

**ANALYSIS 7**  
CASTE COALITION IN  
UP AT CROSSROADS**MONEY 8**  
BIDDING FOR CBM BLOCKS TO START  
ON FEB 15, END ON MARCH 15: DGH**SPORTS 11**  
ALL EYES ON VIRAT KOHLI THE  
BATTER AS INDIA TAKE ON SA

VIJAYAWADA, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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MEET ALLAM GAARI  
PELLIKUTHURU  
RUKSHAR DHILLON

Page 12

**AAP PICKS BHAGWANT MANN FOR PUNJAB,  
SAYS HE SCORED 93% IN TELEVOTE**

Bhagwant Mann is Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s chief ministerial candidate for Punjab, Arvind Kejriwal said today in a dramatic reveal of the results of the televoting drive in which people were asked to phone in their choice for the top post. Bhagwant Mann, a two-time AAP MP from Sangrur, received more than 93 per cent of the votes cast through phone and WhatsApp, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal told reporters. More than 21 lakh people participated in the vote, AAP said. Around 3 per cent votes were in the name of Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu, Mr Kejriwal shared. Some even chose Mr Kejriwal, the Chief Minister of Delhi, but those votes were considered invalid.

**TWEAKS IN BJP'S UP SEAT STRATEGY  
FOLLOW RASH OF DEFECTIONS**

With just a few weeks to go for the Uttar Pradesh elections, the ruling BJP is busy making changes to its seat distribution strategy - being more generous with its allies as well as incumbent legislators than earlier planned, sources in the party have said. While it has announced 107 candidates for the 403-seat assembly, discussions are still underway for others. UP votes in seven phases starting February 10 with results on March 10. The BJP, which had earlier planned to drop as many as 100-150 MLAs, now finds itself in a spot after a string of defections led by former minister SP Maurya that has seen two more ministers and a clutch of MLAs switch sides to its main challenger Samajwadi Party.

**PIT BULL MAULS BOY IN NOIDA,  
DOG'S OWNERS ARRESTED: POLICE**

A pit bull mauled a child at Sadopur village in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar district on Monday while the owners of the dog looked on. According to the Badalpur Police, during an argument with the boy's family, the owners, identified as Ravinder and Saurabh, allegedly let the dog attack the minor. "A complaint was received from the minor's family member. The complainant was identified as Vaadi Manvir. We have arrested Ravinder and Saurabh, while one person named Jagat is on-the-run," said the police. The police have registered a case under relevant of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

**NDA WOMEN INTAKE SAME AS LAST YEAR.  
SUPREME COURT SEEKS EXPLANATION**

The Supreme Court Tuesday asked the Centre to explain why, despite its orders, the intake of women candidates in NDA for year 2022 has been restricted to 19, the figure same as last year. It asked the Centre to place the figures on record about the total number of candidates who have appeared in the NDA examination 2021, for entrance tests for RIMC and for RMS. A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and M M Sundresh told Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, that the government will have to explain why the figure of 19 women has been fixed for year 2022 as per the notification issued by UPSC.

# YSRCP may face uphill task in Narasapuram if TDP, Jana Sena join hands

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP's rebel MP K Raghu Rama Krishna Raju is yet to submit his resignation and seek re-election however a survey conducted in November and December last year to gauge the mood of the voters in Narasapuram Lok Sabha segment that comes under West Godavari district has shown that it will be a tough task for the ruling YSRCP to win the segment if opposition TDP and Jana Sena join forces.

If the by-poll to Narasapuram Lok Sabha segment is conducted today and Jana Sena- BJP alliance contests individually the actor politician's party holds the key resulting in a keen neck to neck contest between TDP and YSRCP and the margin of

Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena holds the key if bypoll is held today

victory for either of the two parties would be less than 5,000 votes.

