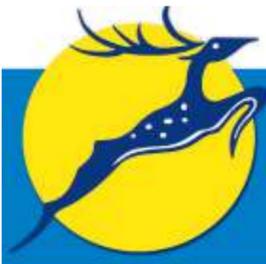


**ANALYSIS 7**  
MAYAWATI AND HER  
COMMITTED VOTEBANK

**MONEY 8**  
TOTAL 9,849 URLS BLOCKED IN  
2020: CHANDRASEKHAR

**SPORTS 11**  
KOHLI REMOVED FROM ODI CAPTAINCY AS  
ROHIT BECOMES NEW WHITE-BALL CAPTAIN

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



# the pioneer

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VASISHTA SIMHA  
ON TURNING  
PASSION INTO  
CAREER  
Page 12

## GENERAL RAWAT DIES IN CHOPPER CRASH

Rawat's wife Madhulika and 11 others also died on the spot

General Rawat's body to be brought to Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

General Bipin Rawat, India's first Chief of Defence Staff, and his wife died today after a military chopper crashed in Tamil Nadu, killing 13 on board. The only survivor, an Air Force Group Captain, is being treated for severe burns.

"With deep regret, it has now been ascertained that Gen Bipin Rawat, Madhulika Rawat and 11 other persons on board have died in the unfortunate accident," the Indian Air Force (IAF) tweeted.

The person being treated at the military hospital in Wellington is "Group Captain Varun Singh", said the Air Force.

The IAF had confirmed a little before 2 pm that an Mi-17 V5 helicopter with General Rawat on board had "met with an accident near Coonoor, Tamil Nadu".

The helicopter crashed shortly after it took off from the Air Force base in Sullur at 11.45 am, Coimbatore, for Wellington in the Nilgiri Hills.

The General was heading to the Defence Services Staff College in Wellington to address the faculty and students.

It was making its descent and would have landed in 10 more minutes when it came down, barely 10 km from a road. The Air Force has ordered an Inquiry into what happened.

Videos showed steaming wreckage scattered on a hillside and rescuers struggling through smoke

and fire to locate bodies. Charred bodies were pulled out from under mangled metal and fallen trees. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, briefed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, called a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) at his residence. The Defence Minister and Army Chief MM Naravane visited General Rawat's home in Delhi long before the official announcement.

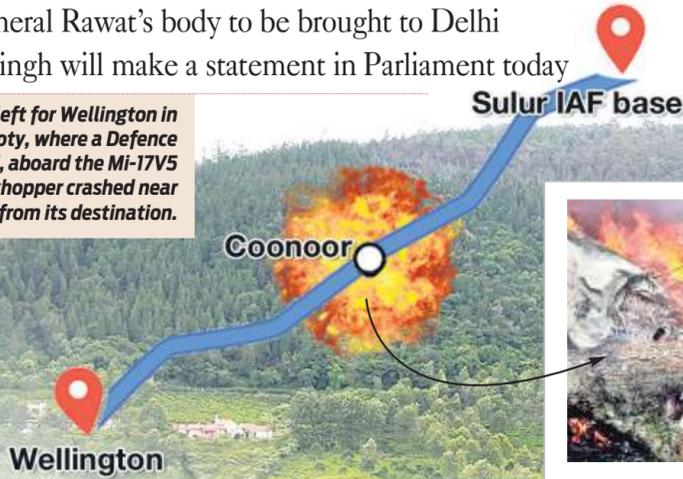
The Defence Minister called General Rawat's death an "irreparable loss" to the country and the forces.

General Rawat, 63, took charge as India's first Chief of Defence Staff in January 2019. The position was created to integrate the three services - the Army, the Navy and the Air Force.

### Defence Minister visits General Rawat's home

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Army Chief General MM Naravane visited Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat's home today. Their visits came after a chopper carrying Gen Rawat crashed, killing 13 people.

At 11.45 PM, General Rawat left for Wellington in Udhagamandalam, also known as Ooty, where a Defence Services Staff College is located, aboard the Mi-17V5 chopper with 13 others. At noon, the chopper crashed near Coonoor, 14km from its destination.



- IAF's Embraer aircraft carrying General Bipin Rawat, his wife and other defence personnel takes off around 9 am from Palam airbase in Delhi for Sullur airbase near Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu
- Aircraft lands at Sullur airbase around 11.35 am
- IAF's Mi17V5 chopper, with Rawat, his wife and 12 defence personnel onboard, departs from Sullur airbase around 11.45 am for Defence Services Staff College in Wellington

- Continued on page 2



### What is the MI-17 V5 Helicopter?

<b>AIRCRAFT TYPE</b> Military transport helicopter, multiple variants have armed assault capabilities	<b>DESIGNED BY</b> Mil Moscow Helicopter Plant	<b>BUILT BY</b> Kazan Helicopters, a subsidiary of Russian Helicopters	<b>1975</b> First Flight	The designation Mi-17 is for export; Russian armed forces call it Mi-8MT	The Mi-17V-5 is one of the world's most advanced transport helicopters, designed to transport cargo inside the cabin and on an external sling.
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At least 60 countries use these copters, as of 2021.

## Disbelief grips tea estate workers as stench of burning bodies envelopes woods

PNS ■ COONOOR

A kind of a thud and 'something' whirring from nowhere was the first sign that something has gone seriously amiss. Humble tea estate workers, in their serene Western Ghats village in Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu were quickly overwhelmed with a sense of foreboding.

Soon, it was sheer disbelief that gripped them in their modest hillside colony when they saw a frightening bright blaze emerging from the misty woods amid clanking of metal objects. Though it was a little past noon, fog still shrouded the hills on Wednesday. Although neither workers nor their family members could comprehend what was unfolding, they and some local people were the first to reach the location, where the Air Force helicopter, with Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat, his wife and 11 other people on board, crashed.

However, they could not get very close as the fire raged destroying all that it could in the wooded vicinity. The location of the mishap is a forest area, close to a tea estate and mountain chain and valleys.

Eyewitness accounts said hearing 'something like a boom' and then 'clanking of objects,' while the fire raged for well over half an

hour, destroying the copter, killing its occupants and reducing huge trees to ashes.

"The helicopter crashed in a forest area, pretty close to a tea estate. The main, motorable route to this area is only through the tea estate. It was the local people and workers who saw what happened immediately after the crash," a senior state police official in Chennai said quoting preliminary inputs.

"The Defence authorities could throw light on the crash," he added.

Eventually, when some people managed to reach close by, they could just not believe what they saw.

When they spotted a 'burning thing' they initially thought that it could be the branch of a tree, and on inching closer, the stench of the flesh that was still ablaze made them realise what it was a 'burning and burnt' body of a man crushed under the heavy branch of a huge tree that fell down in the impact of the crash.

When they saw another partially burnt body near bushes, apparently of a young soldier, they got an indication of the gravity of the situation. With only some shreds of his olive green uniform over a part of his upper torso, he was just lying flat on the ground, lifeless.



Police personnel, the first responders, looking for survivors at the wreckage of the chopper at the crash site.

## Gen. Rawat's death created a void in country: Pawan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena Party (JSP) chief K Pawan Kalyan expressed shock and grief over the death of CDS Gen. Bipin Rawat in a helicopter crash. In a message here on Wednesday, he said that Bipin Rawat was the first Army Officer who held the CDS post. He had striven to strengthen the security forces and played a vital role in this regard. His untimely death created a void in the country. Pawan Kalyan also expressed grief over the death of Saitej. He said that he was saddened to know that the young army officer from Chittoor district died in the helicopter crash. He condoled the death and conveyed sympathies to the bereaved families.



## Chittoor native Sai Teja dies in crash

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A resident of Kurabalakota in Chittoor district was among the victims of the IAF helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu. The deceased, B Sai Teja, hailing from Eguva Regada village, was serving as Lance Naik in the Indian Army.

The accident happened while Sai Teja was on duty as Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat's Personal Security Officer. He joined as SPO to Rawat about seven months back. Sai Teja joined the Army as a sepoy in 2013 from the Bengaluru regiment. He cleared the para-commando examination while serving as a sepoy the following year. He was serving as Lance Naik in the 11 para. He was training people in the Bengaluru Sepoy Training Center



until last year. Sai Teja is survived by wife Shyamala, 4-year-old son Mokshagna and 2-year-old daughter Darshini.

## Outstanding soldier, true patriot: PM Modi

Paying rich tributes to Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday that he was an outstanding soldier and a true patriot who greatly contributed to modernising India's armed forces and security apparatus. Gen Rawat's passing away has saddened him deeply, the prime minister said. In his condolence message, Modi said he was deeply anguished by the helicopter crash in which Rawat, his wife and other personnel of the armed forces died. They served India with utmost diligence, Modi said, adding that his thoughts are with the bereaved families. "Gen Bipin Rawat was an outstanding soldier. A true patriot, he greatly contributed to modernising our armed forces and security apparatus. His insights and perspectives on strategic matters were exceptional. His passing away has saddened me deeply. Om Shanti. As India's first CDS, Gen Rawat worked on diverse aspects relating to our armed forces including defence reforms. He brought with him a rich experience of serving in the Army. India will never forget his exceptional service," the prime minister tweeted.



## Governor expresses deep anguish, sadness

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan expressed deep anguish and sadness over the demise of Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat, his wife Madhulika Rawat and 11 other defence personnel in the Army helicopter crash near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu on Wednesday. Governor Harichandan expressed profound grief over the loss of lives in the Army helicopter crash and said that the death of Gen Bipin Rawat is a great loss for the nation. The Governor said 'I pray for eternal peace to their souls and offer my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members.'

## Jagan, Chandrababu express shock

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed shock over the IAF helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu, in which Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat was onboard. "Extremely disturbed by the news of the Army chopper crash in TN. Praying for the safety of CDS Gen Bipin Rawat ji. Deepest condolences to the families of the victims. May they find strength in this difficult time," Jagan said in a tweet on Wednesday. Telugu Desam Party president N Chandrababu Naidu expressed shock over the tragedy. "I am shocked to learn that an Army helicopter carrying Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat ji and 13 others has crashed in Tamil Nadu. My thoughts and prayers are with those who were onboard," Chandrababu said in a tweet. The IAF in the evening said that Gen Rawat, his wife Madhulika and 11 other people on board the helicopter died in a crash near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu. It said Group Captain Varun Singh with injuries is currently under treatment at a military hospital in Wellington (in Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu).

## Fake Central GST invoice racket busted

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Officers of the Anti-Evasion Wing of Vizag Central GST have detected a fake invoice racket involving a network of companies.

Enquiries made and searches conducted on M/s Krishna Sai Builders Pvt. Limited and M/s Dew Drops Granite Private Limited have revealed that fake GST cred-

it worth more than Rs.18 Cr has been transacted by creating fictitious invoices without actual supply of goods or services.

Three persons including the alleged mastermind, Madan Mohan Reddy, were arrested and produced before the Economic Offences Court at Visakhapatnam on Wednesday. They were remanded in judi-

cial custody for 14 days. All of them were sent to Central Prison, Visakhapatnam. Further investigations in the case are on and the officers are looking at the possibility of several AP and Telangana-based fake firms in the network and the quantum of fraudulent tax amount is likely to go up.

## Vested interests trying to hinder OTS scheme: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has alleged that vested interests have been trying to hinder the implementation of the One-Time Settlement (OTS) scheme.

He held a review meeting on the YSR Jagananna Colonies and YSR Jagananna Sampoorna Gruha Hakku scheme on Wednesday and directed the officials to create

awareness on the benefits of the OTS scheme for house loans among people.

The Chief Minister said that the OTS scheme was voluntary and houses would be registered with clear titles. The State government would be waiving off Rs 10,000 crore of housing loans taken by economically backward sections and the registrations would be done free of cost.

The beneficiaries would get legal rights on the properties. The CM directed the officials to create awareness of these benefits among the people.

The Chief Minister said a few vested interests had been trying to hinder the implementation of the OTS scheme.

"The previous government did not consider proposals to waive off interests of housing

loans and approximately 43,000 people have paid interests along with the principal amount," he said and added that only B-form patta was given after complete payment in the past.

He said the State government was giving complete legal rights of the property to the beneficiaries through the OTS scheme and they could mortgage or sell the property.

# 23.8% kids use phones while in bed: NCPPCR

Study highlights need for more community playgrounds

NAVEENA GHANATE  
HYDERABAD

Nearly 23.8 per cent use smart phones while they are in bed, as per a study commissioned by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPPCR). The study says 37.15% of children, always or frequently, experience reduced levels of concentration due to smart phone use.

NCPPCR recently conducted a study on 'Effects (Physical, Behavioural and Psycho-Social) of using mobile phones and other devices with internet accessibility by children' with sample size of 5,000 from rural and urban areas in all the zones of the country.



Union Minister of Women and Child Development Smriti Zubin Irani, in a written reply in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, said: "As per the study, 23.80 per cent of children use smart phones while they are in bed, before going to sleep which

increase with age; this has adverse impact on children".

Use of smart phones at inappropriate times can have detrimental impact on health and well-being of children. One such impact is reduction in level of concentration among children. As per the study, 37.15% of children, always or frequently, experience reduced levels of concentration due to smart phone use.

As per information received from NCPPCR, based on the findings of the study, it recommends a bigger portion of land in the communities needs to be identified as a playground for children that will encourage the children to involve themselves in games and sports.

## Disbelief grips tea estate workers as ...

Continued from Page 1

Another army man, who apparently sustained severe burns was lying in a prone position and was obviously dead. People, however, had no clue about the identity of the victims.

According to local people, some occupants of the helicopter may have got thrown out in the impact of crash, which they say happened "as the rotor blade of the chopper hit a huge tree due to poor visibility while on the ascend." People in Nilgiris district are accustomed to man-animal conflict and wild animals entering villages and destroying crops and even killing people.

The spectacle of burning bodies and the stench of flesh and the helicopter crash is something they have neither seen nor could easily forget for many years to come.

## 5 girl students of govt school allege gang-rape by teachers

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Fifteen teachers, including the principal of a government school in Rajasthan's Alwar district, were booked after five girl students accused them of gang-rape.

Police, who conducted preliminary investigation at their village, suspect it to be a case of "revenge" and "witness harassment" by a former teacher of the school, who was arrested last December on charges of molesting three girl students.

They said the complainants have refused to undergo medical examination.

"A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed to probe the matter thoroughly," Superintendent of Police, Bhiwadi, Ram Murthy Joshi said.

He said the principal and 14 teachers, including five women, were booked under the Indian Penal Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) after the girl students registered three FIRs at Mandhan police station in

Bhiwadi, Alwar, on Tuesday night.

"Entire staff of the school has been booked in the FIRs. The family members of the girls have refused to get medical examinations conducted. Their statements will be recorded in the court and a thorough investigation will be held," Joshi said.

Speaking about the possibility of "witness harassment", he said, "I went to the village and spoke to the villagers and family members. It appears to be a case of witness harassment on the basis of primary investigation."

"Last December, a former teacher of the school, who is currently under suspension, was arrested on charges of molesting three girl students. The case is under trial and the police have filed a chargesheet in the court. All the staffers, who have been booked in the FIRs last night, had given statements against their colleague, who recently got bail," he said.

The SP said according to preliminary investigation, the teacher persuaded the

family members of the five girls to register cases against the school teachers and that he accompanied them to the police station and waited outside as the girls lodged complaints.

Station House Officer of Mandhan police station Mukesh Kumar said the girls, who are minors, have alleged that the male teachers used to rape them with the help of their female colleagues.

One of the FIRs was based on the complaint of two sister girls who study in the school, second FIR has also two victims and third case mentions one girl, according to the SP.

Meanwhile, BJP state president Satish Poonia collected details of the case from Alwar district collector and Bhiwadi Superintendent of Police.

He demanded stern action against the accused.

In a statement, Poonia alleged that law and order in the state has been derailed and that Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot should focus on restoring it.

## Will Mamata or KCR initiate talks on Federal Front?

SNCN ACHARYULU  
HYDERABAD

After West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee hijacked Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's idea to form a front to defeat the BJP in the next Lok Sabha elections the focus is now on whether KCR or Mamata will initiate talks on the issue.

In fact, before the last Lok Sabha elections, KCR had initiated talks with like-minded parties over the formation of a Federal Front against the BJP and the Congress.

KCR met Mamata twice regarding this. KCR also discussed it with former PM Deve Gowda, the chief of Janata Dal (Secular), Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren and others.

KCR felt that the talks could continue after the Lok Sabha elections. But against KCR's expectations, the BJP won a majority in the Lok Sabha and formed a government on its own.

Later, KCR started moving closely with the BJP-led government. Now Mamata has taken the initiative to form a third front against the BJP.

She has discussed the matter with Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav. Like Mamata, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has also strongly criticised the Congress.

When KCR initiated talks on the formation of a Federal Front Mamata Banerjee, Akhilesh Yadav and Sharad Pawar said that without Congress support it is not possible to defeat the BJP and that the Federal Front should be formed under the leadership of the Congress.

But KCR wanted the Federal Front to be formed with anti-BJP and anti-Congress parties. But now their opinions have changed. While Mamata and Akhilesh moved away from the Congress the TRS is moving closer to the Congress.

The meeting organised by the Congress on floor coordi-

ination was attended by TRS MPs. But Trinamool Congress MPs and MP Asaduddin Owaisi did not attend the meeting.

Later, the TRS clarified that they attended the meeting to apply pressure on the Centre on paddy procurement.

Against this backdrop, it is interesting to see whether KCR or Mamata would speak first on forming a front against the BJP. Sources said that Prashant Kishore of I-PAC is more interested to form a third front against the BJP and the Congress than Mamata. Prashant is reportedly mediating with the TRS and the YSR Congress to get their support for Mamata.

Prashant Kishore has direct access to YSR Congress President and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

During the last Assembly elections, Prashant Kishore worked for the YSR Congress and is now working for the next Assembly elections. But Prashant Kishore has no connections with the TRS or its supremo KCR.

## CDS CHOPPER CRASH

Mi17V5 is advanced transport helicopter with IAF since 2012

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Mi17V5 helicopter, which crashed with Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Bipin Rawat and 13 other people onboard on Wednesday, is an advanced military transport chopper that has been with the Indian Air Force (IAF) since 2012.

Manufactured by Russian Helicopters subsidiary Kazan, the helicopter has an onboard weather radar and is equipped with the latest generation of night vision devices.

It also has the new PKV-8 autopilot system and a KNEI-8 avionics suite. It can carry a maximum take off weight of 13,000 kg and maximum payload weight of 4,000 kg.

India had in 2008 signed a deal with Russia to induct 80 Mi17V5 medium lift helicopters for strengthening its chopper fleet for humanitarian and disaster relief missions and transport operations.

The contract was later expanded for delivery of 151 Mi17V5 helicopters.

The first batch of these helicopters came to India in September 2011.

In February 2012, the IAF

had formally inducted Mi17V5 helicopters from Russia to enhance its operational capabilities including carrying troops and cargo to high altitude areas.

The helicopter is fitted with a self-defence system against heat seeker missiles, heavily-armoured cockpit, vital systems and components.

