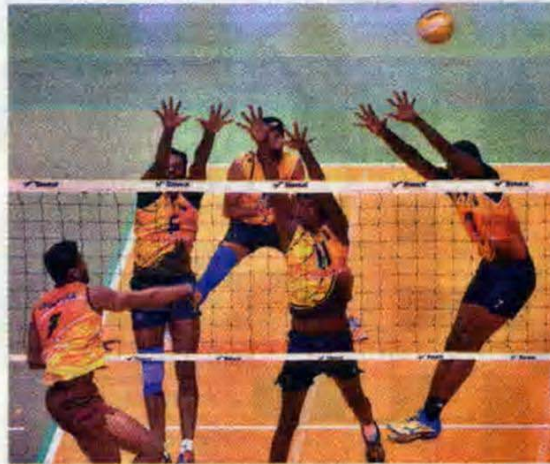
NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL

erves, Kerala managed to wriggle out. Vibin George, Rohith and Manu combined well as they bagged the first two sets. But Mohit Sehrawat, skipper Ranjit Singh and Sukhjinder Singh did well to pick up points for the northern state, who levelled at two-all. In the decider, Uttarakhand briefly led 6-4 but pressure led to the former's downfall.

Results (all quarterfinals): Men:

Kerala bt Uttarakhnad 3-2 (25-21, 25-22, 23-25, 14-25, 15-12), Tamil Nadu bt Uttar Pradesh 3-0 (25-20, 25-19, 25-17), Punjab bt Services 3-0 (25-19, 25-23, 25-16), Railways bt Karnataka 3-1 (25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22). **Women:** Indian Railways bt Karnataka 3-0 (25-17, 25-03, 25-08), Kerala bt Andhra Pradesh 3-0 (25-13, 25-10, 25-11), West Bengal bt Telangana 3-2 (25-22, 22-25, 11-25, 25-09), Tamil Nadu bt Maharashtra 3-2 (25-23, 25-15, 19-25, 20-25, 18-16).

TN Spikers Smash Way to Group Pole Position



A Karnataka player gets it past Tamil Nadu blockers at the National Volleyball Championships in Bengaluru on Wednesday | JITHENDRA M

VOLLEYBALL

Express News Service

Bengaluru: Tamil Nadu steamrolled past Karnataka 3-0 to top group B in the 64th national volleyball championships at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium here on Wednesday.

Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Services ended in that order to make the last eight grade. Except for the first set, Karnataka were no match for the TN players with Sakthi Kumar and Riyazuddin putting in brilliant displays at the net. Their ability to sell dummies had Karnataka mixed up often as the ball fell into vacant spots for winners.

After leading 20-17, Karnataka surrendered the initiative. Though the teams managed to level scores till, 29-29, Tamil Nadu got the decisive set points to take the lead as Riyazuddin's smash

went off the Karnataka players for winners.

It was Tamil Nadu all the way in the second and third sets. Had TN even dropped a set, Karnataka would have topped the group on a set-score ratio but that was not to be. Punjab defeated Kerala 3-2 in a group A cliffhanger which had the large crowd roaring on delight.

Results: Men: Group A: Punjab bt Kerala 3-2 (25-23, 25-23, 17-25, 14-25, 15-13). **Group B:** TN bt Karnataka 3-0 (31-29, 25-21, 25-16), Services bt Rajasthan 3-0 (25-20, 30-28, 25-18). **Group C:** WB bt Pondicherry 3-0 (25-18, 25-20, 25-19), Maharashtra bt Delhi 3-0 (25-22, 25-18, 25-19). **Group D:** HP bt Goa 3-1 (25-20, 21-25, 25-14, 28-26). **Group E:** MP bt Bihar 3-0 (25-22, 25-21, 25-21), Assam bt Gujarat 3-0 (25-22, 26-24, 25-19). **Group F:** Uttarakhand bt Tripura 3-0 (25-14, 25-11, 25-13), Chhattisgarh bt Jharkhand 3-1 (25-19, 26-28, 25-18, 25-23), Telangana bt Jharkhand 3-0 (25-15, 25-22, 25-20).

TN thrash Karnataka in volleyball: Fol-

lowing Karnataka men's two splendid wins earlier in the Senior National Volleyball championships in Bengaluru, the crowd, anticipating another victory, had come in large numbers. But the spectators' joy was short-lived as the hosts, who began brightly, just pressed the self-destruct button as the match wore on to surrender meekly 0-3 to neighbours Tamil Nadu on Wednesday, reports R Satya.

The win meant that Karnataka, who needed to win just a set to top the group, finished third behind their conquerors and Services. Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the two elite group toppers, will play teams that come through the playoffs on Thursday.

Tamil Nadu men make it to semis

R.Satya@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: Tamil Nadu men made it to the semifinals of the 54th Senior National volleyball championships after scoring a 3-0 (25-20, 25-17, 25-17) win over Uttar Pradesh in their quarterfinal encounter here on Friday. Tamil Nadu will face Railways in the last-four stage.

Meanwhile, it was payback time at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium. Having suffered a 0-3 defeat at the hands of Karnataka in the semis of the Federation Cup last year, Railways were gunning to get even. They avenged that defeat with a 3-1 verdict. Unfortunately, Karnataka just didn't have the firepower to quell Railways' challenge on the day. During the Fed Cup triumph, they

NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL

had towering centre-blocker Ashwal Rai in the main six. On Friday, Rai, forced to sit out by the Volleyball Federation of India (VFI) for late submission of transfer papers, was a mere spectator. The hosts were let down by the almost non-existent blocks. Both skipper Karthik and the inexperienced Bharath fetched the team just five points in the entire match. It was probably the experience of Railways setter Kapil Dev that made it easy for his team. His ability to split the rival blocks gave his attackers a free run. The other semifinal in the men's category will be between Kerala, who beat Uttarakhand in a five-set thriller, and Punjab, who eased past Services 3-0.

Semis line-up: Men: Kerala vs Punjab; TN vs Railways; **Women:** Railways vs West Bengal; Kerala vs Maharashtra/ Tamil Nadu

Results (Quarters): Men: Kerala bt Uttarakhand 3-2 (25-21, 25-22, 23-25, 14-25, 15-12); TN bt UP 3-0 (25-20, 25-17, 25-17); Punjab bt Services 3-0 (25-19, 25-23, 25-16); Rlys bt Karnataka 3-1 (25-16, 22-25, 25-17, 25-22); **Women:** Rlys bt K'tka 3-0 (25-17, 25-3, 25-8); Kerala bt AP 3-0 (25-13, 25-10, 25-11); WB bt Telangana 3-2 (25-22, 22-25, 11-25, 25-9, 15-11)

VOLLEYBALL

Services puts away Tamil Nadu

N. SUDARSHAN

BENGALURU: Services beat an off-colour Tamil Nadu 25-22, 25-20, 22-25, 28-26 in a Group-B clash on day two of the 64th senior National volleyball championship at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Sunday.