While Raghu Rama Krishna Raju has been pushing the deadline to submit his resignation, actor Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena currently is in alliance with BJP in the state. Ever since Raghu Rama Raju stepped up his attack on the state government run by YSRCP which he represents in Parliament and announced that he would resign the possible by-poll had turned into a point of discussion across the state especially in both the Godavari districts.

If the by-poll is necessitated there is no clarity if Raghu Rama



Raju would contest on a BJP ticket in alliance with Jana Sena or jump into the fray as an independent candidate.

The findings of the mood survey conducted by a Hyderabad based survey agency credited with an accuracy of both pre-poll and post-poll surveys since 2018 gained significance at a time when TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu had extended an olive branch to Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena recently which was turned down by the actor-politician.

Interestingly and most glaringly, according to the survey with a per-

centage of error between 1.5pc to 2 pc seen by The Pioneer YSRCP's expected vote share of 36.35 pc is slightly lesser than TDP's vote share of 36.80pc.

Jana Sena's expected vote share is 23.90 pc and BJP 0.68 pc, others 0.65pc. The survey conducted by the Hyderabad-based agency having IIT-educated self-taught psephology enthusiasts had also found that 1.72pc would be the Silent Voting Factor (SVF) in the Narasapuram LS segment.

The mood survey was taken up in two phases last year, the first one between November 25 and December 14, the second phase during December 19 and 26.

**FOUR SCENARIOS**

Assumption:1

■ If TDP is in alliance with Jana Sena, in Narasapuram Segment, the MP seat will go to TDP + Jana Sena with expected majority of 1,20,000 to 1,30,000.

Assumption:3

■ If the three parties TDP, Jana Sena and BJP are in alliance, the MP segment will go in the favor of this alliance with the margin of the majority being around 75,000 to 80,000 votes.

Assumption:2

■ If TDP, YSRCP, JSP, BJP contest individually in Narasapuram MP Segment, it is observed as a keen contest between YSRCP and TDP, and the margin of victory is expected to be around 3000 to 4000 votes only.

Assumption:4

■ If any independent candidate will contest by taking the support of BJP, TDP and Jana Sena the margin of majority will be 60,000 to 65,000 votes

## HRA slashed & CCA removed, govt staff on warpath again

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Government employees are up in arms against the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government as three GOs that revised their pay scales by slashing HRA drastically, discontinuing City Compensatory Allowance (CCA) and also PRC for every 10 years instead of five were issued late on Monday evening.

They are now getting ready to launch a stir to achieve their long-pending demands. The government employees are of the opinion that they were left deceived as there will be a reduction in the pay with the new GOs instead of revision of their salaries for good.

The government employees are stating that other than enhancing the retirement age the new PRC recommendations and the subsequent GOs issued has not done anything good to them.

They are now demanding the total rollback of these GOs. According to these GOs, the Dearness Allowance of 30.392 per cent would be merged with the pay as recommended by the 11th PRC.

**AP PRC CONUNDRUM****ACTION PLAN IN TWO DAYS**

**VIJAYAWADA:** State government employees have decided to start protests in various forms in a day or two against the new rules. Further, the unions and associations will conduct Joint Action Committee meetings on January 20 and announce their future course of action plan demanding cancellation of the

government's decision and fulfilling their demands. Angry over the government's decision, teachers burned GO copies issued on PRC, HRA, and CCA at Dharma Chowk in Vijayawada on Tuesday and demanded that the government cancel the GOs.



## AP logs 6,996 Covid cases

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Active cases shot up to 36,108 as Andhra Pradesh added 6,996 fresh cases of Covid-19 on Tuesday, the highest in a day after a gap of seven months.

The state reported 1,066 recoveries and four deaths in 24 hours ending 9 am on Tuesday, the latest

bulletin said. The state Covid-19 chart now showed a total of 21,17,384 coronavirus positive cases, 20,66,762 recoveries and 14,514 deaths till date. Chittoor district registered 1,534 and Visakhapatnam 1,263 fresh cases.