"The Mi-17V-5 military transport helicopter is designed to carry personnel, cargo and equipment inside the cargo cabin or on an external sling, drop tactical air assault forces and reconnaissance and sabotage groups, destroy ground targets and carry the wounded," said Russian government's defence exports company Rosoboronexport.

According to the company, this helicopter can achieve a maximum speed of 250 km per hour.

The helicopter is fitted with advanced TV3-117VM engines.

It is the most technically advanced helicopter of Mi-8/17 family of helicopters, and incorporates the best engineering solutions from previous generations of helicopters.

## Chittoor native Sai Teja dies in crash

Continued from Page 1

His parents are agriculturists. His family did a video call this morning at 8:45 and he spoke to his wife and children. The family is in a state of shock. They received a confirmation from the Army headquarters about his demise.

Sai Teja visited his hometown on Vinayaka Chaviti last. For children's education, Sai Teja had moved his family to Madanapalle. Born in 1994, Sai Teja studied degree in Ongole. Sai Teja's brother Mahesh Babu is also serving in the Indian army and posted at Himachal Pradesh.



## Vested interests trying to hinder...

Continued from Page 1

"The OTS scheme is a good opportunity for the poor and it's entirely up to the people to make use of the scheme," the CM added. He directed the officials to distribute the registration documents from December 21.

He said the State government would also register the houses and give absolute rights to the 43,000 people who repaid the loan amount during the term of the previous government and added that the registration process would continue in village secretariats in the future.

The officials informed the Chief Minister that they had issued orders to remove section 22-A and cancel stamp duty, transfer duty and user fees for OTS scheme beneficiaries. The registration process is being done in village and ward secretariats and registration documents, field sketch-

es and loan clearance certificates are being issued to the beneficiaries of the OTS scheme. The officials have furnished the details of the progress of the construction of houses under the 'Pedarandiriki Illu' scheme.

The Chief Minister also directed the officials to expedite the construction of houses as the court cases were resolved and rains have stopped. They were asked to focus on the quality of the works. He instructed the officials to give better suggestions to the people who are building houses on their own and to implement policies that would reduce the construction cost. The bricks required for construction should be manufactured close to the respective colonies and labor camps and cement warehouses should be set up inside the layouts so that there won't be transportation charges, he said.

## Fake Central GST invoice racket...

Continued from Page 1

Officers explained that paper companies are being floated without any real business or supplies and creating fake

GST invoices. Through these, the fraudulent tax credit is passed on and utilised by other entities leading to evasion and huge revenue loss to the government. They added

that the department is using data analysis to detect these fake networks and as per law, the persons involved can be arrested if the amount exceeds a stipulated limit.

## General Rawat dies in chopper crash

Continued from page 1

The Chief of Defence Staff is the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and has to be the main military adviser to the Defence Minister besides giving impartial advice to the political leadership.

A former Army Chief, General Rawat was also appointed the head of the newly-created Department of Military Affairs.

The general joined the army as a second lieutenant in 1978 and had four decades of service behind him, having commanded forces in Jammu and Kashmir and along the Line of Actual Control bordering China.



Timeline of the tragedy

Helicopter crashes near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu around 12.20 pm. The defence establishment

came to know of the incident after villagers in nearby Katteri informed the district administration. Initially, eight ambulances and medical teams from Coimbatore and Wellington

went to the spot. Since the crash site is in a forest area, access to the wreckage was difficult. Visuals showed pieces of the chopper, some of them smouldering, scattered on the hillside. Rescuers were at work, struggling through thick smoke and fire.

IAF confirms at 1.53 pm that its Mi17V5 chopper with Rawat onboard has crashed near Coonoor. IAF announces at 6.03 pm that Rawat, his wife and 11 other people onboard the chopper have died in the crash. It says Group Captain Varun Singh, survived the crash with injuries and is being treated at the military hospital in Wellington.



## TODAY

### ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Margashirsha & Shukla Paksha  
Tithi: Shashthi 19:53  
Nakshatram: Dhani 21:50  
Rahukalam: 1:30 pm - 2:53 pm  
Yamagandam: 6:38 am - 8:01 am  
Varjyam: 5:01 am - 6:37 am  
Gulika: 9:23 am - 10:46 am  
Amritakalam: 11:48 am - 1:20 pm  
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 am - 12:30 pm

### VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: THUNDERSTORM  
Temp: 27°C  
Humidity: 88%  
Sunrise: 6:24 AM  
Sunset: 5:35 PM  
Updated DECEMBER 08, 2021 5:00 PM

### CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin ₹204  
Without Skin ₹224  
Broiler at Farm ₹110

### EGG RATES ₹/100

VIJAYAWADA 442  
HYDERABAD 435  
VISAHAAPATNAM 440

### RETAIL PRICE ₹/4.42

## Omicron cases must be treated only in designated facilities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of Omicron cases being detected in a few places in the country, the Union health ministry on Wednesday wrote to states and union territories, stating that patients of the new coronavirus variant have to be treated in designated Covid facilities with separate isolation

area.

It has to be ensured that no cross infection takes place and adequate precautions are taken by health-care workers in these facilities to prevent transmission among other patients and healthcare workers, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said in a letter to states and union territories (UTs).

## Highlights of an outstanding career

Here's your 5-point peek into General Rawat's career

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

General Rawat has had an illustrious career in the defense services spanning over four decades that saw him rising in ranks to be appointed the first joint chief of the tri-services. The CDS is a one-point advisor to the government on matters related to the military and functions with the main aim of integrating the three services - the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. He was appointed the 27th Chief of the Army Staff in 2016 amid a controversy over his seniority. He had superseded two senior officers to occupy the

Army chief's position. He then rose to become the CDS in 2019. The government had amended the Army rules to extend the age of superannuation from 62 years to 65 years, paving the way for his appointment to the post.

He is credited with being instrumental in reducing militancy in Northeast India. The 2015 cross-border operation into Myanmar in which the Indian Army successfully responded to an ambush by NSCN-IM militants was conducted under his supervision. He was also part of the planning for the 2016 surgical strikes, in

which the Indian Army went across the Line of Control into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. General Rawat was reportedly monitoring the developments from South Block in New Delhi.

General Rawat was a veteran in counterinsurgency and high-altitude warfare, having served in difficult terrains including the Northern and Eastern commands. He has also served as General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-C) Southern Command. During his long career, he served across the country in various roles. He commanded a company in Uri, Jammu and Kashmir. As a

Colonel, he commanded the 5th battalion 11 Gorkha Rifles in the Eastern sector along the Line of Actual Control at Kibithu in Arunachal Pradesh. As a Brigadier, he commanded 5 Sector of Rashtriya Rifles in Sopore, Kashmir. He has also been part of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force and has commanded a multinational brigade in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where he was twice awarded the Force Commander's Commendation.

General Rawat has been decorated with many honours for his service, including the Param Vishist Seva Medal, Uttam

Yudh Seva Medal, Ati Vishist Seva Medal, Vishist Seva Medal, and Sena Medal.

General Rawat is an alumnus of the St Edward School in Shimla and the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla. He was commissioned in the Fifth Battalion of the Eleven Gorkha Rifles in December 1978 from the Indian Military Academy in Dehradun. He was a recipient of the prestigious 'Sword of Honour'. General Rawat also attended the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) course at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, USA.

## 2 from Punjab among 3 found murdered in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Three people, including two hailing from Punjab, were found murdered in Nizamabad district of Telangana, police said on Wednesday.

The incident happened in a shed in Dichpally mandal around midnight on Tuesday, they said adding that unidentified persons murdered the trio, who were in the age group

of 28-45 and were harvester mechanics. The motive behind the killing was under investigation, the police said.

Two of the deceased were from Punjab and the other from Sangareddy district of Telangana. The trio was hit with a hammer. Nizamabad Commissioner of Police Kartikeya said adding the bodies bore blunt injury marks.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH  
PANCHAYATI RAJ ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISING ENGINEER, P.R., ANANTHAPURAM  
E PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE  
Supervising Engineer, Panchayati Raj, Anantapuram invites on behalf of Government of Andhra Pradesh, percentage bids tenders from eligible contractors registered with Government of Andhra Pradesh on e-procurement platform for certain works. Prospective bidders can download the tender schedule for 17 works with an estimated cost of Rs. 12253.5 Lakhs under SEDP/PRASR/ Incentive grants of Supervising Engineer, P.R., Anantapuram at further details can be seen on the net of e-procurement portal i.e., www.approcurement.gov.in, www.panchayats.gov.in and also can be obtained from the concerned Supervising Engineer, P.R., Anantapuram 344/5/2021, 0265/22/2021, email id: se\_p\_r\_anantapuram@pr.ia.ap.gov.in from 10.12.2021 to 27.12.2021. SOP Form DL 13.12.2021 to 20.12.2021 PMS/VS/Anantapuram.  
DPR R.O. No. 2265/CLAN/17/2021-22 DL 08.12.21 SE - Y. BHANU RAJU, SUPERVISING ENGINEER, P.R., ANANTHAPURAM.

# Malladi: Govt giving top priority to roads, highways

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada-Central MLA Malladi Vishnu has said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is giving top priority to roads and highways. MLA Vishnu, along with Deputy Mayor A Sri Shailaja Reddy, took part in the inauguration of road-laying work from Paipula Road to Nunna on the Vijayawada - Nuzvid highway on Wednesday.

Speaking to media persons, Vishnu alleged that the TDP government, during its five-year tenure, had failed to take any initiative to lay roads or repair them.

CM YS Jaganmohan Reddy had laid more roads in two-and-a-half years than during the five-year rule of Chandrababu Naidu. During the five years of the TDP regime, only 1,356 km of new Bitumen (BT) roads were laid.



Vishnu said that in two years after the YSRCP government came to power, 1,883 km of new BT roads were laid across the State.

He said about 4,015 km of highways were widened, developed and repaired in two years. He said that road repair works would be carried out on the lines of the 'Naadu-Nedu'

programme and the difference would be evident. An amount of Rs 500 crore was released to the R&B department for carrying out repair works.

The Vijayawada-Central MLA said that the CM had directed to take necessary steps to repair the roads in the city. As per the instructions of

the CM, special attention was being paid to road repair works in the constituencies and as part of it the re-laying of the road work of 1.5 km on the Vijayawada-Nuzvid road was started with an estimated cost of Rs 2.5 crore. He said that tenders were called in the month of May and due to the monsoon the work was delayed. The repair work would be completed in a month and by 2022 the road would be ready for public use, Vishnu said.

The MLA further said that the Inner Ring Road (from Ramavarappadu Ring to Jakkampudi) will be developed with an estimated cost of Rs 70 lakh of VMC general funds and is currently in the tender stage. Similarly, Ajit Singh Nagar flyover approach road works would be grounded soon at a cost of Rs 13 lakh, added Vishnu.

## 2 judges of AP HC sworn in

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Justice Dr Kumbhjadala Manmadha Rao and Justice Kumari Boddupalli Sri Bhanumathi have been appointed as judges in the Andhra Pradesh State High Court. They were administered the oath of office by AP High Court Chief Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra in the First Court Hall, High Court of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by several High Court judges, Advocate General S Sriam, High Court Registrar General A Ravindra Babu, AP Bar Council president Ghanta Rama Rao, AP High Court Bar Association president Janakirami Reddy, Additional Solicitor General N Harinath, Public Prosecutor Srinivasa Reddy and a few registrars and advocates.

## Police keep away from employees' stir

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The employees working in the Andhra Pradesh Police Department are keeping away from the ongoing protest launched by government staff. The leaders of the Andhra Pradesh Police Officers' Association (APPOA) in Amaravati on Wednesday announced that the Police Department staff would not participate in any kind of protests against the government.

APPOA state president J Srinivasa Rao, general secretary Md Mastan Khan, senior vice-president K Srinivasa Rao and other leaders thanked Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and DGP Gautam D Sawang for standing with the department during the COVID-19 crisis.

The leaders said that



APPOA passed a resolution welcoming the decision of sanctioning weekly-offs to police personnel and CM Jagan's statement regarding the announcement of the 11th PRC in 10 days. Praising the efforts of the CM for resolving issues, they urged to take measures for filling

vacant posts in the department. The APPOA leaders said that trusting the statement of CM Jagan on PRC, the police staff are distancing themselves from the employees' first phase protest programme and that they would not participate in any other types of agitations.



## MP Madhav threatened to kill me, Raghurama complains to PM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rebel YSRCP MP K Raghurama Ramakrishna Raju complained to the Prime Minister of India that YSRCP Hindupur MP Gorantla Madhav has threatened to kill him.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, Raghurama Ramakrishna Raju said that when he was entering the Parliament through Gate No 4, MP Gorantla Madhav met him and threatened to kill him.

In the earlier session also, he abused him and threatened to kill him, he told the Prime Minister in the letter.

"Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy publicly mentioned that his family would become hypertensive and would go to any extent if anyone speaks about him which was publicly acknowledged by DGP Gautam Sawang.

## TDP slams YSRCP for 'false claims' on OTS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national spokesman GV Reddy on Wednesday demanded that the YSRCP Government provide free registrations to the poor beneficiaries of housing schemes without resorting to 'forced OTS collections'. GV Reddy advised the ruling party MLAs and Ministers to prove their commitment to the poor people instead of launching a misinformation campaign against the TDP. The Government was unable to take up development activities to create wealth. It started a single-point agenda of making huge collections from the poorer sections.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader said in 2020 itself, the Jaganmohan Reddy regime brought the GO No 10 and collected over Rs 10,000 crore from the realtors in the name of regularisation of the layouts. The ruling party leaders should explain to the people what they had done with that amount. Now, another massive fraud was started on the poor beneficiaries for houses that have been constructed since 1983.

GV Reddy deplored that the latest move to collect 5 percent land from layouts would only impose a big burden on the middle class and poor families. The

Government was asking for 5 percent of land within the layouts. This plan made it clear that the sole priority of the YSRCP regime was to collect land and money regardless of its impact on the lives of the people.

The TDP leader called it a 'moral bankruptcy' on the part of the ruling YSRCP leaders to say that the TDP was creating hurdles when the Government was providing property ownership rights to the poor beneficiaries. When the ruling party was really committed, it should have provided these rights free of cost without collecting a single rupee in the name of OTS.

## Complete works at Rajiv Gandhi Park soon, Commissioner directs officials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner V Prasanna Venkatesh, along with the officials, inspected the progress of the modernisation works undertaken at Rajiv Gandhi Park on Wednesday. The Commissioner asked about the progress of the work being carried out on the park premises and gave several suggestions to the officials.

The authorities concerned were instructed to complete all the ongoing engineering and greenery modernisation works in the park on a war-footing so



that it would be made available to them at the earliest.

He examined the works of setting up children's playing

equipment in the park. Further, the authorities have been directed to focus on providing facilities such as toilets

and drinking water to make the park premises accessible to visitors.

Later, District Collector J Nivas and Commissioner Prasanna Venkatesh inspected the arrangements for the inauguration of the Benz Circle Flyover 2 at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium.

Chief Engineer M Prabhakara Rao, Chief Medical Officer Dr Geetabai, Assistant Director of Horticulture B Dayakar Babu, Executive Engineer ASN Prasad and others were present.

## Kranthi assumes charge as Vja CP, promises friendly policing

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Friendly policing and safety of women will be given top priority, said Kranthi Rana Tata who assumed charge as the Commissioner of Police, Vijayawada, on Wednesday.

Addressing media persons on the occasion, he thanked Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and DGP Gautam D Sawang for appointing him as the Commissioner of Police, Vijayawada.

Kranthi Rana said that he would initiate good changes in Vijayawada by taking steps to control crime and manage traffic well. He said he was familiar with the traffic problems in Vijayawada city and he would try to implement a better traffic management system. A meeting would be convened very soon with police officials to address problems and repairing of traffic signals.

Referring to blade batch and ganja cases, the CP said that he had taken stock of the blade batch activities and ganja peddling in the city and would address the issues. He further said that he is aware of the mindset of anti-social elements and would try to motivate them to give



up their activities. He said that he would interact with them and try to provide.

The new CP said special emphasis would be laid on the safety of women, children, and elderly people. He said the police would adopt a people-friendly policy and appealed to the people to cooperate with the Police department to serve them better. The people of Vijayawada would very soon see a 'better delivery of services'.

He said the police would

give priority to people-centric and friendly policing and appealed to the people to cooperate with the police for discharging their duties efficiently. Kanthi Rana Tata earlier worked as the Deputy Commissioner of Police and Joint Commissioner of Police. He was transferred to Anantapur as DIG. After the retirement of B Srinivasulu as the Commissioner of Police, the State government had appointed Rana as Vijayawada Police Commissioner.

## 10 out of 11 newly-elected MLCs take oath

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In all, 10 MLCs out of a total of 11 belonging to YSRCP took oath in AP Legislative Council on Wednesday. The ruling party is now getting an absolute majority in the Council after two-and-a-half years of coming into power.

AP Legislative Council Chairman, K Moshen Raju, gave the oath to the newly-elected 10 MLCs in which eight MLCs took oath on the

Assembly premises and two others who came late took oath in the Chairman's chamber.

The MLCs, who took oath, are Y Sivarami Reddy from Anantapur, Dr Ummareddy Venkateswarlu and Marugudu Hanumatha Rao from Guntur, Indukrui Raju from Vizianagaram, Varudu Kalyani and Ch Srinivas Rao from Visakhapatnam, Krishna Raghavendra Jayendra Bharat from Chittoor and Tumati Madhava Rao from Prakasam

took oath in the programme held on the Assembly premises.

Chief Minister programmes convener Talasila Raghuram and Mondithoka Arun Kumar elected from Krishna district came late to the oath-taking ceremony so chairman Raju gave the oath to them in his chambers. Ananta Udayabhaskar, who was elected from East Godavari district, did not attend the oath-taking programme.

After the oath-taking cere-

mony, Minister for Panchayat Raj Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy spoke to the media persons and said that CM Jaganmohan Reddy had given equal priority to all sections in the Council. He recalled that earlier Chandrababu Naidu created a ruckus by giving threats from the gallery of the Council and alleged that Naidu resorted to cheap politics with the support of his moles in the system. He alleged that the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) was doing

a false campaign on the One Time Settlement (OTS) scheme and cheating the people. He recalled that Naidu never tried to fulfil poll promises but CM Jagan fulfilled all his election promises by implementing all welfare schemes.

Ministers Buggana Rajendranath, Adimulapu Suresh, M Sankara Narayana and Mekathoti Sucharita, advisor to government Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy and others were present.

## 303 villages identified in Krishna dist under Jagananna Palavelluva scheme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Under the Jagananna Palavelluva scheme, 303 villages have been identified in Krishna district for the scheme which aims at empowering women dairy farmers to bring change in their lives, said district collector J Nivas.

The Collector said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy will launch Jagananna Palavelluva scheme in Krishna district in a few days and 303 villages in the district were identified in the first phase.

On Wednesday, the Collector visited Vissannapet mandal, Chandrupatla village secretary and participated in an awareness programme on the benefits of the Jagananna



Palavelluva scheme. Speaking on the occasion the collector said that the profits from the sale of milk would be directly given to the dairy farmers without any middlemen. The women from the Village Dairy Association shall be the promoters and manage the milk collection through the

association. For looking after these activities, the villagers will appoint their secretary and assistant secretary.