As experienced India players in setter Ukkara Pandian and attacker Naveen Raja Jacob turned in patchy performances, the relatively inexperienced side lost its nerve at crucial moments.

After having conceded the first two sets, it could have levelled the tie when it held two set points at 24-22 in the fourth, but it let go of both.

Earlier, it took two full sets for Tamil Nadu to click. Hampered by libero T. Sakthi Kumar's illness, innumerable net infringements and a slew of overcooked serves, it was always playing catch-up.

Services' all-round ability was fully on show as the attacker in A. Anshad bailed his team out defensively too, and Arjun Nath, the central blocker, spiked with authority when the chance was presented. Pankaj Sharma, the attacker, was as lethal from the back-court as he was from the front and played his role as the universal to perfection.

For Tamil Nadu, as attackers Selva Prabhu and S. Karthik blew hot and cold, it was left to the blockers in skipper G.R. Vaishnav and M. Satish Kumar to keep their side in the match.

The duo upped their game in the third set and even rescued

Tamil Nadu on two occasions in the fourth — from 8-12 down and then from 13-16 to finally lead 17-16.

At 21-21, when setter Muthu Samy, who replaced Ukkara

Pandian, placed the ball with pin-point precision and then on the next point Satish executed a timely block, Tamil Nadu seemed set to drag the match into the decider.

However, two expert blocks by Services' P.K. Dinesh and a powerful smash by Anshad in the last few exchanges helped Services clinch the set and the match.

"We might not be individually good, but we worked well as a team," said Services coach V.M. Sheejith. "We wanted to begin well, and we have done that."

In the day's other men's matches involving Group-A teams, Kerala defeated Andhra Pradesh in straight sets to start its campaign on a winning note.

The result was however Andhra's second loss in as many matches.

Railways, the defending champion, won its second successive match beating Punjab 25-22, 25-17, 25-18.

The results:

Men: West Bengal bt Delhi 25-23, 25-16, 25-14; Haryana bt Gujarat 25-23, 25-17, 25-19; Maharashtra bt J&K 25-19, 25-23, 25-16; Assam bt Bihar 25-19, 25-12, 25-15; Uttar Pradesh bt Himachal Pradesh 24-26, 25-21, 25-20, 25-20; Chandigarh bt Goa 25-22, 25-17, 25-23; Telangana bt Jharkhand 25-17, 25-20, 25-13; Kerala bt Andhra Pradesh 25-23, 25-21, 25-23; Services bt Tamil Nadu 25-22, 25-20, 27-25, 28-26; Railways bt Punjab 25-22, 25-17, 25-18.

Women: Andhra Pradesh bt Jharkhand 25-18, 25-4, 25-7; Gujarat bt Chandigarh 17-25, 25-23, 25-13, 25-21; Madhya Pradesh bt Uttarakhand 25-14, 25-16, 25-21; Himachal Pradesh bt Delhi 25-20, 25-19, 25-21; Rajasthan bt Pondicherry 25-19, 25-07, 25-17; West Bengal bt Punjab 25-12, 25-17, 25-21; Telangana bt Tamil Nadu 25, 20-25, 25-16, 32-30, 15-12.



OVERMATCHED: Central blocker Arjun Nath (left) and attacker Pankaj Sharma (right) were on song for Services as it overwhelmed an off-colour Tamil Nadu. — PHOTO: G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

Services stun formidable Tamil Nadu

DC CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU, JAN. 3

Pankaj Sharma and Kiran led from the front as Services began their 64th Senior National Volleyball Championships with a stunning 3-1 defeat of formidable Tamil Nadu in their Group B clash on the

SENIOR NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL

second day at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium here on Sunday.

The two attackers -- Pankaj and Kiran -- in association with setter Sivarajan shocked previous edition's runners-up Tamil Nadu 25-22, 25-20, 22-25, 28-26 in 96 minutes at a packed stadium.

The Army spikers, former quarterfinalists, were right on the money taking a four-point lead with Sivarajan setting up for attacker Devender. Tamil Nadu fought back through the experienced Ukrapandian's cheeky game play but went down 22-25.

In the second set, India spiker Naveen Raja's attacking display kept TN in hunt even as Services' skipper Lijo Joseph and Pankaj continued to pile misery to clinch it 25-20.

Tamil Nadu missed their key player T. Sakthi Kumar owing to upset stomach and dubious faults at the nets went on to haunt them.

In the third set, Services' defence came up with an impressive show to keep TN's attackers at bay. But Naveen, Karthik S. and Anga Muthu waged a fight back to claw their way back

into the game with a 25-22 verdict for TN.

Going into the fourth set, Services came back strongly with universal Anshad A. joining attackers Pankaj and Kiran. The combina-

tion of youth and experience failed to work for TN as they succumbed to pressure.

P Sundaram's men saved three match points before Anshad sealed their rivals' fate to register their first win of the campaign.

In the evening fixture of the Group B clash, Kerala took little more than hour to dispatch Andhra Pradesh 25-23, 25-21, 25-23.

Meanwhile, defending champions Indian Railways began their title defence thumping Punjab 25-22, 25-17, 25-18 in 65 minutes.

Results: Men (Group A): Kerala bt Andhra Pradesh 3-0 (25-23, 25-21, 25-23); Services bt Tamil Nadu 3-1 (25-22, 25-20, 22-25, 28-26); Indian Railways bt Punjab 3-0 (25-22, 25-17, 25-18). Group C: West Bengal bt Delhi 3-0 (25-23, 25-16, 25-14); Group E: Haryana bt Gujarat 3-0 (25-23, 25-17, 25-19); Group C: Maharashtra bt Jammu & Kashmir 3-0 (25-19, 25-23, 25-16); Uttar Pradesh bt Himachal Pradesh 3-1 (24-26, 25-21, 25-20, 25-20); Chandigarh bt Goa 3-0 (25-22, 25-17, 25-23); Group F: Telangana bt Jharkhand 3-0 (25-17, 25-20, 25-13); Women: Group A: West Bengal bt Punjab 3-0 (25-12, 25-22, 25-21). Group B: Telangana bt Tamil Nadu 3-2 sets (20-25, 20-25, 25-16, 32-30, 15-12); Group E: Assam bt Bihar 3-0 (25-19, 25-12, 25-15); Group D: Group D: Madhya Pradesh bt Uttarakhand 3-0 (25-14, 25-16, 25-21). Group F: Himachal Pradesh bt Delhi 3-0 (25-20, 25-19, 25-21); Rajasthan bt Pondicherry 3-0 (25-19, 25-7, 25-14); Group E: Andhra Pradesh bt Jharkhand 3-0 (25-18, 25-4, 25-7); Gujarat bt Chandigarh 3-1 (17-25, 25-23, 25-13, 25-21).