Nation's progress  
dependent on rural  
development:  
Venkaiah

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PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Carona positive cases are creating panic among the doctors and paramedical staff in Government General Hospital (GGH) Vijayawada as a large number of doctors and others were tested Covid positive on Tuesday, sources say. GGH superintendent Dr Ravi Kiran was tested positive from Covid and was recovering from the deadly infection.

Along with the GGH superintendent about 25 junior doctors and other doctors were also tested Covid positive. A few paramedical staff were also tested positive from the contagious infection. A total of 50 health staff of the GGH were tested positive as on Tuesday.



## CM hails SERP for winning Skoch Award

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, along with the Department Secretary Gopalkrishna Dwivedi and SERP (Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty) CEO Imtiaz Ahmed, met Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at his camp office here on Tuesday. They showed the CM the Golden Award given by Skoch for their exemplary work in the field of rural development.

The award was given to SERP for its outstanding work in implementing YSR Cheyutha, YSR Asara



schemes and uplifting the rural poor and working for poverty alleviation.

The Chief Minister congratulated the minister and officials on winning the award.



## Night curfew from 11 pm to 5 am in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State government on Tuesday imposed a strict night curfew across the state from 11 pm to 5 am starting from January 18 to 31. With the spike in Covid positive cases, the State government has imposed a strict night curfew. Exemptions during the period of night curfew will apply for hospitals, diagnostic labs, pharmacies, print and electronic media, telecommunications, internet services, broadcasting services, IT and IT-enabled services; petrol pumps, power generation, transmission and distribution, water supply and sanitation; government officers/officials including officers of Andhra Pradesh High Court and other courts, urban local bodies and panchayat raj institutions on emergency duty, all medical personnel; pregnant women and patients for the purpose of receiving medical care.



## 23 flights cancelled in 2 days at RGIA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Airlines are cancelling or postponing flights as many of their employees are falling sick with the coronavirus.

At the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport here on Monday, 15 flights were cancelled.

On Tuesday eight flights were cancelled. At the time of publishing, three flights have been cancelled on Wednesday.

**TODAY****ALMANAC**

**Month & Paksham:** Pausa & Sukla Paksha

**Tithi :** Pratipada : Jan 18 05:18 AM

to Jan 19 06:54 AM

**Dwitiya :** Jan 19 06:54 AM to Jan 20 08:05 AM

**Nakshatram :** Ashlesha: Jan 19 06:42 AM

to Jan 20 08:24 AM

**Rahukalam :** 12:26 PM to 1:50 PM

**Yamagandam :** 8:16 AM to 9:40 AM

**Varjyam :** 08:25 PM to 10:07 PM

**Gulika :** 11:03 AM to 12:26 PM

**Amritakalam :** None

**Abhijit Muhurtham :** Nil

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**

**Forecast:** SUNNY

**Temp:** 31°

**Humidity:** 62%

**Sunrise:** 6:42 AM

**Sunset:** 6:01 PM

Updated JANUARY 18, 2021 5:00 PM



## Pawan demands more Covid test centres

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan has demanded that the number of Covid test centres be increased in the wake of rising positive cases.

In a statement here on Tuesday, Pawan Kalyan said that the statistics of Covid patients being recorded in the Telugu states and the country is alarming. The news of health staff, including doctors, health assistants, medical students, o police, employees of local bodies and media persons, are getting affected by Covid is disturbing. Even the people's representatives and politicians are being infected. "It is unfortunate that Telugu Desam chief former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu has fallen ill due to Corona. I wish him speedy recovery so that he can start working for the



people as usual. I appeal to the governments of Telugu States to take Covid prevention measures

with high alert," he said.

By increasing the Covid tests, the people who are affected by the virus could be identified and there will be a chance to give them treatment. For this, the number of testing centres has to be increased. "It will be better if mobile testing centres are established. Similarly, Track and Trace method, which was practised during the Corona first wave period, must be implemented strictly," he added.