The Collector said that training programmes for promoters, secretaries and assistant secretaries would be conducted for 3 days under the scheme.

## Anti-hijack mock exercise held in Vizag airport

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

An anti-hijack mock exercise along with a Mass Casualty Evacuation drill was conducted at Visakhapatnam airport by INS Dega on Wednesday. The exercise was aimed at testing the efficacy of contingency plans and procedures to deal with a hijack threat and validate the Mass Evacuation capability of all stakeholders including Marine Commandos (MARCOS), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Airport Authority of India (AAI) and the State government agencies.

The exercise was conducted based on a mock hijack scenario enacted utilising an Indian Naval Dornier. The Aerodrome Committee under the aegis of Commanding Officer, INS Dega handled the developing scenario as per Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).



Response mechanism of Dega ATC, Quick Reaction Team (QRT), Marine Commandos (MARCOS), Central Industrial Security

Force (CISF), Airport Authority of India (AAI) and State government agencies were exercised.

On completion of AHME,



Mass Evacuation capability to designated hospitals was exercised and validated. An exhaustive debrief was conducted in the presence of members of

Aerodrome Committee and observers from the National Security Guard (NSG) and SOPs were revalidated to deal with future contingencies.

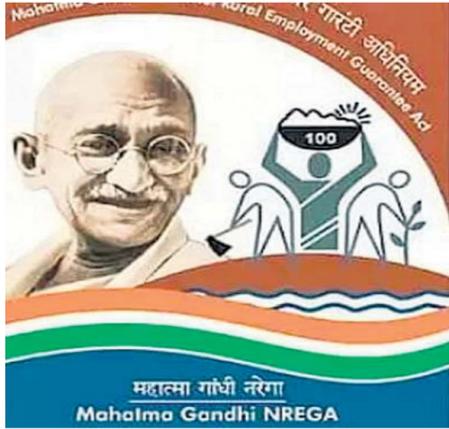
# Funds released under NREGS to State tripled in five years

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh stood among the highest recipients of NREGS funds from the Centre. Under the MGNREGS Scheme, Andhra Pradesh has received Rs 10,365 crore in 2020-21. In the current financial year 2021-22, so far Rs 6,625 crore has been released to Andhra Pradesh.

In a written reply to BJP Rajya Sabha member, GVL Narasimha Rao, Union Minister of State for Rural Development Sadhvi Niranjan Jyothi, on Wednesday said from Rs 3,940 crore in 2016-17, NREGS releases to Andhra Pradesh have increased substantially every year and have almost tripled in five years.

In Andhra Pradesh in the last two years, a large number of buildings have been constructed with NREGS funds. As many as 10,898 Gram



Panchayat/Sachivalay buildings have been constructed or are under construction for which an expenditure of Rs

1,872 crore is being spent under the scheme.

Another 10,315 Rythu Bharosa Kendra (RBK) build-

Union Minister of State for Rural Development Sadhvi Niranjan Jyothi, on Wednesday said from Rs 3,940 crore in 2016-17, NREGS releases to Andhra Pradesh have increased substantially every year and have almost tripled in five years.

ings have also been constructed or are under construction with an expenditure of Rs 781 crore.

In all, Rs.3,490 crores were spent under the scheme for the construction of different types of buildings with Central assistance under NREGS scheme.

Asked if the NREGS funds have been used for the construction of the boundary walls of Haj properties or Churches, Minister for Rural Development replied that the State government has informed the Ministry that

NREGS funds have not been used for the purpose.

Speaking on the issue, Rajya Sabha MP and Union government representative in State-level DISHA Committee said, "Andhra Pradesh has received the second-highest releases in the country under NREGS." He added, "YSRCP government must stop misleading people that all buildings constructed in rural areas of the State are its own initiative. It must give due recognition to the Central government."

## Appoint JPC on MSP: Vijaysai

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP's Rajya Sabha member V Vijaysai Reddy has urged the Centre to appoint a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to discuss the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for agricultural produce.

Talking during the Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, he said although the recent repeal of the three contentious farm laws by the Centre has been unanimously welcomed, it has triggered a larger debate on how best to protect the interests of farmers. One issue that has come up time and again is the need for guaranteeing MSP.

"The Andhra Pradesh government, under the leadership of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, has not only been vocal about the need for MSP but has also put its words into action. While



the Centre has announced MSP for only 23 agricultural products, the Andhra Pradesh government has announced MSP for an additional 24 commodities. Currently, 47 crops are covered under MSP in Andhra Pradesh, which is the highest among all states in the country," he added.

The MP further said that, however, there is a need to guarantee MSP for all crops at

the national level. "For this purpose, it is imperative that wider consultations be conducted with farmers and farmers' organisations to get a clearer picture of the ground-level challenges with respect to MSP. Such deliberations with stakeholders would be beneficial in sorting out issues that have acted as a barrier to providing statutory recognition to MSP and would help in drafting national legislation that caters to the needs of our farmers," he said.

"As parliamentarians, it is our public duty to facilitate such dialogue with the farmers. To this effect, I urge the Centre to form a joint parliamentary committee to engage with the stakeholders concerned and elicit their opinion on the various issues associated with MSP," Vijaysai Reddy said.

## AP govt urged to instal statue of Rosaiah



PNS ■ GUNTUR

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) senior leader Yerrapathineni Srinivasa Rao has demanded that the government install the bronze statue of former Chief Minister K Rosaiah in Piduguralla town.

He said that K Rosaiah belonged to the Guntur district and was a great statesman. He had been in politics in AP for six decades and Rosaiah never hurt the feelings of any political leader by speaking using unparliamentary words.

"We demand the government to install a bronze statue of K Rosaiah in Piduguralla. If the government fails to install the statue, the TDP will install the bronze statue," he said.

## TDP demands financial aid to flood-affected farmers in State

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) here on Wednesday demanded that the government extend financial assistance to the flood and rain-affected farmers and purchase the damaged paddy from the farmers.

Addressing a press conference in the TDP party office, politburo member and former minister Nakka Ananda Babu said that due to floods and rains 50 per cent of crops were damaged in several districts. The government is not taking enumeration of cope loss seriously, alleged. "The officials are exerting pressure on the revenue and agriculture officials to enumerate crop loss as low as possible. Moreover, irregularities are taking place in the enumeration of crop loss," he alleged.

Ananda Babu said that the officials were showing partiality towards the farmers who are affiliated with

the YSRCP. "The government is acting in an indifference manner in extending financial help to the affected farmers and completing enumeration of loss of crop," he slammed. Though there was no crop loss to some farmers affiliated to the YSRCP, their names included in the list, he flayed.

The TDP leader questioned the YSRCP government about what happened to the price stability fund, assured by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to protect the interests of farmers. The Rythu Bharosa Kendras are in no way useful to the farmers, he lashed out.

The officials are unable to tell how many farmers enrolled their crops in e-crop and what benefit they are getting. Vemuru market yard former chairman Jonnalagadda Vijay Babu and Bapatla TDP Telugu Rythu secretary Kishore were among those who were present.

## Jr docs' stir hits GGH services

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Medical services at the Government General Hospital (GGH) here remained disrupted as the junior doctors continued their stir demanding action against those who attacked junior doctors in the hospital three days ago.

The junior doctors boycotted duties on Wednesday and the patients bore the brunt as they did not get medical treatment in some wards. Junior doctors told the media that some youths who claimed that they were followers of the ruling party leader, behaved excessively with the junior doctors who



were on duty on Sunday night.

The agitating junior doctors squatted in front of the Superintendent's office and raised slogans demanding action against the culprits. The junior doctors called off their stir on Tuesday evening with the assurance of the

Joint Collector that the culprits would be arrested. The junior doctors alleged that no action had been taken against the culprits so far which is why they boycotted duties today also. Meanwhile, the patients expressed anger over the officials for their indifference in resolving the issue.

## Vedic Univ prof among 3 killed in mishap

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Three persons, including Vedic University Vaikhanasa Agama Vidwan Sriman Agni hotram Srinivasa charyulu and his wife Rajyalakshmi, were killed when the car in which they were travelling rammed a stationary lorry at Chevuru village in Gudluru mandal on Wednesday.

Police said

Srinivasacharyulu (58) and his wife Rajyalakshmi (55) were going to Ongole to participate in the Ayyappa Swamy puja programme. Their car rammed a stationary lorry from behind, killing Srinivasacharyulu instantaneously while Rajyalakshmi died as she was being shifted to hospital. The car driver was also killed in the accident.



## Minor girl goes with friend, alleges rape by his friends

G. RAVI KIRAN ■ HYDERABAD

One minor girl was raped by five youngsters in Medipally area. The girl belongs to Sultan Bazar and she has gone with her boyfriend without informing her parents. The parents have lodged a complaint as a missing case. The girl was traced by the Police and she has alleged that the boy friend and his friends have raped her several times.

The girl was missed on 30th November and traced on Tuesday by the Police. The girl has alleged that the boys have sexually assaulted her. The Police have registered a case on the boys under POCSO act. The Police are investigating further.

The girl is a resident of Sultan Bazar and the accused belongs to Amberpet area. The Police have stated that they have registered the case under the charges of rape, POCSO and kidnap.

## Two girls born in TSRTC bus get lifetime free travel offer

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TSRTC extended lifelong Free travel to the two babies born in TSRTC buses. Two girls born on running TSRTC buses get free bus travel for life

It is a moment of pride to bring two lives on board, said Managing Director TSRTC VC Sajjanar, IPS.

They are born to frequent travellers - two baby girls, recently, born on the moving Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) buses, had received free lifetime passes from the corporation as their 'birthday' gifts.

While the first girl was born on November 30, near Peddakothapally village in a bus belonging to Nagarkurnool depot, another woman gave birth to her daughter on board on the afternoon of December 7 near Siddipet. The bus belongs to the Asifabad depot.

These two women unexpectedly went into labour



onboard to their respective destinations and the TSRTC crew members and fellow passengers helped the women to deliver their babies.

Later, the TSRTC crew coordinated with officials of the Health department and rushed the mothers and newborns to the nearby government hospitals in 108 Ambulances for further treatment. They are said to be doing well. Appreciating the quick response and support of the TSRTC crew and passengers, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of TSRTC VC Sajjanar, IPS, said he was pleased to offer newly-borns free lifetime passes for their travel on the TSRTC buses.

## Prakasam Dist Collector directs officials to hand over TIDCO houses to beneficiaries

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Collector Pravin Kumar has directed the officials to take steps to hand over the TIDCO houses to the beneficiaries at the earliest. He said that the construction of houses has already been completed in Kandukur.

The Collector reviewed the construction of TIDCO houses with the officials on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion he instructed the officials to complete the construction of TIDCO houses which were left in middle at Chintala and Giddalur towns. He said that the TIDCO is constructing 9,568 houses in the district of which the construction of 1,408 houses has been completed in Kandukur.



TIDCO is building 4,128 houses in Ongole, 912 in Markapuram, 912 in Kanigiri, 1,248 in Giddalur and 960 in Addanki. The Collector said that

the banks should provide loans to the beneficiaries of TIDCO to repay their share of the money.

He recalled that Rs 29 crore was to be paid to TIDCO under the beneficiary share in Kandukur town, Rs 7.50 lakh in Giddalur town and Rs. 25.87 lakh in Addanki.

Awareness programs should be organized for the beneficiaries at the town level, he said.

The Collector said TIDCO houses, which are being built on 300 square feet, would be handed over to the beneficiaries for just one rupee. Joint Collector K S Viswanathan, DRO Puli Srinivasulu and TIDCO engineer G Venkateswara Rao were among those who were present.

## Wooring Gen Z: TDP launches internship in politics

SNV SUDHIR ■ VIJAYAWADA

With the political landscape changing across the country, TDP, which is known to bring in innovation in party activities, especially using technology, has unveiled a unique programme that taps the potential of fiery, smartphone-wielding Gen Z youth. For those who don't have any political background, but have radical innovative ideas this could turn into a potential launchpad for a career in politics.

Probably for the first time in the South, N Chandrababu Naidu's TDP has launched an internship programme in politics for the enthusiastic youngsters who bustle with ideas but don't find any platform to implement them. And during such a two-month-long internship programme, these interns will have an opportunity to meet



the top leadership of the party, interact with them and discuss ideas for improving the performance of the party as well as the development of Andhra Pradesh.

The first batch of the programme that started in

August has completed the training. During the programme, which was conducted on online platforms owing to the Covid pandemic situation, they had sessions with TDP's youth leaders, general secretary and MLC

Nara Lokesh, MLA Adireddy Bhavani, GITAM president M Shri Bharat and Sree Ram. The internship is the brainchild of a newly-launched frontal organisation of TDP - the TDP Professionals Wing (TPW).

"TPW is south India's first affiliated wing for professionals. Our wing serves as a gateway for the next generation politics and development policies. One can be the force behind development through ideas and insights. This is the best opportunity for young leaders and aspirants to work for CBN sir's vision.

The wing has been strengthened with the support of Lokesh Anna, who is taking care of this wing to make sure that no political aspirant is left out from sharing their ideas and they can work in an encouraging political space," Tejaswai Podapati of TPW told The Pioneer.

She added that the internship is one of TPW's flagship programmes. The programme has been divided into three -- research & analysis, election analysis and graphic and web designing. The internship has attracted

hundreds of enthusiastic students, youngsters and working professionals from diverse educational backgrounds and locations.

"We hope to build this into a sustained initiative to actively engage our youth in working towards the vision of Chandrababu Naidu. This is the first-of-its-kind internship programme in South India and it is now taking the second cohort, to be organised by Telugu Professionals. We are looking for youngsters with a passion to work in politics and policymaking," added Tejaswi.

She further said that TPW supports new and innovative ways of thinking, mobilising talent, and reaching out to the people, based on the insights of the professionals. "Thus, the party offers a State-wide canvas for any professional who has worthy and effective ideas and who are willing to see them in action," she said.

## 'Accidents reduced drastically in five years'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Around 39 lakhs of cases were noted under violation of traffic rules for not wearing a helmet in the year 2021 in the Hyderabad Police Commissionerate.

The Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad Mr. Anjani Kumar has explained the details of the accidents with a comparison for the last five years in a press meet on Wednesday. He has stated that the accidents were reduced drastically in the last five years. The efforts of the traffic police have succeeded in preventing the accidents, he added.

As per the reports, total accidents were 1657 in 2021 and 1843 in 2020. In 2017, five years back 2367 accidents happened. Deaths happened in 237 cases in 2021, 248 in 2020 and in 2017 the number was



303. In 2021, in 237 cases, deaths happened. Out of them 178 were because of over speed, drunk & drive 13, Careless & Negligence were 24 cases. In these cases, most of the vehicles involved were goods vehicles.

The cases of traffic violations registered in 2021 are 39 lakhs for not wearing helmet, Violation of stop line 75,000, Triple riding on Bikes 1.12 lakhs, Over speeding 76,000, entering No Entry area 17,350, signal jumping 40,274, cell phone driving 34,191, drunken driving 21,041 and without number plate cases were 28,320.

INDIA CORNER

**Info on farmers' deaths maintained by state govts: Centre in Parliament**

The government on Wednesday told Parliament that information related to number of farmers who died during the protest at Delhi borders since last year is maintained by "respective state governments". Minister of state for home affairs Nityanand Rai told the Rajya Sabha in a written reply that "police and public order are state subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. The information in this regard is maintained by the respective state governments."

He was asked a question on the number of farmers who died during protests on the borders of Delhi from 2020. The reply of the minister added that the "respective state governments deal with matters relating to compensation in such cases (death of farmers)". The reply stated that the "Delhi Police has informed that an amount of Rs 7,38,42,914 (up to 20.11.2021) has been spent to provide security at various sites of the farmers protest."



**Sena MP Priyanka send legal notice to BJP MLAs for defaming her**

Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi on Wednesday said she has sent a legal notice to BJP leaders Ashish Shelar and Atul Bhatkalkar and a singer for "spreading lies" about her comments on Veer Savarkar, in a bid to "defame" her and the party. Chaturvedi has also sought an apology from the JP MLAs and singer Bharat Balvalli, failing which she said she will initiate criminal and civil defamation proceedings against them. Taking to Twitter, the Sena leader said on December 2, Shelar in a press conference, claimed that she had insulted Savarkar. Chaturvedi said she did not make any comment against Savarkar and that Shelar's "false accusations" have led to her loss of reputation. "I have sent a legal notice for defamation through my lawyers to @ShelarAshish @BhatkalkarA and Bharat Balvalli for spreading deliberate lies in a bid to defame me, malign me and my party @ShivSena."



**BJP opposes local bodies polls sans OBC seats, writes to Maha SEC**

BJP MLA Ashish Shelar on Wednesday asked the Maharashtra State Election Commission to not go ahead with the polls in local bodies scheduled on December 21, saying conducting them will amount to doing injustice to Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Shelar's request came against the backdrop of the Supreme Court staying these polls on the seats where there is the reservation of up to 27 per cent for the OBCs. Maharashtra State Election Commissioner U P S Madan had on Tuesday announced that elections to zilla parishads, panchayat samiti and gram panchayats will be held as per schedule except on the seats reserved for OBCs in light of the Supreme Court verdict. This decision of the poll body has attracted criticism from various political parties. While staying these polls on the seats where there is the reservation of up to 27 per cent for the OBCs, the SC had also made it clear that the election process for the other seats would continue.



**Rajnath Singh briefs PM on chopper crash**

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is monitoring the situation after an Indian Air Force helicopter with Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat, his wife and several other officers on board met with an accident on Wednesday near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu.

Sources said Singh has briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the crash and the Indian Air Force chief has been asked to reach the site. There was no im-



mediate word on the condition of Rawat.

A meeting of senior officials of the ministry was underway, sources said.

Singh also visited the residence of Rawat and spoke to his daughter.

The defence minister is likely to make a statement on the incident in Parliament.

Official sources said the Mi-17V5 helicopter got airborne from Sulur for Wellington and there were 14 persons on board the chopper including the crew.

Four bodies have been recovered from the site of the crash, they said.

The Chief of Defence Staff was on his way to the Defence Staff College in Wellington.

The IAF said a Court of Inquiry has been ordered into the accident.

**Concerned ministry to share information**

Union I&B Minister Anurag Thakur on Wednesday said information about the helicopter accident in Coonoor in Tamil Nadu will be shared by the ministry concerned at an appropriate time.

"The entire information about the accident that has taken place will be shared by the concerned ministry at an appropriate time," Thakur told reporters when asked about the helicopter crash involving Chief of Defence Staff Bipin Rawat. An Indian Air Force helicopter with Rawat on board crashed on Wednesday near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu, the IAF said.

**'No proposal under consideration to make Law Commission statutory'**

The Ministry of Law and Justice has told the Supreme Court that there is no proposal under consideration to make Law Commission a statutory body.

The submission has been made in response to a plea filed by lawyer Ashwani Upadhyay seeking direction to the Centre to declare Law Commission a "statutory body" and appoint the panel's chairperson and members.