A slice of action from the Tamil Nadu and Services encounter at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday.
—SHASHIDHAR B.

Services too good for TN

Fine All-Round Performance From Army Team Shocks Title Contenders

R.Satya@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: They have been one of the consistent teams in the country and with three India players in their ranks, Tamil Nadu came into the tournament as the odds-on favourite. But after an hour and 36 minutes of their opener against Services, the title must be the last thing on the players' minds.

Services, with a fine all-round show, handed them a stunning 3-1 defeat in the 64th Senior National Volleyball Championships at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor stadium here on Sunday evening. The goodly holiday crowd lapped up everything that the army outfit dished out.

Tamil Nadu made Services' task that much easier by failing to come to the party. The army team ran rings around the Tamil Nadu defence, which was quite ordinary. Libero Sakthi Kumar, manning the backcourt, was a luxury on the court for the better part of the encounter.

VOLLEYBALL

With their first pass in disarray, there was nothing much India setter Ukkrapandian could do. As such, their attacks lacked the desired sting and they fired only in patches, including their mainstay Naveen Raja Jacob. They also made too many unforced errors. Services weren't complaining as they made the most of their rivals' generous offering.

Attacker Anshad did the bulk of the work for the army team, scoring winners at will. Sensing the mood he was in, setter Sivarajan kept him in play right through the opening set. Pankaj Sharma and Kiran played the supporting role to a nicety.

Services pocketed the first two sets in double quick time. Staring down the wrong end of the barrel, Tamil Nadu coach P Sundaram rang in quick changes and even had a stern word with his wards. That seemed to get the players out of their slumber. The blockers, led by India player



STRETCHED: Services' Arjun Nath (right) strikes past M Sathish Kumar of Tamil Nadu at Sree Kanteerava Stadium on Sunday

GR Vaishnav, finally got into the act by checking the marauding Services attackers.

The crowd, which was supporting Services, seemed to switch its allegiance. Tamil Nadu didn't disappoint as they took the third set rather comfortably to raise visions of a turnaround. But they were back to playing catch up in the fourth set, down 8-12 at one stage. The coach replaced the struggling Ukkrapandian with Muthu Samy and it seemed to pay dividends as they fought back gallantly and even went ahead 19-17.

But their old frailties came to the fore and Services, with a brilliant backcourt defence, retrieved everything that the Tamil Nadu spikers threw at them. They turned a 19-21 deficit into a 28-26 victory to kick-start their campaign in style. Interestingly, Services' last National triumph was when Karnataka last hosted the premier event in Davanagere 13 years ago. They would be hoping that Karnataka will turn out to be a happy hunting ground again.

KERALA ROUT AP

Earlier, Kerala men got their campaign too off to a great start, outclassing Andhra Pradesh in straight sets.

They did struggle briefly in the third set when Andhra coach Prabhakar Raju flummoxed them by making Krishnam Raju, a blocker mainly, into an attacker.

The ploy worked for a while, but before much damage could be done, Kerala regrouped in time to come away unscathed. The star of their 75-minute victory was undoubtedly Jerome Vinith, whose sizzling winners, even from the backcourt, had the crowd entertained.

Results: Men: Group A: Kerala bt Andhra Pradesh 3-0 (25-23, 25-21, 25-23); Railways bt Punjab 3-0 (25-22, 25-17, 25-18). **Group B:** Services bt Tamil Nadu 3-1 (25-22, 25-20, 23-25, 28-26). **Group C:** West Bengal bt Delhi 3-0 (25-23, 25-16 & 25-14); 3) Maharashtra bt J&K 3-0 (25-19, 25-23, 25-16). **Group D:** Uttar Pradesh bt Himachal Pradesh 3-1 (24-26, 25-21, 25-20, 25-20); Chandigarh bt Goa 3-0 (25-22, 25-12, 25-23). **Group E:** Haryana bt Gujarat 3-0 (25-23, 25-17, 25-19); Assam bt Bihar 3-0 (25-19, 25-12, 25-15). **Group F:** Telangana bt Jharkhand 3-0 (25-17, 25-20, 25-13). **Women: Group A:** West Bengal bt Punjab 3-0 (25-12, 25-22, 25-21). **Group B:** Telangana bt Tamil Nadu 3-2 (20-25, 20-25, 25-16, 32-30, 15-12). **Group C:** Madhya Pradesh bt Uttarakhand 3-0 (25-14, 25-16, 25-21). **Group D:** Andhra Pradesh bt Jharkhand 3-0 (25-18, 25-4, 25-7); Gujarat bt Chandigarh 3-1 (17-25, 25-23, 29-13, 25-21). **Group F:** Himachal Pradesh bt Delhi 3-0 (25-20, 25-19, 25-21); Rajasthan bt Puducherry 3-0 (25-18, 25-7, 25-14).

ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಮಹಿಳಾ ತಂಡ ಶುಭಾರಂಭ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಆಯೋಜಿಸಲಾದ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಚಾಂಪಿಯನ್‌ಶಿಪ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡವು ತನ್ನ ಪಂದ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಆರಂಭಿಸಿದೆ. ಮೊದಲ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡವು ತನ್ನ ಪಂದ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಆರಂಭಿಸಿದೆ. ಮೊದಲ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡವು ತನ್ನ ಪಂದ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಆರಂಭಿಸಿದೆ.



ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡವು ಮೊದಲ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ತನ್ನ ಪಂದ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಆರಂಭಿಸಿದೆ. ಮೊದಲ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡವು ತನ್ನ ಪಂದ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಆರಂಭಿಸಿದೆ. ಮೊದಲ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡವು ತನ್ನ ಪಂದ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಆರಂಭಿಸಿದೆ.

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64ನೇ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಚಾಂಪಿಯನ್‌ಷಿಪ್ ಆಂಧ್ರ, ಗುಜರಾತ್ ಜಯಭೇರಿ

ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ ವಾರ್ತೆ

ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು: ಆರಂಭದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರಬಲ ಪೈಪೋಟಿ ಎದುರಿಸಿ ನಂತರ ತಿರುಗೇಟು ನೀಡಿದ ಆಂಧ್ರ ಪ್ರದೇಶ ಮತ್ತು ಗುಜರಾತ್ ಮಹಿಳಾ ತಂಡಗಳು 64ನೇ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಸೀನಿಯರ್ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಚಾಂಪಿಯನ್‌ಷಿಪ್‌ನ ಭಾನುವಾರದ ಪಂದ್ಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಗೆಲುವು ಪಡೆದವು.

ಜಯನಗರದಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಕಿತ್ತೂರು ರಾಣಿ ಚೆನ್ನಮ್ಮ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಂಗಣದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆದ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಆಂಧ್ರ 25-18, 25-4, 25-7 ರಲ್ಲಿ ಜಾರ್ಖಂಡ್ ಮೇಲೆ ಗೆಲುವು ಸಾಧಿಸಿತು. ಬರೋಬ್ಬರಿ ಒಂದು ಗಂಟೆ ನಡೆದ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಆಂಧ್ರ ಮೊದಲ ಸೆಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಷ್ಟೇ ಅಲ್ಪ ಪ್ರತಿರೋಧ ಎದುರಿಸಿ ಗೆಲುವು ಪಡೆಯಿತು. ಇನ್ನೊಂದು ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಗುಜರಾತ್ 17-25, 25-23, 25-13, 25-11ರಲ್ಲಿ ಚಂಡೀಗಡ ಎದುರು ಜಯಭೇರಿ ಮೊಳಗಿಸಿತು. ಈ ಪಂದ್ಯ 91 ನಿಮಿಷ ಜರುಗಿತು.

ಪುರುಷರ ವಿಭಾಗದ ಪಂದ್ಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಪಶ್ಚಿಮ ಬಂಗಾಳ 3-0ರಲ್ಲಿ ದೆಹಲಿ ಮೇಲೂ, ಹರಿಯಾಣ 3-0ರಲ್ಲಿ ಗುಜರಾತ್ ವಿರುದ್ಧವೂ, ಮಹಾರಾಷ್ಟ್ರ 3-0ರಲ್ಲಿ ಜಮ್ಮು ಮತ್ತು ಕಾಶ್ಮೀರದ ಮೇಲೂ ಗೆಲುವು ಪಡೆದವು.



ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಚಾಂಪಿಯನ್‌ಷಿಪ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾನುವಾರ ಸರ್ವಿಸಸ್ ತಂಡದ ಪಂಕಜ್ ಶರ್ಮಾ ಚೆಂಡನ್ನು ಬ್ಲಾಕ್ ಮಾಡಲು ಯತ್ನಿಸಿದ ಕ್ಷಣ - ಪ್ರಜಾವಾಣಿ ಚಿತ್ರ

ರಾಜಾಜಿನಗರದ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಂಗಣದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆದ ಪುರುಷರ ವಿಭಾಗದ ಪಂದ್ಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಉತ್ತರ ಪ್ರದೇಶ 3-1ರಲ್ಲಿ ಹಿಮಾಚಲ ಪ್ರದೇಶ ಮೇಲೂ, ಚಂಡೀಗಡ 3-0ರಲ್ಲಿ ಗೋವಾ ವಿರುದ್ಧವೂ, ತೆಲಂಗಾಣ 3-0ರಲ್ಲಿ ಜಾರ್ಖಂಡ್ ಮೇಲೂ ಜಯ

ಸಾಧಿಸಿದವು.

ಕಠೀರವ ಒಳಾಂಗಣ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಂಗಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಜರುಗಿದ ಮಹಿಳಾ ವಿಭಾಗದ ಹೋರಾಟದಲ್ಲಿ ಹಿಮಾಚಲ ಪ್ರದೇಶ 3-0ರಲ್ಲಿ ದೆಹಲಿ ಮೇಲೂ, ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ 3-0ರಲ್ಲಿ ಪುದುಚೇರಿ ವಿರುದ್ಧವೂ ಗೆಲುವು ಪಡೆದವು.

Fancied TN bow to Services' might

Champions Railways record second victory

By Vikram VAR

SPECIAL REPORT: Tamil Nadu's traditional prowess in the sport of volleyball is once again evident in the men's services' team's victory in the final of the Senior National Volleyball Championship.

However, Services, on the night of a great team work, put up a superb performance to win the final against Railways 3-0 (25-21, 25-21, 25-18) in a gripping encounter at the Jawahar Indoor Stadium on Sunday.

It was a dominant start for Services, defending champion Railways had no chance of attacking victory in the first set. Services' prowess in their own court was the key to their victory in their first set. Services' prowess in their own court was the key to their victory in their first set.

convinced fashion, beating Railways 3-0 (25-21, 25-21, 25-18).

In the women's Group C match, Karnataka began on a positive note, defeating Chhattisgarh 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14).

Earlier, senior players Vikram Pandian and Nagesh Raju took their post as captains in Tamil Nadu's victory in their first set.

In the second set, blockers of Railways and Services both showed a strong will and both allowed the strong Tamil Nadu attack to find their rhythm. Even as the helpless Tamil Nadu side tried different combinations, Services remained



POLICEFILE: Tamil Nadu's might of the Services attempts a smash past the Tamil Nadu defence. (PHOTO: DR JAYAKANNAN)

focused throughout the set to clinch it 25-20. Two set down, Tamil Nadu had no option but to go all out in order to save the match.

In the most engaging set of the match, the GK Vaithianathan made a fine comeback to clinch it 25-22 to pull one back. Tamil Nadu finally found an answer to Karnataka's power hit strategies through their improved defence led by Vishnu.

Tamil Nadu were expected to carry momentum into the fourth set but Services regrouped well to take a healthy 10-6 lead. Senior Pandian, who

hit show continued and too many instances of net infractions.