Though there is a night curfew and partial restrictions on meetings and celebrations, continuing classes in schools in the present circumstances are not at all suggestive. "I request that the classes must be postponed till the intensity of Covid is reduced. I am appealing to the YSRCP government to take a decision considering the issues such as the incom-

pletion of vaccination for children and their immunity level is low".

When the State is passing through a critical situation, the government issued orders to open liquor shops for another hour and it shows the thoughtless attitude of the state government. During this critical period, it should think of how to distribute essential commodities and announce an action plan to improve the medical services. "Without doing this, how will the government concentrate on liquor sales?" he reasoned.

He said, "I appeal to all the people to follow Covid rules and not to step out of their houses without a mask and keep physical distance. Be more cautious with regard to aged people, people who are unhealthy for longer periods and children."

## Naidu tests positive for Covid-19

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A day after TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh was tested Covid-19 positive, Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu has also tested positive for the virus.

Naidu on Tuesday tweeted that he has tested positive. He has isolated himself at his residence at Undavalli here. "I've tested positive for Covid with mild symptoms. I have quarantined myself at home and taken all the necessary precautions," he wrote.

Naidu requested those who came in contact with him to get themselves tested at the earliest.

On the other hand, Andhra Pradesh Governor Bishwabhusan Harichandan has expressed concern over Leader of Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu, testing positive for Covid-19. Governor



Harichandan wished him speedy recovery of Chandrababu, by taking all precautions as per advice of the doctors.

Meanwhile, another TDP leader and former minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao has also tested positive. He tweeted that he has tested positive with mild symptoms and has quarantined himself at home.



# Will Pawan help Jagan have the last laugh in 2024?

Although Jana Sena Party Chief Pawan Kalyan appears to be sincere in his efforts to give a concrete shape to his new political outfit whose prime goal is to unseat the YSR Congress government, circumstances are pushing him into tricky situations that could water down the efforts towards opposition unity being made by like-minded parties and social groups.

One predominant view is that sincere efforts at opposition unity might yield fruits, given the resentment among various sections of society. Even as families below poverty line (BPL) are enjoying the benefits of welfare schemes, there are many from the same section of society fuming at the government for imposing unbearable financial burden on them. It is inevitable for any government to taste mixed responses from different sections of people and those ele-



PIN POINT

ments do impact the political prospects of the ruling YSR Congress Party.

The state government seems to be prioritising those issues which had resulted in conflicts with various sections of people. It government generally gives priority to welfare schemes that cover large numbers of voters across the state. It believes that those who benefit from welfare schemes would naturally vote for the ruling party.

The state government has already declared that more than rupees one lakh crore of money has been deposited into the bank accounts of lakhs of beneficiaries. It has suggested that the scheme would continue only if the YSR Congress retains power.

As for retaining power, YSRCP is in a 'do or die' situation in Andhra Pradesh as it has already boasted that it

**So, if there is lack of coordination among opposition parties, including TDP, BJP and JSP for the 2024 elections, it would be a poor show on the part of the opposition with possible split of anti-establishment votes.**

would remain in power "for three decades".

The ruling party may be least bothered about disgruntled sections of society who are paying huge amounts as taxes and get nothing in return, even in the name of welfare measures, including 'Nava Ratnaalu', taken up by the ruling party. Will the angry voter spare the government? This is moot question for the five crore population of AP.

Film actor Pawan Kalyan seems to be anxious to launch

a stir against the Jaganmohan Reddy government's policies, perhaps thinking that all-out efforts are needed to unseat the YSRC government. There was a big blow to his plans. An unexpected incident took place with mega star Chiranjeevi, elder brother of Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan, meeting Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy in the name of discussing the hike in ticket prices in cinema theatres across AP.

The general public is of the



M D RATNA KUMAR  
Senior Journalist

opinion that the brothers are working unitedly for the common cause: unseating the ruling party. In any case, the talk of a stir aimed at ruling YSRC has been diluted by the mega star's meeting with the Chief Minister.