The Ministry submitted that the petition filed by Upadhyay is frivolous and not maintainable being devoid of merits. "The petitioner has not



come with clean hands and has raised an issue which clearly falls out of the doctrine of separation of power and the government is presently seized of

the matter regarding the appointment of Chairperson and Members of the Law Commission," the ministry said in an affidavit filed in the top court.

"It is submitted that the 22nd Law Commission was constituted on February 21, 2020, and the appointment of Chairperson and Member is under consideration with concerned authorities.

"However, no proposal is under consideration to make Law Commission a statutory body," it said.

The top court had earlier issued notice to the Centre on the plea of Upadhyay, who made the ministries of Home

Affairs and Law and Justice as well as the Law Commission of India as parties.

The plea had said the cause of action arose on August 31, 2018, and is continuing when the tenure of the 21st Law Commission ended but the Centre has neither extended the tenure of its Chairperson and Members nor notified the 22nd Law Commission.

"Although, on February 19, 2020, Centre approved the constitution of Twenty-second Law Commission it has not appointed the Chairperson and Members till date," Upadhyay had said in the petition filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey.

**Chhattisgarh: Three killed in road mishap**

Three persons were killed when their motorcycle collided with a car in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur district on Wednesday, police said. The accident took place on Ulsapur flyover under Sakri police station limits around 1.30 am, an official said. The victims, who worked for a caterer, were heading home to Bilaspur town from a wedding, when the motorcycle they were travelling on collided

with a car, he said. The impact of the collision caused the victims Moha mmaad Basheer (50), Ranjeeta alias Sangeeta Banjare (35) and Kumat Bai (57) to be thrown off the two-wheeler and fall of the flyover, the official said. Bangare died on her way to a hospital, while the others succumbed to their injuries during treatment, he said, adding that a case has been registered against the car driver, who has been arrested.

**Bomma expresses shock over IAF helicopter crash**

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai expressed shock over the Indian Air Force helicopter carrying the Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat meeting with an accident near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu on Wednesday.

He said search and rescue operations are underway at the place where the accident



occurred.

"I am deeply pained to hear the Army helicopter carrying the Chief of Defence Staff Bipin Rawat meeting with an

accident. I am trying to get more information," Bommai told reporters here.

"This is the most unfortunate incident. The nation is in a state of shock," he added.

The IAF helicopter with Gen Rawat on board met with an accident near Coonoor and four people were killed in the mishap that happened reportedly due to low visibility due to foggy conditions.

**Court orders framing of charges against gangster**

A Delhi court has ordered framing of charges against alleged gangster Parvesh Mann and four others for allegedly running an organised crime syndicate and extorting money from the traders and businessmen here.

Additional Sessions Judge Praveen Singh directed to put the accused persons on trial for an offence punishable under stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).

"I find that prima facie the prosecution, by the evidence before the court, has established that there exists a

grave suspicion that there is an organized crime syndicate led by accused Parvesh Mann of which accused Ajay Mann, Sachin Mann, Yudhveer and Sahil Dahiya are members and are engaged in the commission of an organized crime," the judge said in an order passed on December 3.

The prosecution claimed that the regular crime review of Delhi NCR revealed that "dreaded gangster Parvesh Mann has become a symbol of terror and lawlessness in the area of Outer and West Districts of Delhi including neighbouring districts of Haryana."

It alleged that in 2016, Parvesh separated himself

from the gang of notorious Neeraj Bawana and established his gang, and began extorting money from the proprietors of shops, property dealers and other businessmen spread over West, North, North West, and Outer districts of Delhi and NCR. "This syndicate is involved in continuing criminal activities as an organized crime syndicate for gaining pecuniary benefits for the members of the gang, for establishing criminal supremacy in the area, and for the lavish lifestyle of its members. This syndicate is comprised of sharpshooters and fearless misguided youth," police said.

**ISRO initiated R&D for removal of debris**



The Indian Space Research Organisation has initiated research and development activities for the removal of debris left in orbit by space missions, the Lok Sabha was informed on Wednesday.

Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Earth Sciences Jitendra Singh told the Lower House that ISRO follows the guidelines laid down by the United Nations as well as by the

Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee for space debris mitigation.

The guidelines include post-mission disposal of satellites and rocket bodies efficiently to ensure the space debris produced by India does not stay in orbit. "ISRO has also initiated research and development activities on active debris removal to extract space debris from space," Singh said in reply to a question in the Lok Sabha.

**HC seeks ED stand on PFI plea against money laundering**

The Delhi High Court Wednesday asked the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to respond to a plea by Popular Front of India (PFI) challenging a money laundering case registered by the agency in 2018 and the consequent proceedings.

Justice Anu Malhotra issued notice on the petition and granted four weeks to the central agency to file the reply.

PFI lawyer Adit Pujari



claimed that over 150 summons have been received by several of its members from across the country for a "roving and fishing inquiry" in the case by ED.

The judge, listing the case for further hearing on February 4, said she "expected that the CCTV cameras of the respondent (ED) will remain functional at the time of recording of statements".

Pujari said the present ED probe arises from a National Investigation Agency (NIA) case concerning the alleged training of youngsters in Kerala for carrying out anti-national activities.

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**'AFSPA claimed too many lives'**

Naga Peoples Front (NPF) MP Lorho Pfoze on Wednesday flagged in the Lok Sabha the alleged sufferings faced by the Northeastern states of Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh due to the imposition of the AFSPA and



said too many lives have been lost due to it. Pointing to the Nagaland incident in which 14 civilians were killed, the MP from Outer Manipur, during the Zero Hour in the House, said the "cruel, brutal murder of 14 civilians" took place at a time when there were celebrations going on in the state of Nagaland.

**Bill to bring clarity on retired judges' pension**

Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed a bill which seeks to bring clarity on the age of retired judges to determine when they will get enhanced pension.

The High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2021 seeks

to amend two laws for this purpose. Before the passage of the bill, Law Minister Kiren Rijji told the House that the measure does not in any way affect the salary and pension of judges but only inserts a clarification.

The bill seeks to rectify an anomaly to end any confusion, he said. The bill was later passed by a voice vote.

**40 pc of 20 lakh new jobs for women: Priyanka**

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday released a manifesto for women ahead of the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls, promising that 40 per cent of the 20 lakh new jobs her party aims to create in the state will be allotted to women. While releasing the six-point manifesto titled 'Shakti Vidhan', she also said that if the Congress forms government, it will ensure 50 per cent of all ration shops in the state are



managed and run by women. The points covered in the manifesto are 'swabhimani' (self-respect), 'swawlamban' (self-sufficiency), 'shiksha' (education), 'samman' (respect), 'suraksha'

(security) and 'sehat' (health). On the 40 per cent jobs for women, Priyanka Gandhi, who is also a general secretary in the Congress, stressed that the allotment will be made in accordance with existing provisions of reservation. Within the state labour ministry, there will also be a government department to ensure humane working conditions of domestic workers, she promised while releasing the 'Shakti Vidhan' manifesto at the Congress office here.

**'Missile Vessel Squadron gets 'President's standard'**

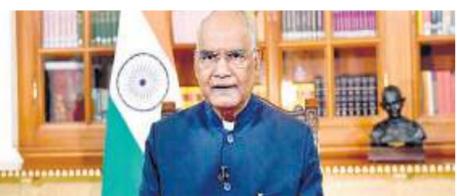
President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday awarded the 'President's Standard', a rare honour for its distinguished service, to the 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron, the unit that had bombed and sank Pakistan Navy's vessels in the 1971 war.

The President said the honour is the testimony to the services rendered by the past and present officers of the squadron.

The year also marks the fifty years since the inception of the

Missile Vessel Squadron, also known as the 'Killers', which over the past five decades have maintained the capability of delivering a credible offensive punch from the sea.

"The timing of this award could not have been more befitting as our nation is celebrating 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh'. The presentation of the Standard is a testimony to the exceptional service rendered by officers and sailors, past and present, of this squadron to our nation," President Kovind said at the ceremony.



Based in Mumbai, the Missile Vessel Squadron has participated in Operation Vijay, Operation Parakram and most recently, during the heightened security state following the Pulwama attack in 2019 deployed within striking distance off the Pakistan coast.

The 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron was formally established at Mumbai in October

1991 with ten Veer Class and three Prabal Class missile boats. However, the genesis of 'Killers' dates back to the year 1969, with the induction of OSA I Class missile boats from the erstwhile USSR to bolster the strength of the Indian Navy. These missile boats were transported to India on heavy-lift merchant ships and commissioned in early 1971 at Kolkata. They were baptised by fire in the same year during the Indo-Pak war of 1971 where they played a decisive role in the outcome of the war.

**Logjam continues in Odisha Assembly**

Logjam in the Odisha Assembly continued for the seventh consecutive day on Wednesday with the House witnessing four back-to-back adjournments as the legislators of ruling and opposition parties indulged in sloganeering and placard war over the Kalahandi woman teacher's kidnap-murder case. The House plunged into chaos as soon as it assembled for the Question Hour. Opposition BJP and Congress members trooped into the well of the



House, demanding removal and arrest of Minister of State for Home DS Mishra for his alleged link with the prime accused in the case. Legislators of the saffron camp, donning black scarves, beat gongs and waved posters, in which the main accused in the case could be seen on the campus of Naveen Niwas, the residence of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, with the BJD supremo standing at a distance.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

### Self-service?

#### Biden's two-day 'Summit for Democracy' is mainly aimed at countering China's rise

US President Joe Biden's global initiative, the Summit for Democracy, is a two-day affair beginning December 9. He wants the summit of 100-odd countries to commit to opposing authoritarianism and corruption, besides respecting human rights. Aware of its inconsistent democratic record, the United States also proposes to scuttle criticism of the summit by focusing on free media, free and fair elections and strengthening democratic reformers. However, stitched into the summit's agenda is President Biden's larger geopolitical objective. The rallying together of over 100 "democracies" is for him to send a message to China on two counts. One, register the summit as a symbolic global opposition to China's "authoritarianism". Two, bind the summit behind the United States in a maze of common, "democratic" interests to counter China's rise. China has already sought to politicise the summit by declaring itself a democracy by saying there is "no fixed model of democracy; it manifests itself in many forms". It even organised an "International Forum on Democracy" to upstage the American exercise. The fact that China, a one-party country with a rubber stamp Congress, controlled media and devalued human rights, can stolidly claim allegiance to democracy reflects two things. One, that China is bristling because, like Russia, it is excluded from the summit while *bete noire* Taiwan has received the invite. Two, China is well aware of Biden's geopolitical narrative behind the summit. Even before the summit begins, a debate is raging on the politics behind



the US exclusion/inclusion process while finalising the invitee list. The US was careful not to publicise any criteria for selecting countries, but the inclusions and exclusions expose the politics. Taiwan's case, for example, drives the point home. It is a democracy no doubt, but the US does not recognise Taiwan and it is there because China is not. Pakistan, whose human rights record is frequently questioned and its army's interference in the functioning of the elected Government is well noted, is in. It is being explained that the US considered Pakistan's inclusion a must because India was invited. In the case of Africa, Latin America and Europe, too, the politics of exclusion prevailed. Having said that, the US got one thing right. Democracy is on the defensive and authoritarianism is on the rise. The summit proposes to rectify the pattern, but its approach is debatable. Focusing on fighting corruption or simply opposing authoritarian traits is not the way; strengthening and defending democracy is. Democracy needs to be defended on its own merits, and not by countering authoritarianism. This is a matter internal to democracy. Democracy is primarily under threat from its own regimes, with civil liberties being devalued, freedoms and rights trampled upon, and dissent quelled. These practices need to be reversed first. The summit would do well to focus more on extracting a commitment from the "democratic" invitees — or help those who are faltering — to re-learn to uphold liberty, open governance, dissent and participation.

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### PICTALK



A boy gives water to a bulbul sitting on his hand at a city street in Kolkata

PTI

### Ah Taj!

#### The brackish Yamuna's toxic gases are impairing the white marble, a study says

Back in the day, Rabindranath Tagore wrote: "Only let this one teardrop, this Taj Mahal, glisten spotlessly bright on the cheek of time, forever and ever." Unfortunately, however, nothing remains forever and one day Taj, too, would be wiped off the face of time. And if the modern-day Governments don't wake up, it could be sooner rather than later. Yes, it is sad but true that the Taj is dying a slow death; not a natural death but due to the pollutants and toxins present in our environment. Generally, industrial and vehicular pollution are seen as the culprits for the white marble turning yellow and the corrosion but a new study suggests that it is not just industrial units that harm the iconic structure but also the Yamuna on the banks of which the Taj Mahal stands. Major damage to the marble is being caused by the toxic gases emanating from the Yamuna. It may still look good in pictures but an almost black river flows behind the monument and its stink can't be missed even from a distance. Published recently in the *International Journal of Environmental Science and Technology* by four conservation experts, the study suggests that hydrogen sulphide released from the polluted waters has a more corrosive impact on the monument than the sulphur dioxide emitted by Agra's factories.



The Taj Mahal is a must-visit for tourists. It is a money-spinner for the Government, yet no one ever cared about the river that flows near it and its foul smell has for years been corrupting the breathtaking experience. The majestic Mughal architecture is among the 'New Seven Wonders of the World' and a signature monument of India. Its claim to fame is the white marble which lends it a magical look. The gas from the Yamuna is slowly but surely discolouring it. The finding assumes significance as the initiatives to protect the Taj from being affected by pollution have largely been concerned with tackling industrial and vehicular pollution, while the Yamuna's pollution didn't get as much attention until five years ago. Crores of rupees have gone down the drain with no result. It is high time to clean the river, which will not only mitigate the damage to the monument, but also give a new lease of life to its fauna. The pollution can be controlled by treating the sewage water entering the river but, before that, political will is needed to weed out corruption for checking pollution.

# It was an albatross around Pak's neck



PRAFULL GORADIA

## Helping to separate the eastern wing from the rest of Pakistan was a blunder for us as Bangladesh can prove to be a launch pad for terror

A number of Indians have written articles celebrating the country's joint victory with Bangladesh in 1971. I have no quarrel in principle with commemorating any triumph, including one on the cricket or hockey field. Although a victory over Pakistan is an intra-sub-continental affair and therefore rather like a para-civil war and not an international triumph. We have not enjoyed such an achievement since Chandragupta Maurya defeated Seleucus, the appointee of Alexander the Great over Bactria in 317 BC.

That is a quibble contrasted with the blunder of helping to separate the eastern wing of Pakistan from the rest of the country. International realpolitik would have suggested that the eastern wing with a majority of the country's population was a millstone around Pakistan's neck. First and foremost, the population of the eastern wing was larger than the western's. Two, the Bengalis appeared prouder of their language than their religion, whether Islam or Hinduism. In fact, Bengal was a reluctant applicant to Pakistan. Fazlur Rahman and Sir Abdul Rahim were negotiating with Sarat Bose to keep the province united to be a third separate dominion over and above Hindustan and Pakistan. Jinnah was encouraging them because a Muslim-majority dominion would mostly side with Pakistan, especially with a Muslim Premier, forever. The Communist Party was also backing this third opinion.

What East Bengal — now Bangladesh — meant to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah is reflected in the fact that he had never visited it before March 19, 1948. When he did, he addressed the Dhaka University only to tell its students that Urdu would be the sole national language of Pakistan, angering his audience. On March 21, he warned a large crowd at the Dhaka Race Course against what he called the forces of subversive conspiracy bent on destroying Pakistan's unity. Feeble protests were heard from the crowd. Far louder voices of protest were to be heard only days later. The Qaid had through his Dhaka speech set



East Bengal on a course that was to lead, over the next 24 years, to the breakup of Pakistan and the rise of East Bengal as the independent republic of Bangladesh.

Moreover, Ayesha Jalal, the Cambridge scholar who has authored a volume titled *The Sole Spokesman*, called East Pakistan a rural slum, meaning worthless except for growing rice, which the locals ate, and raw jute with no mills to weave it until later. And, of course, in the Sylhet district there were some tea plantations. But it must be said that the jute and tea earned some hard currency in foreign exchange, more than what the western wing earned in 1947-48. Nevertheless, the tall, fair west Pakistanis looked down upon the easterners as dark, short and inferior. The least one did was to look upon the New Medinawalas (Aligarh University students) where the sub-continental 'brotherhood of Islam' were to gather. In that potential fortress of Islam, could one *momin* look at another *momin* of the east with such contempt? Yet he did until he was rid of the dark, short brother/sister in 1971, in his heart of hearts



THERE HAVE BEEN HIGHS IN INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS IN BANGABANDHU'S TIME AND SIX BSF MEN'S HEADS ON BAMBOOS WERE THE LOWEST. WHEN MORARJI DESAI CAME TO POWER IN 1977, HE SAID, 'WE HAD ONE PAKISTAN BUT INDIRA GANDHI HAS GIVEN US TWO'

good riddance. West Pakistanis were smug besides being contemptuous. One example was Field Marshal Ayub Khan, at the peak of his power, amalgamating all of west Pakistan into one province with Khan Sahab, the brother of Frontier Gandhi, as the Chief Minister. He called it west Pakistan. Instead, he should have subdivided east Pakistan into, say, four provinces. So that the eastern wing would have united to vote for the Awami League in 1971 and won all the seats except two and be in a position to vote out the whole of the western wing. The crisis had thus begun with Mujibur Rahman claiming to be the Prime Minister-in-waiting. How could short, black people rule over the tall, fair people? The western wing considered this an abdominal thought and therefore sent Lt General Tika Khan to devastate the Bengalis.

In the late 1990s and during the regime of Begum Khaleda Rahman, Bangladesh awarded India with six chopped heads of its Border Security Force personnel on bamboos like *shikared* animals across the border.

Indians were so dreaded that they took the beheaded heads of their soldiers with equanimity! There have been highs in Indo-Bangladesh relations in the years of Bangabandhu and these six heads on bamboos were the low. When Morarji Desai came to power in 1977, he said that "we had one Pakistan but Indira Gandhi has given us two".

Our relation with Dhaka appears to be warm since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power but recently Bangladesh rewarded India by desecrating 92 temples there and killing a few local Hindus. It is possible that the mischief was resorted to by one or more terrorist groups and had nothing to do with the majority party, the Awami League. Nevertheless, the rioting proved, once again, that Bangladesh can prove to be, from time to time, a haven and launch pad for terrorism. What did India gain by freeing Bangladesh from the yoke of Islamabad? If not infiltrators, terrorists?

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### TIES WITH AN OLD ALLY COULD HELP

Sir — Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent visit to India to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi will bolster up the economic ties and improve the defence infrastructure, giving stimulus to the 'Make in India' initiative. The two countries have remained distant from each other in the last two years which created a jinx in the bilateral relations between them. India was partly left alone to deal with emerging threats from China and increased dependence on the US as a compulsion. The differences remain obvious between US President Joe Biden and PM Modi despite much hyped diplomacy.

The formation of the Quad to counter Chinese expansion in the Indo-Pacific region and US alienation from Afghanistan had enabled China to foster a close bond with fledgling Taliban and Pakistan to display its hegemony towards India and Taiwan and other Quad nations. Russia, an old ally of India, has always stood the test of time which it has proved time and again. India, on the other hand, is one of the largest importers of Russian weapons. One hopes that bilateral relations between the two vibrant leaders PM Modi and President Putin will grow and benefit the interests of both the nations.