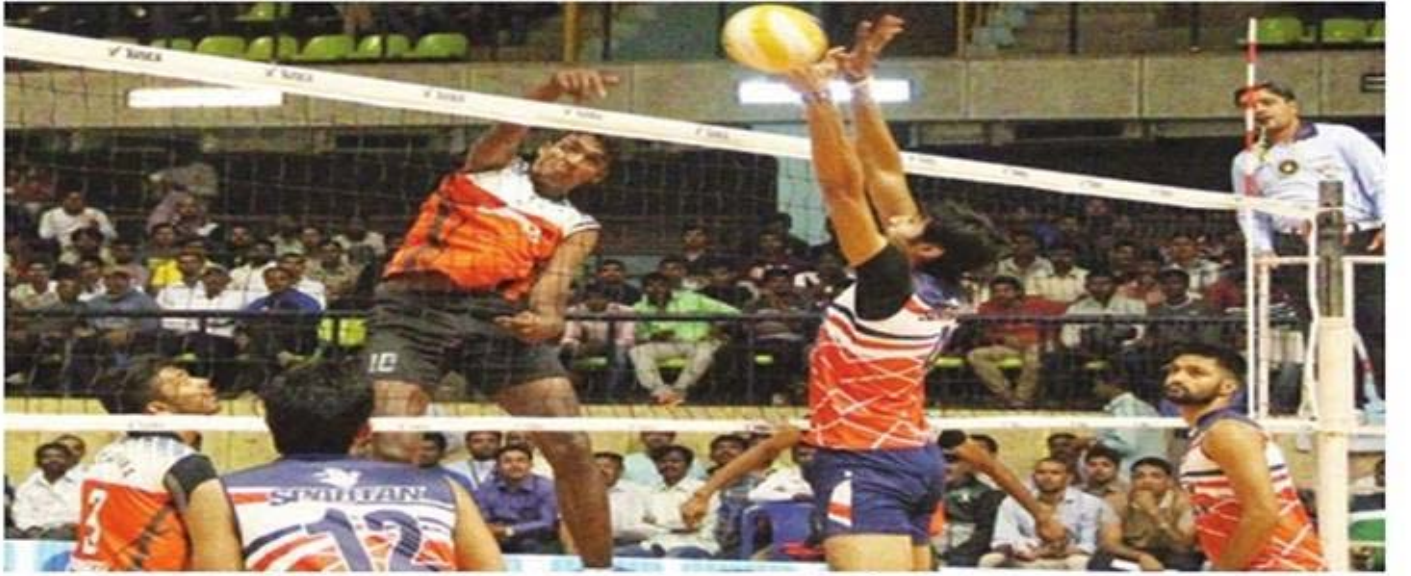
Tamil Nadu coach P Sudhakar sounded optimistic despite the defeat. "Our senior players had an off day but we will bounce back," he said.

DI News Service

- Results:** Men Group A, (senior all)
- Andhra Pradesh 3-0 (25-21, 25-21, 25-21)
 - Uttar Pradesh 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14)
 - Group B, Services in Tamil Nadu: 3-1 (25-21, 25-20, 22-25, 28-26)
 - Group C, West Bengal in Delhi: 3-0 (25-22, 25-16, 25-18)
 - Madhya Pradesh 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14)
 - Group D, Kerala in Chennai: 3-1 (25-21, 25-18, 25-16, 25-21)
 - Group E, Karnataka in Durgam: 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14)
 - Group F, Maharashtra in Bangalore: 3-0 (25-17, 25-15, 25-13)
 - Group G, Andhra Pradesh 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14)
 - Group H, Tamil Nadu in Tamil Nadu: 3-0 (25-20, 25-18, 17-20, 15-13)
 - Group I, Madhya Pradesh in Bhopal: 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14)
 - Group J, Assam in Shillong: 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14)
 - Group K, Jammu & Kashmir 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14)
 - Group L, Uttar Pradesh 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14)
 - Group M, West Bengal in Delhi: 3-1 (25-21, 25-18, 25-16, 25-21)
 - Group N, Karnataka in Bangalore: 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14)
 - Group O, Maharashtra in Pune: 3-0 (25-18, 25-16, 25-14)

ಆತಿಥೇಯರ ಪಡೆಯ ಗೆಲವಿನ ಶುಭಾರಂಭ

ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್: ಮೊದಲ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಜಯ



ಕಂಠೀರವ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಂಗಣದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆದ ಪುರುಷರ ವಿಭಾಗದ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಸೇನಾಸುಕ್ತಿಯವರ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ತಂಡದ ಆಟಗಾರರು

• ಕನ್ನಡಪ್ರಭ ವಾರ್ತೆ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು

ಭಾರೀ ನಿರೀಕ್ಷೆಯೊಂದಿಗೆ ಆಯೋಜನೆಗೊಂಡಿರುವ 64ನೇ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಹಿರಿಯರ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಪಂದ್ಯಾವಳಿ ಶನಿವಾರ ಆರಂಭಗೊಂಡಿತು. ಮೊದಲ ದಿನವೇ ತನ್ನ ಅಭಿಯಾನ ಆರಂಭಿಸಿದ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಪುರುಷರ ತಂಡ, ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ ತಂಡದ ವಿರುದ್ಧ 3-1 ಗೇಮ್‌ಗಳ ಅಂತರದಲ್ಲಿ ಜಯ ಸಾಧಿಸಿತು.



ಶ್ರೀಕಂಠೀರವ ಒಳಾಂಗಣ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಂಗಣದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆದ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ತೀವ್ರ ಪೈಪೋಟಿಯಿಂದ ಕೂಡಿದ್ದ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಉತ್ತಮ ಆರಂಭ ತೋರಿದ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ತಂಡ, ಉತ್ತಮ ಹೋರಾಟ ತೋರಿತಾದರೂ ಮೊದಲ ಗೇಮ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ 23-25 ಅಂಕಗಳ ಅಂತರದಲ್ಲಿ ಪರಾಭವ ಹೊಂದಿತು.

ಆದರೆ, ಅನಂತರ ಪುಟಿದಿದ್ದ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಆಟಗಾರರು ಎರಡನೇ ಗೇಮ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ 28-26ರ ಅಂತರದಲ್ಲಿ ಜಯಭೇರಿ ಬಾರಿಸಿದರು.

ಎರಡನೇ ಗೇಮ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಕೇವಲ ಎರಡೇ ಅಂಕಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಸೋಲು ಕಂಡಿದ್ದ ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ, ಮೂರನೇ ಗೇಮ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಪಟ್ಟು ಬಿಡದೇ ಆಟವಾಡಿತು. ಆದರೆ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕವೂ ಸುಲಭವಾಗಿ ಮಣಿಯು ವಂತಿರಲಿಲ್ಲ. ಎರಡನೇ ಗೇಮ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಗೆದ್ದಿದ್ದ ಉತ್ತಮ ಆದರ ಆತ್ಮವಿಶ್ವಾಸವನ್ನು ಇಮ್ಮಡಿಗೊಳಿಸಿತ್ತು. ಇದರ ಫಲವಾಗಿ, ಅದು ಉತ್ತಮವಾಗಿಯೇ ಪೈಪೋಟಿ ನಡೆಸಿತು. ಅತ್ತ, ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ ತಂಡದ ಕಡೆಯಿಂದಲೂ ಭಾರೀ ಪ್ರತಿರೋಧ ವ್ಯಕ್ತವಾಯಿತು. ಆದರೂ, ಪಟ್ಟುಬಿಡದೇ ಆಟ ಮುಂದುವರಿಸಿದ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡ, ಮೂರನೇ ಗೇಮ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ 25-23 ಅಂಕಗಳ ಅಂತರದಲ್ಲೇ ಗೆಲುವು ಸಾಧಿಸಿತು. ಈ ಮೂಲಕ, ಎದುರಾಳಿಗಳಿಗಿಂತ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡವು 2-1 ಗೇಮ್‌ಗಳಿಂದ ಮುನ್ನಡೆ ಪಡೆದುಕೊಂಡಿತು.