Acting swiftly, YSRC has kept the rumour mills active with talk that Rajiya Sabha berth is being offered to Chiranjeevi. This

development has done enormous damage to Pawan Kalyan's professed plans against the government.

Now it appears as the younger brother is struggling to emerge an alternative to the present regime headed by Jaganmohan Reddy, the elder brother has acted against the spirit of efforts aimed at unity by meeting the Chief Minister. There are hardly any takers for Chiranjeevi's categorical statement of not accepting RS seat given by ruling party. Finally, Chiranjeevi had to announce that he would not return to politics.

It may be recalled that Parimal Natvani, aide of Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries, had been given RS seat as per Jagan's understanding with Mukesh.

Kapus in Andhra Pradesh lack a new leader who can command the community's respect with his sheer confidence. At a time when people expected Chiranjeevi to work

hard for helping Pawan emerge as that kind of a leader, the mega star had lunch with Jagan. If elections are held with there being no unifying factor among the opposition in AP, it would lead to a split in anti-government votes to the advantage of the ruling party.

So, if there is lack of coordination among opposition parties, including TDP, BJP and JSP for the 2024 elections, it would be a poor show on the part of the opposition with possible split of anti-establishment votes.

The absence of a united opposition came in handy for the Congress in 2009 Assembly polls in undivided AP, with YS Rajasekhara Reddy retaining power, though course with least margin. The presence of Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) headed by Chiranjeevi contributed much for his political persona in 2009, as it got 70 lakh votes all over the state and got 18 Assembly seats.

TRS chief K.Chandrasekhar Rao also observed that the presence of PRP in the electoral fray of 2009 was the reason for his party's poor show then. The TRS got only 10 seats then.

TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu recently claimed that he would have become chief minister had Chiranjeevi not launched political party in 2009. The Congress party had got only 8 seats more than half way mark (148+8=156) in the total 294-member House. The final tally would have been different if there was a direct fight between the Congress and the united opposition i.e. without any split of anti-government votes, reasoned Chandrababu.

If a united opposition is not ensured for the 2024 polls, and if Pawan Kalyan chooses to contest without having alliance with principal opposition TDP, it may simply be a repeat of what happened in 2009!

## Action plan...

Continued from Page 1

Secretariat Employees' Union president Venkat Rami Reddy said that discussions are on with the State government on various issues for the last two months. He said that the government officials are against helping the employees. He said that though the fitment was less considering other issues we have accepted it initially. He said that the employees are against the HRA and other issues against the government. He said that the employees cannot compromise on each and every issue, said Venkat Rami Reddy. He said that a future course of action will be revealed in a day or two.

## YSRCP may face uphill task...

Continued from Page 1

All the seven Assembly segments that come under Narasapuram LS have been covered under the survey by taking the samples proportionately. The sample voters were divided into different categories.

The survey also shows that SC communities are still supporting the AP government and the YSRCP. But SC voting is slightly decreased as compared to the 2019 elections. It was also observed that polarisation just began in the upper caste communities like Brahmins, Vysyas, Kapus, Kshatriyas, Kammas and also a BC caste Setty Balijas who are called Gowdas against YSRCP compared to 2019 polls.

The public in all the seven assembly segments criticized the electricity bill for households, house taxes, a hike of price on gas, diesel, petrol and essential commodities.

"This is a pre-poll survey conducted to know the mood of the voters only. These expected results areas on December 26, 2021, only. There is no election and the date of the election is not yet announced. The number of factors such as selection of contesting candidates from different parties, poll management, booth level management, perceptions, all will decide the fact of contesting candidates in the Narsapuram parliamentary constituency. If any strong person or well-known person is selected as YSRCP candidate to contest as MP from Narsapuram, even then YSRCP has to face a herculean task," the lead psephologist of the survey agency told *The Pioneer*.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹232
Without Skin	₹252
Broiler at Farm	₹130
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	455
VISAKHAPATNAM	450
HYDERABAD	435
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.55
IN VIJAYAWADA	

## THREE MAOISTS KILLED IN MULUGU DISTRICT

PNS ■ MULUGU

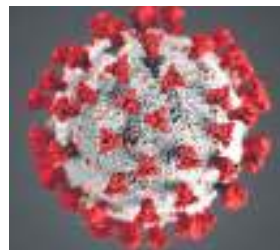
Three Maoists were killed in an encounter with the police at Kariyattala Forest area under Venkatapuram mandal in Mulugu district on Tuesday. It is on Chhattisgarh border.