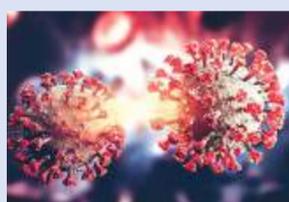
Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Bagrakote

#### BRIBERY NEEDS TO BE ERADICATED

Sir — Corruption is a worldwide bane that affects different stratas of the nation. Almost five per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of developing countries is drowned by the menace of corruption. The developed nations are reeling under the onslaught of corrupt practices of their administration. Education, health, economy and law are but a few spheres of a nation that have crumbled due to excessive corruption. It is common knowledge that corruption in a Government structure is a hurdle on the path of development and progress.

American author John Steinbeck has rightly said, "it is not just power that

#### Vaccination is the best bet yet



In the wake of surging cases of the Omicron variant in India, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) warned of another wave of infections and urged the Government to announce additional doses of the vaccine for those who urgently need it. The National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) has not made any recommendations so far. The emergence of the Omicron variant reminds us that the pandemic is not over and that the vaccination programme cannot continue without reviewing the situation. Many countries have scaled

up administration of booster shots. Many countries are using vaccines different from the ones used for earlier doses of vaccination as booster shots. However, India needs to analyse the data before taking a decision on this. If mixing up vaccines gives better results, the Government will have to acquire additional vaccines.

A decision on whether children should be included in the vaccination programme is yet to be taken. The Serum Institute of India that manufactures Covishield, has not released the trial data of vaccine for children. The Government needs to ensure that adults are vaccinated with two doses before rolling out vaccines for children. Booster shots must be incorporated into the current vaccination programme. Steps must be taken to speed up the second dose of vaccination. Booster shots need to be given to those who need it without further delay. We must learn lessons from the havoc the pandemic created and take preventive measures in time.

Venu GS | Kollam

corrupts, but the fear of losing the power that corrodes the corrupt". It can be said that power doesn't corrupt people, but people corrupt power. Bribe is a chronic problem and deeply rooted in our system. It won't go away easily, but if we wish to see a corruption-free India, the issue of bribes has to be settled. The youth has an important role in acting as a catalyst of change because it is an age where the mind is generally free of corrupt ideas. One also cannot undermine the role of parents and teachers in inculcating the right values in young minds.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

#### OCEANS ARE NOT DUMPING GROUNDS

Sir — It is distressing to note that sewage water flowed into the beautiful Marina beach during the recent incessant rains in Chennai and turned the blue waters to a brownish hue. Not only the Marina, oceans worldwide are con-

stantly under the threat of adulterations and, in fact, have been reduced to 'rubbish dumps' with millions of tons of litter ending up in the sea. According to the United Nations Environmental Program, up to 12.7 metric tons of plastic make their way into the oceans in a year.

We need to serve as educators and ambassadors of a lifestyle in the water. Needless to say that waterways are crucial for the existence of human beings. Together we must develop a passion for the ocean and have the moral obligation to keep it clean and safe. Said the renowned Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh, "The heart of a man is very much like the sea, it has its storms, it has its tides and in its depth, it has its pearls too."

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

### SOUND BITE

All the anti-BJP parties should be brought together to bring about a wider alternative front. People want a change.



NCP spokesperson —Navab Malik

The West would impose strong economic and other measures on Russia if it invades Ukraine.

US President —Joe Biden

Today I'm very proud of how strong I'm because I really didn't know I was.



Actor —Samantha Ruth Prabhu

The Paralympic athletes are provided all requisite facilities on a par with other sports persons, besides their special needs.

Union Sports Minister —Anurag Thakur

If your child wants a good education then your elder brother will help you. Channi sahib will not help.



Delhi Chief Minister —Arvind Kejriwal



## FIRST COLUMN HYBRID IMMUNITY COULD BE THE KEY

Omicron has about 30 mutations and is many times more transmissible than the Delta variant



VIKAS BHATIA

The human body can ward off many infections on its own with its innate immunity. Besides, it develops immunity against contagions after exposure to them. Some pathogens have the potential to cause severe disease, disability, and even or death. Vaccines help the body develop robust immunity against such contagions. During the last two years, SARS-Cov-2 has claimed millions of lives. India too suffered a devastating second wave that affected millions of people across the country. Post this wave, India now has a huge proportion of the population that has developed what we call 'hybrid immunity', a combination of immunity developed after exposure to the viral infection and vaccination. Studies show this form of immunity can provide greater protection against COVID-19. In fact, it has also been observed that people who were exposed to the infection and then took one dose of the vaccine also



have developed a fairly good level of immunity against the virus. Recent national serosurvey shows that more than 80 per cent population of the country, including children, have antibodies against COVID-19. The vaccination statistics show that more than 85 per cent of adults have received the first dose of vaccine and more than half the country's adult population is now fully vaccinated. This hybrid immunity in the population can protect it against severe disease caused by the virus, including new mutants such as Omicron. The Omicron variant, which was first reported in South Africa, is now present in more than 40 countries.

The variant has about 30 mutations and is said to be many times more transmissible than the Delta variant, which caused the severe second wave in India and other countries. The Omicron variant has become a cause of great concern across the world, with many countries imposing restrictions and taking severe measures to contain its spread. India too needs to be cautious. The initial evidence suggests though the virus is highly transmissible, it is not causing severe disease or death. It is so far causing a milder form of the disease with symptoms such as cold, cough, and mild fever. But we cannot let our guard down. Countries have been finding innovative ways to protect themselves. For example, in Germany, one cannot enter a restaurant until fully vaccinated. People across the world have also realized the importance of following personal protective measures such as wearing masks, maintaining a safe distance, avoiding overcrowded locations, and sanitising their hands regularly. If the past viral outbreaks are anything to go by, we find that a virus dies its natural death provided we keep ourselves safe and be patient till it does. I strongly feel that we can win this battle against this deadly virus if we fight it collectively. So, while the government is doing its job by providing vaccines free of cost to the population, preparing the healthcare infrastructure to deal with a sudden surge in the number of patients, and screening those who can be possibly infected, it is the duty of people to take both the doses of vaccine and follow COVID-appropriate behaviour to avoid rapid spread of the disease.

(The writer is a doctor and Director, AIIMS, Bibinagar. The views expressed are personal.)

# Mayawati and her committed votebank



BISWAJEET BANERJEE

Mayawati is working to stitch a social umbrella that will include Brahmins, Dalits and Muslims. It would be a mistake to dismiss her in this election

Campaign activities have now gained momentum in Uttar Pradesh where elections are slated for early next year. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is visiting the districts and making direct communication with the public. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is inaugurating projects and Union Home Minister Amit Shah along with BJP national president JP Nadda is making forays into different areas. Leaders of different opposition parties have also started working on their strategy to counter the ruling BJP government.

After Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the focus is on Akhilesh Yadav who is also drawing massive crowds wherever he is going. People wait for hours, even till midnight, to get a glimpse of Akhilesh. Even Congress national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi is drawing good crowds enthusing hopes among the party mandarins that Congress may spring a surprise in this election.

In all election surveys, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is being given the number three position after Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Samajwadi Party (SP). Congress is being projected as the number four party in every election survey. Despite, BSP being projected as a third position no one can rule out the importance of Mayawati in UP politics. The political pundits believe that rejecting Mayawati in these elections would be a great mistake as she and her party can still prove to be a dark horse in this election.

Recently, many senior leaders deserted BSP, and the majority of them joined Akhilesh's party and the rest, BJP. This has not affected Mayawati as she claimed that those who left BSP had gone alone, thus signifying that the cadre is still with her. Bahujan Samaj Party has a committed a vote bank of over 20 per cent. Mayawati wants Muslim votes in UP. The party has successfully carried out Brahmin Sammelans across the state. She is insisting on maintaining the old base of Dalit and Brahmin votes in BSP. In such a situation, BSP can surprise everyone at the Husting.

In various election surveys conducted in the state, BJP has been projected to get 41 to 44 percent of the votes, while SP, as per surveys, is likely to get 32 percent votes, followed by BSP (15 percent), Congress (6 percent) and others also six percent. In terms of seats, pollsters have projected that BJP would get 241 to 249 seats and SP's share would be between 130 and 138 seats. The surveys say that the BSP may end up getting between 15 and 19 seats and the Congress between 3 and 7 seats. All the election surveys have given more or less the same projections which show that there would be a direct contest between SP and BJP. The surveys have ignored BSP.

These surveys have not amused Mayawati as she contends that such sur-



WHAT HAS MADE THE BSP LEADERS CONFIDENT IS THE GROUND SUPPORT THAT THE PARTY ENJOYS. THEY HAVE A POINT BECAUSE THE BSP'S VOTE SHARE HAS REMAINED ALMOST THE SAME DESPITE THE BJP WAVE. IN THE 2017 ELECTIONS, THE BSP GOT THE HIGHEST 22.7 PER CENT VOTES AFTER THE BJP, WHEREAS THE SP GOT 21.8 PER CENT VOTES IN THAT ELECTION

(The writer is Political Editor, The Pioneer, Lucknow edition. The views expressed are personal.)



veys do not affect her party. She has also demanded that Election Commission should ban such surveys because she believes that they are being carried out to influence some parties' fortunes. She alleged that a large amount of money exchanged hands during these surveys. According to leaders close to Mayawati, the voters of BSP do not participate in the election surveys and they keep silent and are supposed to throw surprises in the elections. The think tank in BSP believes that UP elections would witness a direct contest between BJP and BSP, not SP as projected by many surveys. The belief in Mayawati's camp is that BSP will give a tough fight to BJP on every seat.

What has made BSP leaders confident is the ground support that the party enjoys. They have a point because BSP's vote share has remained almost the same despite the BJP wave. In the 2017 elections, the BSP got the highest 22.7 per cent votes after BJP, whereas SP got 21.8 percent votes in that election. Similarly, in the Lok Sabha elections held in 2019, BSP had won ten Lok Sabha seats with 19.26 percent votes. Samajwadi Party that on the other hand contested election as an ally of the BSP got 17.96 percent votes and could win only five seats. Even evaluation of the previous results shows that the vote share of BSP in the 2012 assembly elections was slightly above 25 percent. This was 5 percent less than the party's

30 percent votes polled in the 2007 elections when Mayawati had formed the government in UP. This 5 percent shift in vote share in 2012 led SP to get 224 seats and Akhilesh Yadav was sworn in as Chief Minister while BSP's seats came down to 80. In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the party got 27 percent votes and 20 seats. So, in terms of vote share, the BSP has been consistent.

In the case of Samajwadi Party, Akhilesh Yadav has stitched caste alliances with small parties. Rumours are that many senior leaders from BJP, including some Cabinet rank ministers, are likely to leave the party and join SP. Akhilesh's alliance with Om Prakash Rajbhar Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBS), Mahan Dal of Keshav Prasad Maurya, and Apna Dal (K) of Krishna Patel in eastern UP and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) of Jayant Chaudhry in western Uttar Pradesh would pay a rich dividend. There is a belief among SP leaders that despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi withdrawing the contentious farm bills, the Jats will support the RLD which in turn will help the Samajwadi Party.

But, what could prove detrimental for Akhilesh is his relations with his uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav. Despite extending an olive branch and waiting for his 'bhatija' to announce seat-sharing with him, Shivpal was cold-shouldered by Akhilesh. It is no secret that

Akhilesh does not have political acumen that his father Mulayam Singh Yadav has. Akhilesh is not suave as his father and does not have the appeal all over the political spectrum, again like his father. The alliances he had made are not natural alliances and are made more for electoral gain. Take the example of Mahan Dal or Apna Dal, which are basically Kurmi caste-dominated parties. The Kurmis and Yadavs, both intermediate castes, are at loggerheads at the ground level. Similarly in western UP, Jats and Muslims generally are not on the same page. Muslims are SP's vote bank while Jats had voted for BJP and RLD in previous elections. In this election, will the Jats and Muslims vote jointly?

The BJP leaders are seeking votes on the basis of work being done by both the Yogi and Modi governments. They are emphasizing the virtue of 'double engine' government. The Congress is trying to find a toe hold in UP. The focus is on Priyanka Gandhi. The enormous task before her is to build a party structure at the ground level. In this scenario, it is not prudent to ignore BSP. Mayawati is working to stitch a potent social engineering umbrella that will include Brahmins, Dalits and Muslims. She has the confidence that she will be able to bring all dominant caste together. In this scenario, it would be a mistake to dismiss Mayawati in this election.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE CONGRESS IS NOT IN THE COMPETITION. IT IS HERE ONLY FOR ADVERTISEMENT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IT GETS ZERO SEATS.  
—SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF  
AKHILESH YADAV



AKHILESH YADAV MIGHT BE AN ASTROLOGER THAT HE FEELS THE CONGRESS WILL WIN ZERO SEATS; WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS.  
—CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY  
PRIYANKA GANDHI

# Menstrual leave: Pathologising gender rights

Is menstrual leave a symbol of care for women or a concealed propaganda to make them look inefficient to be employed in demanding jobs?

Gendering human rights has become passé in India. However, female teachers' demand for menstrual leave every month in Uttar Pradesh has raised eyebrows. The teachers say poor public transport and those filthy toilets in schools add to their woes during the periods. Last year, food delivery company Zomato announced up to 10 days' paid 'period leave' per year for women and transgenders, kicking off debates about gender equality and ghettoising women.

Suffice to say, umpteen dimensions have been discussed about menstrual or period leave recently. Even a Menstruation Benefits Bill, 2017 is in the pipeline. A menstrual period leave enables the working women the option



KG SOFI UTTAM DINESH CHAKRABORTY

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to take paid or unpaid leave from their workplace if they are unable to attend to their work because of this biological norm. The need for this kind of a policy emanated from the fact that some women undergo a condition called dysmenorrhoea or extreme pain during first few days of their menstrual cycle, which also debilitates their productive efficiency.

Such leave is not new in India. Kerala had granted menstrual leave to its female students as early as 1912. A leave policy to help women during their menstrual cycle first came up in Russia in the 19th century but it was later withdrawn in 1927 because it brought with it issues of gender discrimination. In 1947, Japan's labor force brought a



law that provided menstrual leave to its women workforce, but the necessity for such a law is still highly debated in Japan. It is still debated whether menstrual leave is a symbol of care and concern for women at workplace or a concealed propaganda to make women look inefficient to be employed in high demanding jobs.

In India where talking about menstruation is still considered a taboo, will a menstrual leave policy benefit its intended stakeholders, that

is women? Will working women from non-metropolitan areas be able to shed their inhibition and talk to their male bosses menstrual leave? In a country where even the media shies away from advertising napkins, how can policy makers expect women to talk openly about availing menstrual leave at their workplaces? These are pertinent questions that call for paving the way for social and attitudinal change.

It is good to see people, especially employers, opening up to the idea of talking about a taboo topic like periods and extending empathy to women employees in the menstrual age. Showing empathy to women employees who genuinely undergo physical discomfort during first two days

of their menstrual cycle can be considered as an act of humanitarian concern and definitely, it has nothing to do with feminism. It is also highly subjective since women differ in their physical discomfort during their menstrual cycle with few of them undergoing extreme mental and physical agony, and a lucky few do not have any obvious physical discomfort at all. At the same time, providing period leaves only widens the gender gap and also deepens the level of discrimination against the fairer gender at workplace.

Women in Indian culture have always been portrayed as a symbol of endless patience and courage. Homemakers are a poignant testimony to the above statement. They in particular have

never let their menstrual cycle come in the way of their duties towards their families. Empathy from family members during their menstrual phase is the only support they seek at such times. However, the idea of offering period leaves to women is not a solution to the myriad problems that women encounter at their workplaces. In that respect, men too have their share of psychological and physiological worries that need similar empathetic considerations.

If corporates really want to show that they care for their women employees, they should stop bringing policies that promote gender discrimination and gender bias. Alternatively, corporates can make their employees more

empathetic towards women issues by making them aware of the mental and physical stress that haunt women during their menstrual cycle and motivate them to be more compassionate towards women during their difficult times. This calls for bringing up a culture where subjects like periods are not treated as a taboo and women feel uninhibited to speak about it in their workplace. This is a highly subjective issue, each woman needs a different treatment during this time, and period leave is not an umbrella solution and not mandated too. It should be dealt in an organised and organic manner so that the real sense of women empowerment can be translated into reality in Indian society.

### Jio-BP, Mahindra Group sign MoU for EV, low-carbon solution

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A joint venture of Reliance Industries Ltd and BP of the UK on Wednesday said it has signed an agreement with the Mahindra Group to explore EV and low-carbon solutions, including battery swapping technology options, for electric 3-wheelers. Besides exploring creation of EV products and services, the non-binding MoU signed by Reliance BP Mobility Limited (RBML) and Mahindra Group would look for identifying synergies in low-carbon and conventional fuels, the company said in a statement.

"The MoU also covers evaluating charging solutions by Jio-bp for Mahindra vehicles including electric 3 and 4 wheelers, quadricycles and e-SCV (Small Commercial Vehicles - sub 4 ton)," it said.

# Total 9,849 URLs blocked in 2020: Chandrasekhar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government directed blocking of 9,849 accounts/URLs during 2020, up from 3,635 accounts/URLs in the previous year, under a specific provision of the Information Technology Act, 2000, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

Under the provision of section 69A of the Act, the government directed blocking of 471, 500, 633 and 1,385 accounts/URLs in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

This number stood at 2,799 in 2018; 3,635 in 2019 and 9,849 in 2020, he added.

Uniform resource locator (URL) refers to the address of a unique resource on the internet.

"All the accounts/URLs



that are blocked by the government are based on the requests, received from the concerned designated Nodal Officers of Ministries/States, on specified grounds and following the due process, specified in the IT

(Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009, notified under section 69A of the IT Act," he said.

The ministry follows due process in all such directions, Chandrasekhar added.

In response to another query, Chandrasekhar said the government is well aware of the risk and danger posed by growing phenomena of misuse of various media platform and the user harms caused as a consequence.

"...keeping with the mission of having an open, safe and trusted and accountable internet, Government has published, the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 under the IT Act. These rules have appropriate provisions to deal with such user harms/menace," he said.

He further stated that law enforcement agencies at the Centre and states take appropriate legal action as per provisions of law, and when appropriate, request intermediaries including social media platforms like Google and Youtube to remove content violative of any law.

## 'Cyber security, frauds main concerns with digital currency'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

As the RBI moves ahead for the launch of the central bank digital currency (CBDC), Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday marked out cyber security and digital frauds as the main challenges in the new system.

Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar said there are two types of CBDCs - wholesale and retail - and a lot of work has happened in the former while the latter was termed as a "complicated" aspect which will take time.

The RBI had earlier this year announced that it has started work on the CBDC, in line with other major central banks of the world which are looking at a fiat digital currency. According to a report, the RBI is looking to start with pilot exercises on the same front by early next year.

"Main concern comes from the angle of cybersecurity and possibility of digital frauds. We have to be very careful about that," Das told reporters in the post-policy



interaction. Das recalled that a few years ago, there were concerns with fake currency and similar aspects can play out with the launch of the CBDC, which need to be prevented by putting up the necessary firewalls and a robust security architecture.