ಪಂದ್ಯಾಳಿಗೆ ವೈಭವದ ಬಾಲನೆ

ಪಂದ್ಯಗಳಿಗೂ ಮುನ್ನ ಕಂಠೀರವ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಂಗಣದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆದ ವೈಭವದ ಉದ್ಘಾಟನಾ ಸಮಾರಂಭದಲ್ಲಿ, ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸಾರಿಗೆ ಸಚಿವ ರಾಮಲಿಂಗಾ ರೆಡ್ಡಿ, ದೀಪ ಬೆಳಗಿಸುವ ಮೂಲಕ ಪಂದ್ಯಾವಳಿಯನ್ನು ಉದ್ಘಾಟಿಸಿದರು. ಭಾರತೀಯ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷ ಚೌಧರಿ ಅವರೇ ಶ್ರುತಮಾರ್, ಬಿಬಿಎಂಪಿ ಮೇಯರ್ ಮಂಜುನಾಥ್ ರೆಡ್ಡಿ ಹಾಜರಿದ್ದರು.

ಇನ್ನು, ನಾಲ್ಕನೇ ಗೇಮ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿಯೂ ಇತ್ತಂಡಗಳು ಗೆಲುವಾಗಿ ಭಾರೀ ಸೇನಾಸುಕ್ತಿಯವರ ನಡೆಸಿದವು. ಈ ಜಿದ್ದಾಜಿದ್ದಿಯ ಹೋರಾಟದ ನಡುವೆ ವಿಜೃಂಭಿಸಿದ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡ ಮಿಂಚಿನ ಪ್ರದರ್ಶನ ನೀಡಿತು. ಒಂದು ಹಂತದಲ್ಲಿ ತಟಸ್ಥವಾದಂತೆ ಕಂಡು ಬಂದ ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನದ ಆಟಗಾರರು ಕೈ ಚೆಲ್ಲಿದಂತೆ ಭಾಸವಾಯಿತು. ಅತ್ತ, ಶಿಷ್ಟಬದ್ಧ ಪ್ರದರ್ಶನ ಮುಂದುವರಿಸಿದ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡ, ಈ ಗೇಮ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ 25-20 ಅಂಕಗಳ ಅಂತರದ ಜಯ ಸಾಧಿಸಿತಲ್ಲದೆ, 3-1 ಗೇಮ್‌ಗಳ ಅಂತರದಲ್ಲಿ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲೂ ಜಯಶಾಲಿಯಾಯಿತು.

ಮಹಾರಾಷ್ಟ್ರದ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ರೈಲ್ವೆಸ್ ಗೆಲುವು: ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ತನ್ನದೇ ಪ್ರಾಬಲ್ಯ ಹೊಂದಿರುವ ರೈಲ್ವೆಸ್ ತಂಡವೂ, ಟೂರ್ನಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಶುಭಾರಂಭ ಮಾಡಿದೆ. ಶನಿವಾರ ನಡೆದ ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ವಿಭಾಗದ ಮೊದಲ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ, ರೈಲ್ವೆಸ್ ತಂಡ, ಮಹಾರಾಷ್ಟ್ರ ತಂಡವನ್ನು 3-0 ಗೇಮ್‌ಗಳ ಅಂತರದಲ್ಲಿ ಪರಾಭವಗೊಳಿಸಿತು. ಮೊದಲ ಗೇಮ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ 25-19 ಅಂತರದಲ್ಲಿ ಜಯ ಸಾಧಿಸಿದ ರೈಲ್ವೆಸ್, ಅನಂತರದ ಗೇಮ್‌ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 25-18, 25-17 ಗೇಮ್‌ಗಳ ಅಂತರದಲ್ಲಿ ಜಯಿಸಿ, ವಿಜಯದ ನಗೆ ಬೀರಿತು.

ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ ವಿರುದ್ಧ 3-1 ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳ ಗೆಲುವು | ಮಿಂಚಿದ ಅನೂಪ್, ರೈಸನ್

ಆತಿಥೇಯ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಪುಭಾರಂಭ

■ ಮಂಜುನಾಥ ಕೆ ಜಾಲಗಿರೆ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು

ಆರಂಭಿಕ ಓನ್‌ಜೆ ಹೊರತಾಗಿಯೂ ಅನೂಪ್ ಡಿ. ಕೋನ್ಪಾ ಮತ್ತು ರೈಸನ್ ಭಿಸ್ಟ್ ರೆಸಲ್ ದೊ ಅವರ ಚಾಕಚಕ್ಯತೆ ಆಟದ ನೆರವಿನಿಂದ ಚೇಲಂಕಿ ಪ್ರದರ್ಶನ ನೀಡಿದ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ತಂಡ, 64ನೇ ಹಿರಿಯರ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಪಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಚಾಂಪಿಯನ್‌ಷಿಪ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ ತಂಡದ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಗೆದ್ದು ಶುಭಾರಂಭ ಮಾಡಿದೆ.

ಇಲ್ಲಿನ ಶ್ರೀ ಕಂಠೀರವ ಒಳಾಂಗಣ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಂಗಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ನಡವ ಟೂರ್ನಿಯ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭದ 'ಬೆ' ಗುಂಪಿನ ಉದ್ಘಾಟನಾ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಿಂಚಿದ ಆತಿಥೇಯ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ 3-1 (23-25, 28-26, 25-23, 25-20) ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳಿಂದ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿ ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಗೆಲುವಿನ ಸೆಗೆ ಬಿಲಿತು.



ಎದುರಾಳಿಗೆ ಅಂತಿಮ ಟೆನಿಸ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಪಂದ್ಯ ಆರಂಭಿಸಿದ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಆಟಗಾರರು ನಂತರ ಚುರುಕಿನ ಪಾಟಾಂಗ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಗಮನ ಸೆಳೆದರು.

ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ತಂಡವನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿನಿಧಿಸುವ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡದ ನಾಯಕ ಎ.ಕಾರ್ತಿಕ್ ಐನ್ಫೋಸಲ್ಲಿ ಮಿಂಚಿದರೆ, ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ತಂಡದ ಮತ್ತೊಬ್ಬ ಆಟಗಾರ ಅನೂಪ್ ಡಿ. ಕೋನ್ಪಾ ಮತ್ತು ರೈಸನ್ ಭಿಸ್ಟ್ ರೆಸಲ್ ದೊ ವಿಭಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ ಅತ್ಯುತ್ತಮ ಪ್ರದರ್ಶನ ನೀಡಿದರು. ಇವರ ಸಾಹಸದಿಂದ ವೇದಲ ಸೆಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಎದುರಾಳಿಯ ರಿಟ್ಟು ರೆಡ್ಜೆ ಮತ್ತು ದಾಳಿಯನ್ನು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸಮರ್ಥವಾಗಿ ಎದುರಿಸುತ್ತಾ ದೂರ ಕೊನೆಗೊಂಡಲ್ಲಿ ಒನ್ನೆಡೆ ಅನುಭವಿಸಿತು.