Sankar explained that the CBDC will be an electronic version of the current paper-based currency and also

underlined the risks around digital frauds and cyber risks as "major challenges".

"There has been a lot of work which has happened in the wholesale account-based, while retail is complicated and will take time. As and when whichever is ready first, we will release it for a pilot," he added.

Earlier, Das had hinted about a soft launch for the CBDC by the end of December 2021.

### MONEY MATTERS

#### IndiGo signs agreement with CSIR-IIP to make SAF

IndiGo has signed an agreement with Dehradun-based Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Indian Institute of Petroleum (CSIR-IIP) to manufacture and deploy sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) globally, the airline said on Wednesday.



As per global airlines body IATA, SAF is defined as "fuel that has the potential to generate lower carbon emissions than conventional kerosene on a life cycle basis". In the statement, Ronojy Dutta, chief executive officer of IndiGo, said, "We have partnered with CSIR-IIP to ensure that we are working towards controlling emissions, and in the process, building supply chains for manufacturing and deploying sustainable aviation fuel in India and globally in the foreseeable future. The carrier said it desired to be an anchor partner to such institutes and oil refining companies in the future to address the core issue of carbon emissions, and take a lead in demonstrating its commitment towards sustainable and responsible growth."

#### RIL shares up 1.6 pc after announcing JV with TA'ZIZ



Shares of Reliance Industries on Wednesday jumped over 1.6 per cent after it announced launch of a strategic joint venture with TA'ZIZ to invest USD 2 billion in chemical projects in the UAE.

On BSE, the scrip closed 1.5 per cent higher at Rs 2,417.4. During the day, it jumped 2.09 per cent to Rs 2,431.45. On NSE, the shares settled at Rs 2,420.95 apiece, up 1.64 per cent over previous close. Intra-day, it surged 2.09 per cent to Rs 2,431.8. Abu Dhabi Chemicals Derivatives Company RSC Ltd (TA'ZIZ) and Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), have agreed to launch 'TA'ZIZ EDC & PVC', a world-scale chemical production partnership at the TA'ZIZ Industrial Chemicals Zone in Ruwais, as per a regulatory filing posted on Tuesday. The new joint venture will construct and operate a chlor-alkali, ethylene dichloride and polyvinyl chloride production facility, with an investment of more than USD 2 billion, it added.

#### Infosys BPM to create 250 jobs in Ireland

Bangalore, Dec 8 (PTI) Infosys BPM, the business process management arm of Infosys, on Wednesday announced that it is expanding its presence in Ireland, creating 250 jobs locally with the development of a new delivery centre in Waterford.



Infosys BPM started its Ireland operations in Dublin in 2014, delivering service offerings across telecommunications, manufacturing, social media, healthcare, edtech, and fintech sectors. The company said in a statement that it has since then, further expanded in Ireland through its offices in Waterford, Wexford, Clonmel, and Craigavon.

#### All equipment, systems to power 5G rollout being procured



All equipment, components and systems to power India's 5G rollout have been procured from "trusted sources", Union Minister for Communications Ashwini Vaishnav told Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

He was replying to a question by Congress member Manish Tewari who wanted to know if the government refused to allow Huawei to participate in the 5G trials because the Chinese company is "deemed to be a security risk". "Without taking name of any particular company, I would like to say that whatever procurement has happened for 5G, is happening under the trusted sources regime," the minister said in his reply during the Zero Hour. He said "discussions and dialogues" are happening all over the world on the issue of procuring from secured sources the telecom devices which have serious repercussions on technology-based security.

## Sensex zooms 1,016 pts; Nifty reclaims 17,400-mark

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Extending its winning run to the second session, equity benchmark Sensex skyrocketed 1,016 points on Wednesday, boosted by RBI's accommodative stance as well as easing concerns over the Omicron variant.

Bulls were enthused by a positive sentiment in global markets amid reports that the new coronavirus strain is unlikely to be more severe than the Delta variant, removing market concern regarding its economic impact.

The 30-share BSE Sensex zoomed 1,016.03 points or 1.76 per cent to finish at 58,649.68. Similarly, the NSE Nifty rallied 293.05 points or 1.71 per cent to 17,469.75.

Bajaj Finance was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising around 4 per cent, followed by Maruti, SBI, Bajaj Finserv, Sun Pharma and Asian Paints.

On the other hand, Kotak Bank and PowerGrid were the laggards.

"Positive global cues, coupled with the continuation of an accommodative policy



stance of the RBI by holding rates fired up the bulls even as the central bank decided to enhance the variable reverse repo rate auctions to rebalance liquidity," said S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities.

The bullish undertone was reflected in the sectoral indices and advance-declines as the market breadth was healthy with small and midcaps too participating in the rally, he noted.

After the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) maintained status quo on the interest rate and decided to continue with its

accommodative stance, most of the rate sensitive stocks ended in the green.

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to leave repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent for the ninth time in a row as well as continue with its accommodative stance. Further, RBI retained its growth projection at 9.5 per cent for the current fiscal.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended with significant gains.

Stock exchanges in Europe were, however, largely negative in mid-session deals.

## World shares mostly higher as virus fears ease

PNS ■ BANGKOK

Stocks advanced Wednesday in Asia after another broad rally on Wall Street as investors wagered that the new variant of the COVID-19 virus won't pose a big threat to the economy.

Shares rose in Paris, London, Tokyo and Shanghai but fell in Frankfurt as Germany's parliament elected Olaf Scholz as the country's ninth post-World War II chancellor, opening a new era for the European Union's largest economy after Angela Merkel's 16-year tenure.

Scholz's government is taking office with high hopes of modernising Germany and



combating climate change but faces the immediate challenge of handling the country's toughest phase yet of the coronavirus pandemic.

Germany's DAX fell 0.3% to 15,766.51, while the CAC 40 in Paris was flat at 7,065.10. Britain's FTSE 100 picked up 0.4% to 7,365.25.

The future for the Dow industrials and the S&P 500

were both up 0.2%.

Japan downgraded its growth estimate for the last quarter to minus 3.6% from an earlier reported contraction of 3.0%. The change reflected weaker consumer and public demand and trade.

Economists are forecasting a rebound for the world's third largest economy in the current quarter, thanks to recovering activity after coronavirus case-loads plummeted.

Parliament is expected to approve a record stimulus package of 56 trillion yen (\$490 billion), including cash handouts and aid to ailing businesses, to lift the economy out of doldrums worsened by the coronavirus pandemic.

## Retail inflation expected to ease to 5 pc next fiscal

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Retail inflation is likely to ease to around 5 per cent next fiscal on the back of government measures to ease supplies, reduction in fuel prices and prospects of good crops, the Reserve Bank of India said on Wednesday.

For the current fiscal year to be ending on March 31, 2022, retail inflation is expected to be around 5.3 per cent, the RBI said. The reduction of excise duty and VAT on petrol and diesel will bring about a durable reduction in inflation by way of direct effects as well as indirect

effects operating through fuel and transportation costs, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said while announcing the bi-monthly policy decision. "The inflation trajectory is likely to be in line with our earlier projections, and price pressures may persist in the immediate term. Vegetable prices are expected to see a seasonal correction with winter arrivals in view of bright prospects for the rabi crop. Cost-push pressures continue to impinge on core inflation, though their pass-through may remain muted due to the slack in the economy," Das said.

## Meta to skill 1 crore small businesses, 2.5 lakh creators

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

Meta (formerly Facebook) on Wednesday unveiled a new office in Delhi-NCR - one of its biggest facilities in Asia - and announced plans of skilling one crore small businesses and 2,50,000 creators in the country over the next three years.

Spanning 1.3 lakh sq ft, this is Meta's first standalone office facility in Asia. The premises also house the Centre for Fuelling India's New Economy (CFINE) that will train small businesses and creators.

The new Meta office is designed with an open floor plan and an unfinished look, similar to the headquarters in Menlo Park in the US. The new office in the city will house various teams from Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

Meta said this is meant to inspire collaboration and the consciously exposed concrete pillars and wires on the roof are meant to reflect its startup



outside," Facebook India (Meta) Vice President and Managing Director Ajit Mohan told reporters here.

He added that CFINE - a multifunctional centre - will bring together all its products and efforts and its mission will be to use technology and tools being built by the company to fuel growth for creators, small businesses and entrepreneurs in the country.

"Over the next three years,

we will attempt to train and skill 1 crore small businesses and 2,50,000 creators through the centre. We realise this is no small task, but we recognise that we have an obligation to rise to the unique opportunity presented by the forces of technology transforming India," Mohan said.

He further said: "This is an opportunity in line with the openness of India's internet and the fundamental democratic values that drive institutions that we have benefited from."

Earlier this year, the government announced rules that require large social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp to follow additional due diligence, including the appointment of a chief compliance officer, nodal contact person and resident grievance officer in the country.

They will also be required to have a physical contact address in India published on its website or mobile app, or both. The

rules were introduced to make social media platforms -- which have seen a phenomenal surge in usage over the past few years in India -- more accountable and responsible for the content hosted on their platform.

As per data cited by the government at that time, India had 53 crore WhatsApp users, 41 crore Facebook subscribers, and 21 crore Instagram users.

Meta said the new office has been designed with modern, minimalist and functional furniture, and includes touchless technology to ensure hygiene and safety of employees.

Meta has also collaborated with Indian artists Pratap Morey, Rohini Devasher and Sameer Kulavoor to create large artworks.

Speaking at the event on Wednesday, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said technology is deeply and almost irrevocably changing the trajectory of the country.

## Alembic gets USFDA nod for generic hypertension

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Alembic Pharmaceuticals on Wednesday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market Selixipag tablets, used to treat high blood pressure, in the American market. The company said it has received tentative approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for its abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) for Selixipag tablets in strengths of 200 mcg, 400 mcg, 600 mcg, 800 mcg, 1,400 mcg, and 1,600 mcg.

Alembic's product is the generic equivalent to the reference listed drug product (RLD) Upravi.

## Raveena Tandon: Always had a fascination for the dark side



**R**aveena Tandon is preparing for the release her series *Aranyak* on Netflix. She says she has always been fascinated by the dark side. Raveena spoke to *IAN'S* about the increasing popularity and demand of thrillers on OTT platforms. It just makes you want to binge watch. That is why I love it and have always had a fascination for the dark side. The actress who ruled the 1990s says she doesn't like horror as a genre but that it is the suspenseful genre of suspense or thrillers that keeps her on the television screens.

"I don't like horror, but I love suspense and thrillers and maybe even crime thrillers. The unravelling of it all is what I enjoy. I am a huge fan. I believe there are many people like me. She added that she enjoys romance every once in a while."

*Aranyak* highlights the hardships and prejudices faced by female officers as they attempt to balance their personal and professional lives.

Raveena plays a cop in the dense forest. She waits for a big case all her life and when one day a news report about a teenager's murder shakes the system, Raveena joins forces with her city-bred replacement Angad, played by Parambrata Chatterjee, to solve the case. A forgotten folklore is revived as the two try to find the serial killer entity.

## Money Heist holds global eyeballs; Power Of The Dog leads in film

**F**or nearly 190 million total viewing hours last week, Netflix audiences were singing *Bella Ciao* after the fifth and final instalment of the Spanish drama series *La Casa de Papel* popularly known as *Money Heist* dropped December 3.



In just two days, *Money Heist* took the top spot in Netflix's English language shows, rising to No. 1 on Netflix's Global Top 10 list with far more total viewing hours than the week's top English-language show, *Lost in Space*, which logged 47.38 million hours for Season 3 during the week of November 29, reports *variety.com*.

*Money Heist*, the twisty story of a bank robbery, features standout performances from Úrsula Corberó, Alvaro Morte, Itziar Ituno, Pedro Alonso and Najwa Nimri, among other international talent.

Other non-English shows that have proven their staying power in Netflix's Global Top 10 include Korean dramas *Squid Game* (21.2 million hours) and *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (11.56 million) which have held their ground on non-English language TV Top 10 list for 12 weeks and 14 weeks, respectively.

A new addition to non-English Top 10 this week was the goopy anime series, *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Stone Ocean*, which landed at Number 8 in its first week with 13.98 million hours viewed.

Among English-language series, following *Lost in Space* was *True Story*, the Kevin Hart drama that grabbed 29.81 million viewing hours in its second week in the Top 10.

For the tenth consecutive week, the limited series *Maid* held its ground on the Top 10 English-language shows list with 15.8 million hours viewed, and *Cowboy Bebop* landed in the ninth slot (15.26 million hours).

*The Power of the Dog*, Jane Campion's western-drama starring Benedict Cumberbatch, Kirsten Dunst, Jesse Plemons and Kodi Smit-McPhee, took the Number 1 spot on the Top 10 English-language Movies list, opening with 27.2 million

hours.

For the most part, viewers who watched English-language films went hard for Christmas: *Castle for Christmas* was second to *Power of the Dog* with 25.55 million viewing hours.

A *Boy Called Christmas* took the No. 5 spot, *Single All the Way* landed at No. 6 and *The Christmas Chronicles* (Parts 1 and 2) rounded out the list.

Over on the non-English movie side, French comedy *Spoiled Brats* was No. 1 with 26.73 million hours viewed.

Brazil cinched slot No. 8 with the rom-com *Just Short of Perfect*, its third week in a row in the Top 10, and modern 'quinqui' Spanish film *Outlaws* was No. 6.

Other non-English feature titles making the Top 10 include *The Whole Truth*, *Green Snake*, *More the Merrier*, *Sooryavanshi*, *The Claus Family*, *Dhamaka* and *Bordertown: Mural Murders*.

## Dave Bautista in negotiations for M Night Shyamalan project

**H**ollywood actor Dave Bautista is set to star in *Knock at the Cabin*, the upcoming movie from Pondicherry-born Indian American Oscar-nominated filmmaker M. Night Shyamalan.

The *Dune* actor is reportedly in negotiations to appear in Shyamalan's upcoming movie, which the secretive filmmaker will both write and direct, as well as produce with Ashwin Rajan under his Blinding Edge Pictures banner alongside Marc Bienstock and Steven Schneider, according to *Deadline*, reports *female-first.co.uk*.



Details of the movie — which is scheduled for release in February 2023 — are being kept under wraps.

Bautista is currently going through a busy period, having starred in *Dune* and Netflix's *Army of the Dead* and recently finished production on *Knives Out 2*.

He is currently working on the third *Guardians of the Galaxy* movie, and as well as *Knock at the Cabin*, he's also expected to shoot *Dune 2* and is attached to star in and produce an action movie with Jason Momoa.

The 52-year-old star recently admitted he "almost broke down" when he was cast in *Dune* because he was so keen to work with director Denis Villeneuve but didn't want to "capitalise" on his friendship with the filmmaker to land his role of Glossu Rabban. Asked what attracted him to the project, he said: "For me, it was Denis. I really pursued this, because I was tracking *Dune*. I kept asking my agent, 'When auditions would become available? When are they going to release these roles?' 'But I never hit up Denis personally, because I didn't want to be that guy. I didn't want to try to capitalise on our friendship, so I just waited and waited — and finally, I got a phone call from him, and he offered me the role. I almost broke down; I was so emotional about it. Still, it's like, 'Wow, this is crazy that I'm even here.'"

Meanwhile, Shyamalan recently explained he has needed to put more "thought" into keeping his stories secret as his career has progressed.

## 'I always learnt on the job & found my own way to do a character'



**C**horii star Nushratt Bharuccha, has been garnering praises for her performance in the film, from all across. The actress went out of her comfort zone with the film, and stunned us with her new avatar as an actress.

Speaking about her process of approaching the character, she said, "With each movie, I always try and discover a new approach or method to do the character, to know the character or to turn into the character. This is because, I never went to an acting school, or took any other form of formal training, — I have always learnt on the job and found my own way to do a character."

Speaking about her character Sakshi, Nushratt says, "Sakshi was a very layered character. She was vulnerable, soft, impressionable, forgiving and yet strong and fearless. A survivor. A fighter. Getting her emotional quotient right as a fiercely protective mother was also very important. I'm eternally grateful to Vishal sir for seeing Sakshi in me, and entrusting me with the character," says a grateful Nushratt. Unanimously lauded as her career's finest performance, Chhorii ushers in a new era for the actress as audiences were introduced to Nushratt 2.0. There's much more in store from the actress as she turns the page with content-driven films like *Janhit Mein Jaari*, which she headlines, *Ram Setu*, *Hurdang* and several exciting developments in the pipeline.

### FUN

**ARCHIE**

1 I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! YOU'VE LEARNED SOME MANNERS!

2 IT'S VERY THOUGHTFUL OF YOU TO LET ME INTO THE CAR FIRST!

3 NOT AT ALL!

4 I LOST A HANDLE! YOU'VE GOTTA OPEN MY DOOR FROM IN THERE!

**CALVIN AND HOBBS**

1 HERE'S THE TRANSMOGRIFIER GUN. NOW TRY AGAIN, AND DO IT RIGHT. I WANT TO BE A PTERODACTYL.

2 OK, HERE YOU GO.

3 ZAP

4 WELL NOW, THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!

5 SAY, WHEN DID YOU TURN YOURSELF INTO A 200-FOOT-TALL COLOSSUS?

6 I DIDN'T. WHY?

**GARFIELD**

1 WHAT DID YOU GUYS HAVE FOR LUNCH TODAY?

2 PIZZA

3 OOO! DO YOU HAVE ANY LEFT?

4 LEFTOVER PIZZA?... IN THIS HOUSE?!

5 YEAH, THERE'S SOME IN THE KITCHEN, NEXT TO THE UNICORN

**REALITY CHECK**

1 THE ART OF THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW: YOU'RE A FANTASTIC PERSON, AND YOU'VE DONE A FANTASTIC JOB!

2 OKAY, I'LL CLEAR OUT MY DESK--

**SPEED BUMP**

1 THE CLAW

**CROSSWORD**

**NANCY**

1 WHAT IF SHE SAYS, "NO"???

2 WHAT IF SHE SAYS, "YES"???

**SUDOKU**

8	1	2	5	3				
	9	5		6				1
	3		1					8
							6	
	5		6	1	8		9	
	7							
1				5		8		
9		2			3	7		
		9		7	1	2	6	

**Yesterday's solution**

6	1	7	5	2	4	3	9	8
4	5	3	7	8	9	1	2	6
2	8	9	3	6	1	4	5	7
7	2	1	6	4	3	5	8	9
5	3	6	1	9	8	7	4	2
9	4	8	2	7	5	6	1	3
3	6	4	8	1	2	9	7	5
8	9	5	4	3	7	2	6	1
1	7	2	9	5	6	8	3	4

**Rules**

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

**ACROSS**

- A pain in your mouth
- Speed competitions
- Intoxicated
- Passenger's payment
- Plan
- Do again
- Bathroom powder
- Rub out
- Woolly animal
- A huge seabird

**DOWN**

- Happen
- Try out
- Drug-dependent person
- Residence
- Umpire

**SOLUTION**

A	T	R	I	A	N	G	L	E
T	H	I	N	G	S	O	I	T
T	R	A	N	S	E	R		
E	N	D	I	N	G	S	H	O
N	T	O						
P	U	S	H					
T	M	S	O	L				
E	X	A	C	T				
C	L	A	R	I	N	E		

## Where there's love, there's a Hyderabad!

The pandemic must have impacted our meetings in the office or our enjoyable outings but it didn't stop us from building new connections online. In a very recent survey, it was revealed that Hyderabad city has emerged to be the chattiest city of the country when it comes to dating. Where there is love, how can we Hyderabadis stay behind? While millions of emojis were used in the app's bios, the side eye saw a whopping 40 per cent increase in usage. Members showed a mixed bag of optimism throughout the year.

Home-grown dating app called TrulyMadly says that blossoming dating apps are just the new beginnings for the tech community. There are reports stating how Gen Z enjoyed both virtual meet-cutes and post-vax IRL dates. A significant number of Indians took to video dating on Tinder where Hyderabad reigned supreme as the chattiest video dating city, followed closely by Chennai and Bengaluru! "The pandemic further fuelled the need for having a serious, long-term partner because you were confined to your home. So, we have actually seen that people, who earlier had some inhibitions about joining the platform, shunned them and came on board. They need a safe place to meet new people. We're seeing that, even today, when things have opened up, people prefer to have first dates on Zoom. Dating apps are not an app for hook-ups or one-night stands where you have to meet a stranger tonight. Those were the apps that were negatively impacted. Users anyway meet offline for the first time after some chemistry has been established after talking over the digital medium. Now, that has become default behaviour," explains the founder of a dating

app. On the other hand, Bumble, in its latest survey, has revealed that post the second wave of the pandemic, the youth of the nation is coming out with a new sense of clarity and confidence in taking control of their dating lives. People are expressing their thoughts. The survey also stated that one in five people living in big cities like Hyderabad want to get married and settle down. "You can be a highly intelligent person with a good job but the strategies

be seen sometimes on such dating apps. Don't allow a dating app to be a mode of extorting money from you," warns Anil, the founder of End Now Foundation, Hyderabad. VJ Bani has also confessed that she is all about big gestures and is a huge

Contrary to what breaking norms of what Bollywood conventionally shows, Bani has made the first move in a relationship. She is very open to the idea of women making the first move because why not! Bumble these days is all about helping single Indians navigate conversations and challenges around dating post the pandemic in 2021 as it facilitates unfiltered, meaningful conversations around dating truths in India. Popular dating app WOO also allows users to display a badge to state that they are vaccinated & the users gave a positive response to this due to pandemic related issues. It's now a trend all over. The dating apps also jumped in to give offers like free access to premium users on the basis of super likes, vaxed or boosts. The dating app QuackQuack has come out with a survey about the online dating trends of 2021 on how maximum individuals preferred pairing up with those belonging to a different location altogether. Samarпита Samaddar from Bumble said about the data in the latest survey, "If the last two years have taught us anything, it's that people are being more mindful of what they are looking for in a partner and more intentional about dating at their own time and pace. As we head into the new year, there is a sense of hope and excitement around dating, both virtual and IRL, as India lifts restrictions. With over 70 percent of single Indians looking to 'reset' their dating lives, 2022 looks like a big year for romance."



a fraudster on a dating app will use are very sophisticated. Beware that there are many pitfalls to online dating too. From fake profiles, selfish motives, psychopaths or people only looking for sexual relationships can

romantic in real life. "I'd rather do too much than do nothing at all". Sharing a real-life instance, she says, "Once I was just finishing up a shoot and wrapped, I booked myself a ticket and literally flew 42 hours to spend like 36 hours and I just wanted to go see him and ask him how is he doing?" Bani mentions that she would never date somebody who doesn't lift because it's got so much to do with lifestyle, it impacts the way you eat, what time you sleep and if you are with somebody who doesn't understand this, it becomes a really big issue.

## 4 tips to protect your online biz from fraud

- Holidays for many online businesses are a pleasant time where they can spend summing up their achievements of the year, planning long-term prospects, and gifting employees, clients, and loved ones. Unfortunately, during the end of December online fraud reaches its peak. Online businesses have to keep a subtle balance in order to provide their customers with the opportunity to use financial products online via web and mobile applications and at the same time take efficient risk prevention measures.
- Here is a to-do list to protect your online business from holiday fraud.
- Seasonally scheduled scammers do not have sophisticated technical skills and many companies manage to stop them at the stage of standard initial online verification of the application. Companies should apply a more conservative approach connected with new applications, evaluation policies, and rules, which will save business from possible financial losses during this period.
  - Online companies should pay attention to the applications with high-risk markers — attempts of device or internet connection manipulation, as well as user's behaviour. Such measures will allow filtering out of applications coming from devices with emulators, randomizers and will be able to determine the network infrastructure of professional fraudsters. In the case of digital lending, it will help to reduce the share of excessively active borrowers who usually keep trying to apply for a large number of loans often manipulating application data (for example identity theft i.e. using application information of genuine people sometimes even known to them).
  - Online companies should approach the valuation of frequency characteristics in a more conservative way. Different frequency characteristics are also a very important parameter for risk assessment in the holiday season, for example, the number of risky applications from the same device or IP address, for a limited period of time or simply for the entire observation period. Usually, the risk increases along with the frequency, since this may indicate the risk of credit shopping or the risk of fraud, especially if such activity is supplemented by manipulation with other data.
  - Many companies may fear the risk of profit decline filtering "good" customers along with online scammers. However, in this case, a more precise adjustment of the financial product for the end-user will be of great use. By giving special offers and taking into account the needs of regular customers, the company can mitigate the situation and reduce losses caused by online fraud.
- It is imperative to understand that fraudsters do not treat every industry equally. They often pick and choose an industry to focus on based on the time of year or what businesses are seeing more transactional activity. At times, fraud attempts are simply conducted randomly to target a vulnerable business that may be seeing a higher number of transactions.
- (The author, Manish Thakwani, is the Head of Business Development (India) at JuicyScore, a company that develops anti-fraud and risk management solutions, presents)

## TROUSSEAU FOR VERY BRIDE

Finding the dream wedding dress to get hitched in isn't easy. Luckily this wedding season, brides in India got the chance to Say Yes To The Dress as Discovery+ brings iconic international franchise to the country. From stunning silhouettes to unbelievable designs, get ready to witness the whims and fancies of a brides-to-be as they see their dream outfits coming to life. Recently, Discovery+ launched the trailer of Say Yes To The Dress India that oozes fashion, drama, entertainment, and emotions whilst celebrating and showcasing the various cultures and traditions of India.

This eight-part series uncovers the fascinating tales of brides from diverse cultures with different tastes who are in search of the most important dress they will ever wear. While some envision their dream attire to be extravagant and bold, others take the traditional route, thereby showcasing every bride's unique style. Different wedding functions and events will be adding to the diversity of the bridal looks whilst highlighting their cultural influence on the outfits. No matter how varied the brides are, one thing that is common for all of them, is an extensive mix of colours, latest trends, designs and fabrics — all a true reflection of Indian Bridal fashion. Making the experience further dreamy, Discovery+ collaborated with India's most celebrated fashion designers, including, Neeta Lulla, Abhinav Mishra, Varun Bahl, Natasha Dalal, Sandeep Khosla, Zara Umrigar, Shubika, Angadi Saree, Monica Jade, Seema Gujral, Sanjay Garg, Kar Leo, Ashdeen, Anju Modi, Dilnaz, Heena Kochhar and Rahul Mishra. Not only will they help the brides choose the outfit of their dreams for different occasions but also curate it for them. The excitement doesn't end there, the series will be hosted by Divyak D'Souza, who has been in the fashion industry, as a consultant, fashion editor, bridal stylist and has styled Bollywood celebrities like Farhan Akhtar, Chitrangada Singh, Raveen Tandon and many more. With his background Divyak is a pro at helping brides with every aspect of shopping for a wedding dress, from researching designers to dealing with overbearing entourage and what not.

As a prelude to the show launch, discovery+ launched the wedding song of the year Sajna composed by Badshah and Payal Dev coupled with the catchy choreography done by Punit J Pathak. It crossed 12 Million views on YouTube in merely 5 days. Moreover, it has been trending across social media ruling radio waves as well with 2.5 Million audio streams. On making her

OTT debut for her Bridal wear fashion line, designer Natasha Dalal says, "Designing has always been a passion, and there couldn't have been a better opportunity to make my OTT debut. Say Yes To The Dress is a highly appreciated show around the globe and being a part of it is an amazing experience! Creating a dream outfit for a bride is such an honour for me. Every bride is unique and watching her eyes sparkle when she sees her dream outfit unfold in front of her makes up for all the effort that goes into the process of bringing it to life. I'm excited to be part of this show as it manages to give everyone a glimpse of how a bride feels just before saying Yes To The Dress!"

"I have been following this reality show for a while and it's great that such a format is coming to India. Dressing brides for their special day and curating their dream ensemble has always been the best form of experience. Whilst the journey of curating an outfit for the bride is thrilling, it's a matter of great responsibility, as we are helping someone create their most special memory. They trust the designer with all their heart to translate their wishes and desires. However, the most challenging part is to convince and break through the stereotypical expectations of bridal trousseau but at the end the result is always so emotionally beautiful. A wonderful team creates magic and ease of a happy shoot and working with Discovery+ was a great experience. All in all, it was fun, exciting and engaging to document the bridal designing process," shares designer Neeta Lulla.

"I feel that when one is connected with nature he/she is connected to oneself! That's how I felt being a part of this franchise, it made me feel so connected to myself and my surroundings. One challenge that I faced while helping the brides is the colour palette, brides usually tend to get confused while picking a colour on their big day. Having said that, every bride is different and so is their perspective. However, the overall experience was fantastic and I feel really grateful to be a part of such a hit international franchise and I would love to work with them in future too," says designer Abhinav Mishra.

"I am thrilled to be a part of this legacy show which is finally coming to India. Having been in the fashion industry and bridal styling space for years now, this show is right up my alley. Styling real brides is all about managing expectations and respecting the emotions that go into picking the dress of her dreams. Understanding the bride's thought process and helping her find her ideal bridal look is going to be challenging yet exciting," shares Divyak D'Souza, show host.

It won't just be plain-sailing and there may be some tears too, for these women who are searching for the most priceless dress they'll ever wear.



## Indian medalists who brought glory in 2021

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The Olympics and Paralympics come with a lot of pomp in the country! One moment of showdown telecasted on the national television and the next moment you are the most popular and widely-known sportsperson of the year. The 2021 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics 2021 also brought in some similar kinds of famous waves. Not just the sportsperson soars on popularity but swells every local's chest with ample pride too. The last Olympics also gave us some winning competitors who became 'desh ki jaan!' Let us get to know them again now.

### MIRABAI CHANU

India returned with their first Olympic medal in weightlifting in two decades at the Tokyo Games, but five months later there appeared another medal at this year's Tokyo Olympics. Mirabai Chanu ended India's 21-year wait for a weightlifting medal at the Olympics by clinching a silver medal in the 49kg category to open the country's account! While picking firewood with her siblings, she used to lift a lot more than what her elder brother could. She didn't know about weightlifting at the time, but her mother saw the talent.

### NEERAJ CHOPRA

Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra made history on August 7, 2021, by winning India's first-ever gold medal in athletics at the Tokyo Olympics. With a best throw of 87.58 metres, the 23-year-old took first place in the men's javelin throw final. Apart from being a gold-capped Olympian, he belongs to a family largely involved in the agrarian sector based out of the Khandra village near Panipat. Neeraj has also commenced an ambitious outreach program that is organized with the view of a newer, healthier and fitter India. It is being conducted to connect India's ace athletes with school children!

### AVANI LEKHARA

Even Avani Lekhara became a household name after her win.

The Jaipur girl, who was rendered a paraplegic following a car crash when she was 11, became the first Indian woman to win a Paralympic gold. August 30, 2021, is another date she is unlikely to forget.

Lekhara, who turned 20 in November, bagged gold in the 10 m air rifle standing event in the SH1 category at the Tokyo Paralympics. She followed it with a bronze in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions SH1 event, making her the first Indian woman to win multiple medals at the Paralympics.

### KASHISH LAKRA

The Indian contingent at the 2021 Asian Youth Paralympic Games secured three more medals as they continued their impressive display at the event. The Tokyo Paralympian Kashish Lakra secured a gold medal for India in the club throw while Laxit bagged a bronze medal in the javelin throw. No less than 750 athletes from as many as 30 nations participated. The participants were all aged less than 23. There are in total nine sports in which the athletes can participate. Despite tough competition, Kashish kept her cool and displayed her mettle. The young athlete had very recently bagged the honor of being the youngest athlete to qualify for the Tokyo Paralympic Games 2020 and this victory will certainly be another prized feather in her hat.

### BHAVINA PATEL

Bhavina Patel arrived at the Ahmedabad airport, she received a grand welcome with drum rolls. It was the first time in her career that she had received such a huge welcome. She finally had her moment in the sun after she clinched historic silver in the women's single table tennis, class 4, at the Tokyo Paralympic Games. She became the first-ever Indian paddler to win a medal at the Paralympics. She said her singular goal has always been to go there and give it her best shot. She was also among the 35 athletes who received the prestigious Arjuna Award.



## Kohli removed from ODI captaincy as Rohit becomes new white-ball captain

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Virat Kohli was on Wednesday removed as India's ODI captain with the national selection committee making

Rohit Sharma the sole white-ball leader of the team till the 2023 50-over World Cup.

In another significant development, Ajinkya Rahane was removed from Test vice-captaincy, a position which was also given to Rohit.

The BCCI announced the 18-member squad for the three Test series which doesn't include all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, spinner Axar Patel, and opener Shubman Gill due to various injuries.

Hanuma Vihari has made a comeback in the main squad while Ishant

Sharma has been able to retain his place despite poor form. Squad: Virat Kohli (Capt), Rohit Sharma (vc),

KL Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Shreyas Iyer, Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant(wk), Wriddhiman Saha(wk), R Ashwin, Jayant Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Mohd. Shami, Umesh Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Shardul Thakur, Md. Siraj. Standby Players: Navdeep Saini, Saurabh Kumar, Deepak Chahar, Arzan Nagwaswalla.



## England out for 147 on Day 1

AP ■ BRISBANE

England captain Joe Root won the toss, opted to bat and lost opener Rory Burns on the very first delivery of the Ashes series, a late swinging yorker from Australia pacer Mitchell Starc.

It set the tone for the opening two sessions Wednesday, which were more like open season for Australia's pace bowling pack.

Pat Cummins took the last three wickets and finished with a five-wicket haul in his first innings as Australia captain. The England innings finished with ominous thunder and lightning starting to the west and south of the Gabba.

Heavy rain and bad light combined to prevent any further play on Day 1.

The overcast conditions rapidly grew more gloomy for the visitors after Starc's early strike, with Josh Hazlewood



dismissing Dawid Malan (6) and Root (0) as England slipped to 11-3 in the sixth over.

When Cummins took his first wicket — star allrounder Ben Stokes (5) caught low at

third slip by Marnus Labuschagne four balls after the first drinks break — England was reeling at 29-4.

Opener Haseeb Hameed defied the attack and helped

England to 59-4 at lunch, but was out for 25 early in the second session when he edged a Cummins' delivery that moved away off the seam and was caught by Steve Smith at second

slip. Ollie Pope and Jos Buttler settled the innings, combining in a 50-run stand to staunch the flow of wickets before both were out in their 30s.

Buttler played an expansive drive for his fifth boundary to reach 39 but was out next ball from Starc, edging behind to Alex Carey as England slumped to 112-6. England added six runs before Pope (35) topped an attempted hook and was caught by Hazlewood diving forward near the fine-leg boundary, giving allrounder Cameron Green his first test wicket.

Cummins had Ollie Robinson (0) caught behind and Mark Wood (8) caught at short-leg and the stadium lights were turned on before he had Chris Woakes (21) caught in the deep by Hazlewood to finish off the innings.

Cummins returned 5-38 from 13.1 overs, with Starc and Hazlewood taking two wickets apiece.

PTI ■ MOHALI

### HIMMAT SCORES HUNDRED IN COMFORTABLE DELHI VICTORY OVER JHARKHAND

Veteran opener Shikhar Dhawan failed to trouble the scorers but talented Himmat Singh anchored the chase with a fine century as Delhi easily beat Jharkhand by six wickets in a group C league game of the Vijay Hazare Trophy on Wednesday.

Batting first, Jharkhand scored 263 for 8 with skipper Virat Singh contributing a patient 79 and Kaushal Singh chipping in with 69.

Delhi skipper Pradeep Sangwan scalped three for 46.

In reply, opener Dhawan, who is due to go to South Africa for the ODI series, was snapped by Anukul Roy off Varun Aaron's bowling.

But Dhruv Shorey (64 off 82 balls) and Himmat (113 not out for 124 balls) added 127 for the second wicket inside 25 overs to bring things under control.

While Shorey hit seven boundaries, Himmat, considered one of the

## States hustle for Vijay Hazare Cup

best talents to have come out of Delhi stable, had 11 fours and a six to his credit. Delhi did wobble a bit at 183 for 4 but Himmat had company from Kshitiz Sharma (43 not out for 39 balls) as their unbroken stand of 81 ensured that they reached home with as many as three overs to spare.

Thakur's five-for sets up seven-wicket win for Vidarbha

Young fast bowler Yash Thakur returned with a career-best five-wicket haul as Vidarbha notched up a comprehensive seven-wicket win over Himachal Pradesh in an Elite group A match of the Vijay Hazare One-Day Trophy here on Wednesday.

The 22-year-old from Kolkata snapped five wickets for 53, while Akshay Wakhare (2/51) and Darshan Nalkande (2/37) also chipped in with two wickets each as Vidarbha bundled out HP for 213 in 46 overs at the Dadoji Konddev stadium.

Skipper Rishi Dhawan was the top-scorer for HP with a 50-ball 61.

Vidarbha then returned to overhaul the victory target, reaching 216 for three in just 39.5 overs, riding on half-centuries from Atharva Taide (64) and Yash Rathod (76 not out). Akshay Wadkar also contributed with a 59-ball unbeaten 44.

Gurvinder Singh (2/39) and Mayank Dagar (1/48) were the only bowlers to get wickets for Himachal Pradesh.

In another match at Brabourne Stadium, Gujarat produced a clinical bowling display to dismiss Jammu and Kashmir for 171 and then returned to achieve the total in 36.5 overs losing five wickets.

**SHAHRUKH SHINES AS TN OUTCLASSES MUMBAI; BIG WIN FOR KARNATAKA**

Big-hitting batter M Shahrulkhan starred with a blistering 66 off 35 balls as Tamil Nadu started their

campaign in the Vijay Hazare Trophy One-Day cricket tournament with a superb 54-run win over defending champions Mumbai in an Elite Group B match here on Wednesday.

Sent in to bat by Mumbai skipper Shams Mulani, Tamil Nadu got off to a quick start with newbie B Sai Sudharsan (24 off 24 balls, 4 fours) and captain N Jagadeesan (20) laying the groundwork for a big score.