ಆದರೆ, ದ್ವಿತೀಯ ಸೆಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ದಾಳಿ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಆಟಗಾರರು ಉತ್ತಮ ಪಾಟಾಂಗ್ ನಡಿಸಿ ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ ಆಟಗಾರರಿಗೆ ರಿಟ್ಟು ಉತ್ತರ ನೀಡಿದರು. ಸೆಟ್‌ನ ಕೊನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ 22-22 ರಿಂದ ಸಮಬಲದ ಹೋರಾಟ ತೇಲುವ ಇಂಜಿಂಚಿಗಳು 26-26 ಅಂಕದವರೆಗೂ ಮುಂದುವರಿಯುವವು. ಈ



64ನೇ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಹಿರಿಯರ ಪಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಚಾಂಪಿಯನ್‌ಷಿಪ್‌ನ ಉದ್ಘಾಟನಾ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ತಂಡದ ಆಟಗಾರರ ಬಲವಾದ ಸ್ಕ್ವಾಷ್ ಗೆ ತಡೆಯೊಡ್ಡಲು ಯತ್ನಿಸಿದ ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ ತಂಡದ ಆಟಗಾರ

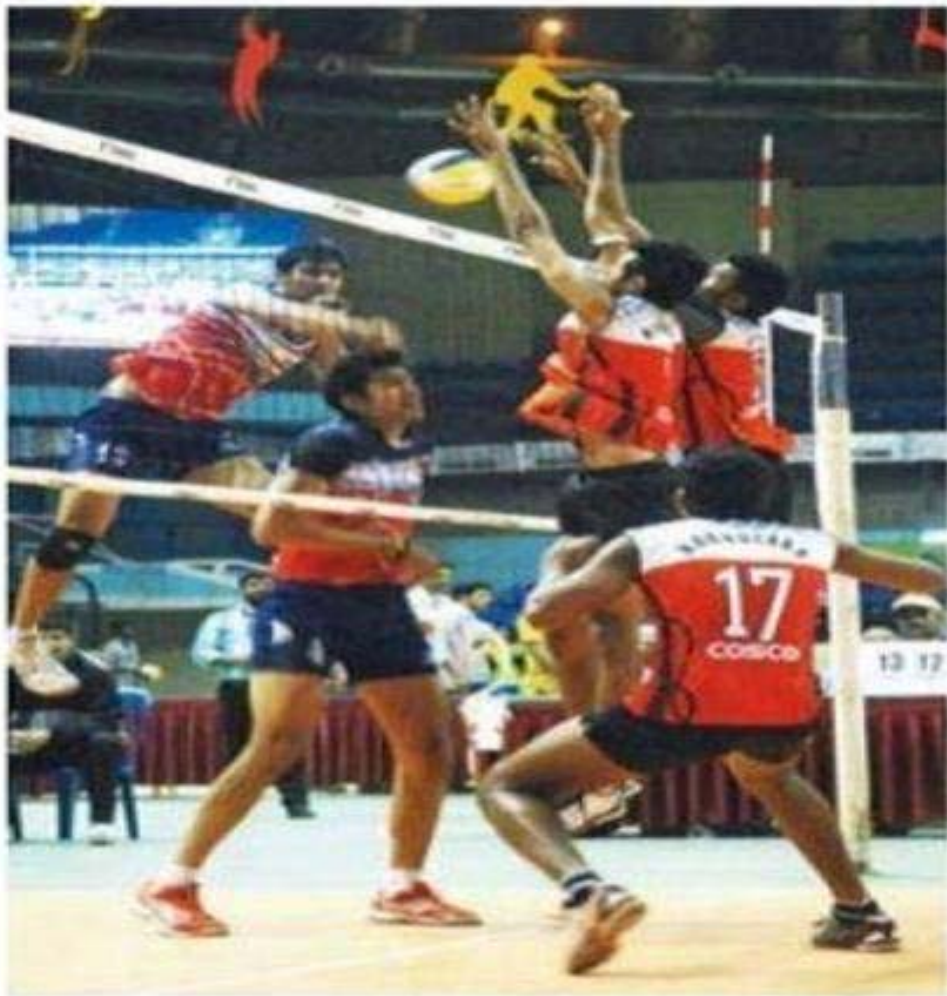


ಬೆಂಗಳೂರಿನ ಶ್ರೀ ಕಂಠೀರವ ಒಳಾಂಗಣ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಂಗಣದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆದ ಸಮಾರಂಭದಲ್ಲಿ 64ನೇ ಹಿರಿಯರ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಪಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಚಾಂಪಿಯನ್‌ಷಿಪ್‌ಗೆ ಚಾಲನೆ ನೀಡಲಾಯಿತು

ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಸರ್ವ ಮೂಡಿದ ಆತಿಥೇಯ ತಂಡದ ಕಾರ್ತಿಕ್ ಅಂಕ ತರುವಲ್ಲಿ ಯಶಸ್ವಿಯಾದರು. ನಂತರ ಮತ್ತೊಂದು ಅಂಕ ಗಳಿಸಿದ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸೆಟ್ ಮೆಚ್‌ಮೆಂಟೊಕೊಂಡು 1-1 ರಲ್ಲಿ ಸಮಬಲದ ಹೋರಾಟ ತೇಲಿತು.

ಮೂರನೇ ಸೆಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನದ ಆಟಗಾರರು ಆರಂಭಿಕ ಮುನ್ನಡೆ ಹೊರತಾಗಿಯೂ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡದ ಸ್ಪೂರ್ತಿಗಾಯಕಿ ಪ್ರದರ್ಶನದಿಂದ ಒತ್ತಡಕ್ಕೆ ಸುಲಿತರು. ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡ ಅಂಕ ಗಿಟ್ಟಿದಾಗಲೆಲ್ಲ ಸುಮಾರು 2 ಸಾವಿರಕ್ಕೂ ಅಧಿಕ ಮಂದಿ ನೆರೆದಿದ್ದ ಅಭಿಮಾನಿಗಳ ಹಮ್ಮಣದಿಂದ ಕಾರಕಕ್ಕೇರುತ್ತಿತ್ತು. ಸೆಟ್‌ನ ವಿರಾಮದಲ್ಲಿ 19-19 ರಲ್ಲಿ ಸಮಬಲದ ಆಟ ಮೂಡಿ ಬಂದಿತ್ತಾದರೂ ಕೊನೆ ಕ್ಷಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಕೊಠ್ಲಿಯಂತೆ ಆಟವಾಡಿದ ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡ 25-23 ಅಂಕಗಳಿಂದ