The dismissal of the two openers in the space of four runs to experienced pacer Dhawal Kulkarni (3 for 45 from 10 overs) saw comebackmen M S Washington Sundar and B Indrajith come together for the third wicket.

The duo added 75 runs with Washington, who is playing after an injury setback, striking three boundaries during his 58-ball 34.

He looked good before being dismissed caught and bowled by Tushar Deshpande (2/57).

Dinesh Karthik, back in the side after missing the Mushtaq Ali tournament, looked to get a move-on and made 32.

The entry of Shahrulkhan, who smashed a last ball six to star in Tamil Nadu's triumph in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 tournament, changed the complexion of the game.

**TRIPURA POSTS CRUSHING 210-RUN WIN OVER ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

Former Gujarat batter Samit Gohel hammered 135 (128 balls, 10 fours, five sixes) to star in Tripura's comprehensive 210-run win over Arunachal Pradesh in a Vijay Hazare Trophy Plate Group match here on Wednesday.

Batting first, Tripura amassed 336 for 4 in 50 overs with Gohel, captain K B Pawan (64) and Rajat Dey (44 not out) adding substance to the total.

Gohel and Pawan added 133 runs for the third wicket in quick time to put Tripura on the road to a big total. After their big stand, Dey and Manisankar Muralisingh (34 not out, 11 balls, 2X4, 3X6) added 41 runs in just 15 deliveries to swell the total.

Chasing 337 for a win, Arunachal were never in the hunt and kept losing wickets at regular intervals to be bundled out for 126 in the 40th over.

Former Tamil Nadu spinner Rahil Shah did the bulk of the damage, scalping four wickets conceding just 16 runs in 10 overs while Ajoy Sarkar took 3 for 15.

In another match, captain Uday Kaul smashed an unbeaten 121 to help Mizoram romp to a seven-wicket win over Bihar.



## Sajid's bowling leads Pakistan past Bangladesh in 2nd test

AP ■ DHAKA

Offspinner Sajid Khan ended with a match haul of 12-128 as Pakistan broke Bangladesh's stubborn resistance to secure an innings and eight-run victory in the rain-hit second and final test on Wednesday.

Bangladesh was forced to follow-on after being wrapped up for 87 in the first innings and was bowled out for 205.

With the light gradually fading, Bangladesh's last-wicket pair of Tajjul Islam and Ebadot Hossain resisted for 34 balls to raise a hope of salvaging the test.

But Sajid broke the partnership, dismissing Tajjul leg-before to help Pakistan win the game.

Sajid claimed 4-86, the fourth-best individual total by a Pakistani

bowler in an innings, to follow up his first-innings 8-42.

Pakistan declared its first innings at 300-4 after only 63.2 overs were possible in the first three days because of rain and bad light.

The third day was entirely washed out and only 6.2 overs were possible on Day 2.

Resuming on 76-7, Bangladesh was quickly dismissed for 87 and Babar Azam forced the follow-on.

Fast bowlers Shaheen Shah Afridi (2-31) and Hasan Ali (2-37) then got into act with the new ball, leaving Bangladesh 25-4.

But Bangladesh

raised a bit hope as Mushfiqur Rahim and Liton Das combined for 73 runs in 25 overs before Sajid rattled the stump of Liton for 45.

Shakib Al Hasan joined Mushfiqur Rahim and added 49 runs before the latter was run out for 48 after trying for a risky single. Shakib and Mehidy Hasan then frustrated the Pakistani attack and Babar came to bowl, getting the breakthrough with his offspin as Mehidy went for sweep.



## Indian hockey player tests positive, match against Korea cancelled

PTI ■ DONGHAEE (SOUTH KOREA)

A women's hockey team participating in the Asian Champions Trophy here has tested positive for COVID-19, resulting in the cancellation of its match against hosts and defending champions Korea on Wednesday.

Even though the Asian Hockey Federation is yet to come out with a statement, a Hockey India source confirmed that one player has tested positive. The AHF statement is also expected to clear the air on India's participation in the remainder of the tournament.

"Yes, a player has tested positive so today's game against Korea has been cancelled. The AHF will come out with further statement on the matter," the source told PTI.

## Australia and UK join US in diplomatic boycott of Beijing Games

PTI ■ CANBERRA

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Wednesday Australia will join the US in a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Games over human rights concerns.

Morrison said it should come as no surprise that Australian officials would boycott the event after the nation's relationship with China had broken down in recent years.

"I'm doing it because it's in Australia's national interest," Morrison said. "It's the right thing to do." He said Australian athletes would still be able to compete.



a strong defense force in the region "particularly in relation, most recently, to our decision to acquire nuclear-powered submarines."

He said his government was very happy to talk to China about their differ-

ences. "There's been no obstacle to that occurring on our side, but the Chinese government has consistently not accepted those opportunities for us to meet," Morrison said.

Rights groups have

pushed for a full-blown boycott of the games, accusing China of rights abuses against ethnic minorities. The US and Australian decisions fall short of those calls but come at an exceptionally turbulent time for international relations and have been met with a barrage of criticism from China.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Wednesday no UK government minister will attend the Beijing Winter Olympics, calling it "effectively" a diplomatic boycott.

Johnson was asked in the House of Commons whether the UK will join the United States, Australia and Lithuania in a diplomatic boycott of the Winter Games in February over Beijing's human rights record.

## Barty wins 2nd WTA Player of Year; Krejickova gets 2 honors

AP ■ ST PETERSBURG

Ash Barty's Wimbledon title and hold on the No. 1 ranking helped her win WTA Player of the Year for the second time in voting results announced.

Barbora Krejickova was selected as Most Improved Player and shared the Doubles Team of the Year award with Katerina Siniakova on Tuesday. Krejickova was the

first woman since 2000 to win both the singles and doubles championships at the French Open.

Emma Raducanu was picked as Newcomer of the Year after winning the U.S. Open at age 18 and becoming the first player to go from qualifying rounds all the way to a Grand Slam title.

Carla Suárez Navarro is the Comeback Player of the Year after returning from



Hodgkin's Lymphoma to play on tour and represent Spain in the Billie Jean King Cup finals.

Barty also was the WTA Player of the Year in 2019. This season, she led the tour with five titles, including her second Grand Slam championship at the All England Club.

The 25-year-old Australian also finished at No. 1 in the year-end rankings for the third season in a row. Krejickova had never won

a singles title before taking three in 2021, including at Roland Garros, and she rose from No. 65 at the end of 2020 to a high of No. 3 in the singles rankings.

Krejickova and Siniakova were recognized as the Doubles Team of the Year for the second time, after 2018. They won the French Open, the WTA Finals and an Olympic gold medal together this year.

## Aruna aims for gold at Istanbul meet

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A 10-member Indian Taekwondo contingent left on Wednesday for the World Para Taekwondo Championship (G-14) in Istanbul with Aruna Tanwar being the best bet for a podium finish.

The World Para Taekwondo Championship is being organised by the Turkish Taekwondo Federation under the Aegis of World Taekwondo (WT) starting Wednesday till December 13.

"My experience at the Paralympics was crucial for the

upcoming World championships, I thank India Taekwondo for being so proactive and making sure I could participate," said Aruna Tanwar, World No. 4 in the W-49 category.

"It's sad that I had to retire with an injury during the Paralympics but I'm confident of winning a medal for India in the upcoming championships.

The preparations have been great and the camps organized by our federation have set up the entire Indian contingent for positive results," Tanwar said.

## After red cards, late goals, Atletico advances to CL last 16

AP ■ PORTO

Three red cards, on-field brawls, countless chances and a flurry of late goals. A wild, win-or-bust match in the Champions League between Porto and Atletico Madrid had it all.

In the end, it was Atletico celebrating a place in the last 16 of Europe's top club competition with a 3-1 win on Tuesday, emerging from a three-way fight for qualification in the final round of group games.

On a night when Ajax striker Sebastian Haller became an unlikely history-maker, Real Madrid finished top of its group, and Kylian Mbappe and Lionel Messi ran amok for Paris Saint-Germain, much of the focus on the next-to-last night of group play was on the Group B finale as three teams vied to be runner-up to Liverpool. Porto started the night in second place, a point ahead of Atletico

and AC Milan, which hosted Liverpool. Milan wound up losing 2-1, meaning the winner of the all-Iberian match at the Estadio do Dragao would advance. It turned ugly, unsurprisingly given the stakes, with Porto having two players red-carded after

Atletico had Yannick Carrasco sent off for swinging his arm around an opponent's neck.

Atletico was outplayed for much of the game but was opportunistic in front of goal, with Antoine Griezmann scoring the 56th-minute opener at a corner and both Angel Correa and Rodrigo De Paul adding breakaway goals after the 90th minute.

It sparked wild celebrations on the touchline by Atletico's famously passionate coach, Diego Simeone, and striker Luis Suarez, who was forced off injured after 13 minutes. Porto earned the consolation of a third-place finish and a spot



in the Europa League knockout playoffs. With its victory, Liverpool became the first English team to win all six of its group games in a single Champions League campaign.

Messi and Mbappe had some fun in PSG's group closer. It was anything but fun for Manchester City.

City manager Pep Guardiola selected a strong lineup for the 2-1 loss at Leipzig despite his team being guaranteed as the Group A winner and in the middle of a busy domestic schedule.

Haller's first season in the Champions League has been a historic one.

By converting an eighth-minute penalty for Ajax in its 4-2 win over Sporting, the Ivory Coast striker became only the second player — after Cristiano Ronaldo in 2017-18 — to score in all six matches of a single group stage. He finished with 10 goals in total.

## India win 41 medals at Asian Youth Para Games

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian para-athletes on Wednesday returned from Bahrain after claiming a whopping 41 medals in their best-ever show at the Asian Youth Para Games.

The Indian contingent won 12 gold, 15 silver, and 14 bronze medals at the continental Para youth games held in Riffa city.

India won most medals in athletics with 22 players finishing at the podium — eight won gold, six bagged silver, and eight secured bronze.

The Indian para shuttlers returned claimed 15 medals with Tokyo Paralympian Palak Kohli,

Sanjana Kumari, and Hardik Makkar claiming three medals each.

In swimming, India won three medals, including one silver and two bronze, while the country also secured a silver in powerlifting.

Over 700 athletes from around 30 countries participated in the continental youth showpiece event that took place from December 2 to 6.

The athletes competed across nine sports - Para athletics, Para badminton, boccia, goalball, Para powerlifting, Para swimming, Para table tennis, Para taekwondo, and wheelchair basketball.

# Vasishta Simha on turning passion into career

L. NIHARIKA

**V**asishta N. Simha, best known for playing negative characters in south cinema, became a noted name in Tollywood after appearing in *Narappa* and *KGF*. The actor is now back with another flick titled *Nayeem Diaries*. It's not just acting, but also the singing prowess that is taking him to greater heights in the cinema world.

In a recent conversation with the media, the actor opened up about his journey from wanting to be a singer to taking up theatre, to becoming an assistant director and now a known actor in south cinema.

"I was born in Hasanali, but my childhood was always on the move. My mother is a government teacher, so I got to visit many places," he said.

All that Simha wanted in life was to learn music from veteran music director and film composer Hamsalekha and work for him. Acting happened accidentally to him while he was doing his graduation from National College, Basavangudi.

About his acting journey, he said, "While I was doing my studies, a guy from my college challenged us to show real talent in a college fest, it somehow provoked me. So I took up the narration part in a skit we performed. Surprisingly, the play won six awards. That intrigued me to explore theatre and arts. Immediately, I enrolled myself in theatre workshops, where I was recognised for my work. I even explored still photography, track maker, AD. Very soon, I bagged two Kannada projects — *Arya's Love* and *Hubballi Hudagaru*. Later, I made my acting debut. An overwhelming moment in my life was when my father patted my back after he watched my film."

Simha says Hamsalekha plays a Dronacharya role in his life. As someone who used to adore him since childhood, it was a blessing for Simha to work with Hamsalekha. Sharing his fan moment with Hamsalekha, he giggled and said, "I was once waiting

for hours just to get the glimpse of Hamsalekha *garu*. I was cheering for him at an event when he was performing. I got beaten up by the bodyguards for trespassing on the property. But I was fortunate enough to meet him and touch his feet."

He further continued, "I visited my cousin's place for a summer vacation, where I saw Hamsalekha *garu*'s summer camp hoarding. I registered myself immediately. After a month, he called me. I was extremely nervous to meet him as I was worshipping him like a God since I was a kid. It was an awe-struck moment of my life. After our first meeting, *guru garu* said he would teach me music. Without a second thought, I grabbed the golden opportunity to learn music and work from my idol. That's how my singing career started in Bengaluru. I didn't aim so high about my music career, all I wanted was to see my name on an album record or cassette."

Speaking about his latest project, *Nayeem Diaries*, for which the actor underwent prosthetics, he said, "Prior to this film, I played an antagonist in some films, but when I heard the narration of this film, I felt a bit agitated at how spine-chilling the script was. When the story was narrated, I could sense intense emotions involved in his character. Playing my character felt like a feast. I had to put on weight and experience prosthetics for the first time."

The actor who's won an IIFA, SIIMA, and Filmfare award spoke about his philosophy and said, "I believe in an ideology that our little actions pave our path. As an actor, my job is to portray a character. If you do an anti-social film, controversy becomes a hazard. My definition of cinema — it's always been a mirror. A medium

which portrays real stories and spreads awareness, that's how I see it."

On the work front, the actor is excited about his upcoming releases — *Odela Railway Station* and *KGF 2*. He also hinted that he'll be playing a cop role in one of his upcoming projects, which is a murder mystery and environment-based film.



## Thank You will release in theatres only

**T**he makers of Akkineni Naga Chaitanya and Raashi Khanna-starrer *Thank You* released a new poster on Wednesday. Along with the poster, came an interesting announcement.

Directed by Vikram Kumar, the film, a romantic comedy-drama, is in its final stages of production. Social media is abuzz with speculations that the film will have a direct OTT release. Putting an end to these rumours, the film's production house Sri Venkateswara Creations backed by Dil Raju, clarified that *Thank You* will release in theatres only.

"*Thank You* movie is now in the final stages of production. We have made this film with immense dedication, and we believe it is an experience to be witnessed only on the big screen. *Thank You* movie will release in theatres just when the time is right," reads the announcement poster.

However, the release date of the movie is not yet revealed. Apart from Raashi Khanna, *Thank You* will also see Avika Gor and Malavika Nair playing some key roles. BVS Ravi has penned dialogues, while Navin Nooli is the editor of the film. SS Thaman will be composing music for this flick.

## Sohel, Ananya team up for Boot Cut Balaraju

**A**ctor Sohel who rose to fame after appearing in *Bigg Boss season 4*, is back to entertain his fans in a different way. The actor has signed a film in which he will be seen playing the male lead.

Debutante Sree Koneti will be directing the movie, which is tipped to be a wholesome family entertainer. Lucky Media will produce the movie in association with Global Films. Ananya Nagalla who's last seen in Pawan Kalyan's *Vakeel Saab* is the leading lady. The film has been titled *Boot Cut Balaraju*. While Dil Raju sounded the clapboard, Miryala Ravinder Reddy switched on the camera. Anil Ravipudi directed the first shot. Bheems Ceciroleo renders soundtracks and Gokul Bharath cranks the camera. Prawin Pudi is the editor and Vithal Kosanam is the art director. Bekkem Babita is the co-producer and Nagarjun Vadde (Arjun) is the executive producer. Yesteryear actress Indrajya, Vennela Kishore, Brahmaji, Anand Chakrapani, Jhansi, *Jabardast* Rohini, and *Master Ram* Tejas will be seen playing some crucial roles in the film.



## Allu Arjun gifts gold to Pushpa's technicians

**T**o be a popular actor is one thing and then to remain in news for all the good deeds is another!

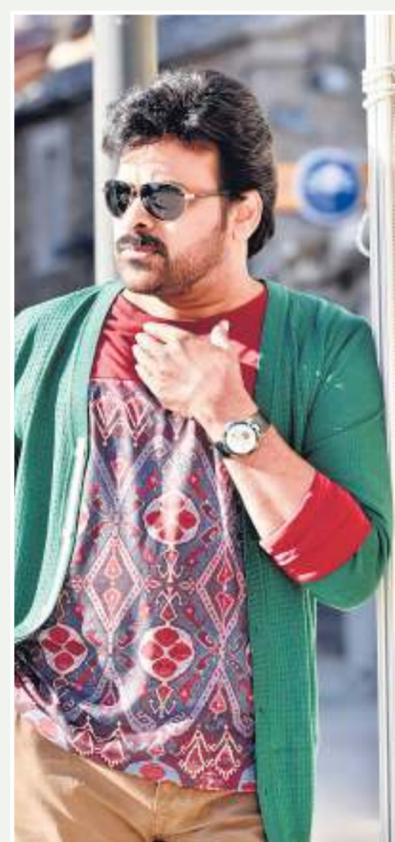
Allu Arjun fondly known as 'Bunny' is all about giving, and giving it all so wholeheartedly. In a recently confirmed news tweeted by Manobala Vijayabalan, a movie trade analyst, it is being said that Allu Arjun has gifted 10 gm of gold to the top technicians of *Pushpa* and honored them with this golden gift for their hard work and efforts for the film! Big news it is!

After keeping fans waiting, the makers of the upcoming Telugu film finally released the trailer on Monday night.

The final cut of the trailer was almost perfect as it is a solid blend of everything that the makers promised the audience since the film went into production. Going ahead and making it to the new for becoming the second most liked trailer yet, it was certain of the big-hearted star to gift his hard-working team with such a considerate gift of all times. Meanwhile, Bunny hasn't disappointed the light boys and other crew members who did their bit for the film to shoot in the remotest locations in the forest region. Allu Arjun has spent around another Rs 12 lakh cash towards these set workers, light men, and set boys.



Producer Dil Raju launched the first lyrical song of *Badmash Gallaki Bumper Offer* on Wednesday. The film has Indrasena, Santosh Raj, Navina Reddy, Marin Philip, and Pragya Nayan playing the main roles. Directed by Ravi Chawli, the film is a suspense comedy-drama. According to the makers of the film, the film will have a twist every 10 minutes.



## Stylish fight planned for Bholaa Shankar

**D**irector Meher Ramesh announced on Wednesday that the unit of *Bholaa Shankar* with actors Chiranjeevi and Tamannaah as the leads had just completed shooting a striking fight sequence.

Sources close to the unit claim that the film's production is moving at a rapid pace, having begun with a pooja at Annapurna Studios in Hyderabad (November 11).

Meher Ramesh, the film's director, confirmed the news via social media. He said that the unit had not just completed a Stylish Fight Sequence but also had shot a grand song on a large set built for the number.

The director stated that they had also started the second schedule. Meher Ramesh stated, "MEGA Glowing star Chiranjeevi is Meher Ramesh's Mega Massive action entertainer Bholaa Shankar. Completed a Stylish Fight Sequence and a Grand Song in a Large set! KICKSTARTED the 2nd schedule already! It is believed to be a remake Tamil blockbuster *Vedalam*, which featured Ajith and Shruti Haasan in the lead roles. Sources say that the script was modified by the makers of *Bholaa Shankar* to appeal to the Telugu audience."