ಸೆಟ್ ಮೆಚ್‌ಮೆಂಟೊಕೊಂಡಿತು. 2-1 ರಲ್ಲಿ ಮುನ್ನಡೆ ಕಾಯಿಕೊಂಡ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ತಂಡ ನಾಲ್ಕನೇ ಸೆಟ್ ನಲ್ಲಿ ನಿರಂತರ ಅಂಕ ಗಿಟ್ಟಿಸಿದ ಮೂಲಕ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿ ತಂಡದ ಮೇಲೆ ಒತ್ತಡ ಹೇರಿತು. ಅಂತಿಮವಾಗಿ 25-20 ರಿಂದ ಸೆಟ್ ಗೆದ್ದ ಕಾರ್ತಿಕ್ ಪಡೆ 3-1 ರಿಂದ ಪಂದ್ಯ ಗೆದ್ದು ಚಾಂಪಿಯನ್‌ಷಿಪ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಶುಭಾರಂಭ ಮಾಡಿತು. ರಾಜ್ಯ ಪರ ಲಿಟ್ಟೆ ಆಟಗಾರ ಶ್ರವಣ್ ಯಾದವ್, ಭರತ್ ಸಿ.ಎಂ. ವಿನಾಯಿತ್ ರೊಚೆಡೆ ಗಮನ ಸೆಳೆದರೆ, ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನ ಪರ ದಾಳಕಾರ ಲವ್ ಮೀಲ್ ಕಟಾಂಬೂ, ನಾಯಕ ಕಿವಿಲೇಲ್ ಕಾರ್ತಿಕ್, ರೆಣ್‌ವೀಲ್ ಸ್ಪೂರ್ತಿಗಾಯಕಿ ಪ್ರದರ್ಶನ ನೀಡಿದರು. ಮುಟಳಿಯರ ವಿಭಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ ಹಾಲಿ ಚಾಂಪಿಯನ್ ರೈಲೈನ್ ತಂಡ 3-0 ಅಂತರದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಹಾರಾಷ್ಟ್ರ ತಂಡವನ್ನು ಹಣೆದು ಗೆಲುವಿನ ಅಭಿಯಾನ ಆರಂಭಿಸಿತು.



ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಶುಭಾರಂಭ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಟೂರ್ನಿ ರಾಜಸ್ಥಾನಕ್ಕೆ 1-3 ರಿಂದ ಆಫಾತ

ಜಂಗಳೂರು

ಆತಿಥೇಯ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ತಂಡದ ಸಂಘಟಿತ ಆಟಕ್ಕೆ ರಜಸ್ಥಾನ ತಂಡ ಮುಂದಿಯೂರಿತು. 64ನೇ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಓಯಿರ ವಾಲಿಬಾಲ್ ಟೂರ್ನಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಶುಭಾರಂಭ ಮಾಡಿದೆ.

ಕಂಠೀರವಾ ಒಳಾಂಗಣ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಂಗಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಶನಿವಾರದಿಂದ ಆರಂಭವಾದ ಟೂರ್ನಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ 3-1 ಸೆಟ್‌ಗಳಿಂದ ರಜಸ್ಥಾನ ತಂಡವನ್ನು ಪರಾಭವ ಗೊಳಿಸಿತು.

ಆಕರ್ಷಕ ಆಟವನ್ನು ಆಡಿದ ತಂಡದ ಆಟಗಾರರು ಜಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಿಂಚಿದರು. ಮೊದಲ ಸೆಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಹಿನ್ನಡೆ ಅನುಭವಿಸಿದರು ರಾಜ್ಯ ತಂಡ ಆಡಿದ ರೀತಿ ನೆರೆದ ಅಭಿಮಾನಿಗಳನ್ನು ರಂಜಿಸಿತು. ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ 23-25, 28-26, 25-23, 25-20 ಅಂಕಗಳಿಂದ ಪಂದ್ಯ ಗೆದ್ದು ಬೀಗಿತು.

ಮೊದಲ ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರವಾಸಿ ತಂಡದ ಆಟಗಾರರು ಕಾರ್ತಿಕ ಪಡೆಗೆ ಶಾಕ್ ನೀಡಿದರು. ಕೊನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಎಡವಿದ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ 23-25 ಅಂಕಗಳಿಂದ ಮೊದಲ ಸೆಟ್ ಕೈ

ಚೆಲ್ಲಿತು.

ಎರಡನೇ ಸೆಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಸೊಗಸಾದ ಆಟವಾಡಿದ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ತಂಡದ ಆಟಗಾರರು, ಸ್ಕಾಟ್ ಹಾಗೂ ಗ್ಯಾಬ್ ಶಾಟ್‌ಗಳ ಮೂಲಕ ಗಮನ ಸೆಳೆದರು. ಅಂಕಗಳನ್ನು ಉಭಯ ತಂಡದ ಆಟಗಾರರು ನೀಡಲು ಹಿಂದೇಟು ಹಾಕಿದರು. ಆದರೂ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ 28-26 ಅಂಕಗಳಿಂದ ಎರಡನೇ ಸೆಟ್ ಗೆದ್ದು ಸಮಬಲ ಸಾಧಿಸಿತು.

ಮೂರನೇ ಸೆಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಸ್ಥಿರ ಪ್ರದರ್ಶನವನ್ನು ನೀಡಿದ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಆಟಗಾರರು, ಎದುರಾಳಿ ತಂಡದ ತಂತ್ರಕ್ಕೆ ಪ್ರತಿ ತಂತ್ರ ಹೆಣೆದರು. ವೇಗವಾಗಿ ಚೆಂಡನ್ನು ಬಾರಿಸುತ್ತಾ ಸಾಗಿದ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಆಟಗಾರರು ಪಂದ್ಯದ ಮೇಲೆ ಹಿಡಿತ ಸಾಧಿಸಿದರು. ಕೊನೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪುಟಿದೇಳುವ ಸೂಚನೆ ನೀಡಿದರೂ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ತಂಡದ ರಕ್ಷಣಾತ್ಮಕ ಆಟಕ್ಕೆ ಜಯ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಪಾಲಾಯಿತು.

ನಿರ್ಣಾಯಕ ಸೆಟ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಶ್ರೇಷ್ಠ ಆಟವನ್ನು ಆಡಿತು. 25-20 ಅಂಕಗಳಿಂದ ಸೆಟ್ ಗೆದ್ದು, ಪಂದ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಜಯ ಸಾಧಿಸಿದರು.