Mulugu Superintendent of Police Sagramsingh Ganpatrao Patil said, in a press statement, on a reliable information that a large

gather of Communist Party of India-Maoist group (Telangana State committee) had been planning to abduct and kill prominent politicians and contractors, a joint operation by Chhattisgarh State police, CRPF and Telangana State police was launched on Sunday in the bordering areas of Mulugu-Bijapur districts.

He claimed that an exchange

of fire between the Maoists and the police parties took place in Kariyattala Forest area. The police, during the combing operation after the firing stopped, three dead bodies, including that of a woman, were found. One self-loading rifle, INSAS rifle, one single bore weapon, 10 rocket launchers and other kit articles were recovered from the place of encounter.



## 50 Covid cases among...

Continued from Page 1

With a large number of health staff being infected from Covid has created panic among the other doctors, relatives, paramedical staff and the patients undergoing treatment.

On Tuesday 6,996 Covid positive cases were reported across the state from 38,055 samples that have been tested during the past 24 hours. Among the 6,996 positive cases Krishna district reported 326 Covid positive cases and no deaths were reported in the district as per the health bulletin released by the health department.

## AP logs 6,996 Covid cases

Continued from Page 1

Guntur logged 758 and Srikakulam 573, while the remaining nine districts added less than 500 new cases each. West Godavari, which has been reporting less than 100 infections for the past few days, added 245 on Tuesday. Visakhapatnam district reported two fresh Covid-19 deaths, while Chittoor and SPS Nellore had one each in a day.

## Third wave may peak in next three weeks

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to peak much earlier than anticipated and may take a maximum of three more weeks, even though the share of rural districts in new caseloads has increased significantly since December, says a report.

The optimism comes from the massive decline in new caseloads in the top 15 districts which had the maximum infections, SBI Research said in a report on Tuesday. Infections in the top 15 districts have declined to 37.4 per cent in January, from 67.9 per cent in December.

The report, however, admitted that 10 of these top 15 districts are major cities and among them Bengaluru and Pune still have higher infection rates.

The overall share of rural districts in new cases has increased to 32.6 per cent in January, from the lowest of 14.4 per cent in December, the report noted. In



comparison to the US, this is too low, where the new cases have soared by 6.9 times even though it has double-vaccinated over 80 per cent of its eligible population. Another point of optimism stems from the fact that India has fully vaccinated 64 per cent of the eligible population, while 89 per cent of the eligible population have been given the first dose. Currently the 7-day median average of vaccination is 70 lakh.

Rural vaccination share in total vaccination is now at 83 per cent, indicating that the rural populace may be largely

protected in the current wave.

Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, MP, Telangana and Uttarakhand have already vaccinated more than 70 per cent of their eligible population with double doses. However, Punjab, UP and Jharkhand are still lagging.

Significantly, new cases in Mumbai seem to have peaked (20,971 cases on January 7) but cases in other districts (Bengaluru, Pune, etc) are showing an increase in daily new numbers.

So, if other districts also implement strict measures and control the spread, then the national peak may come within two-three weeks from now, Soumyakanti Ghosh, the chief economic advisor at SBI said in the report.

The rural caseload is led by Andhra, Bihar, Himachal, Jammu & Kashmir, Odisha and Rajasthan, and rural vaccination is lower in Arunachal, Gujarat, Haryana and Karnataka.

## Raghu Rama just scraped through in 2019 polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The buzz in the political circles in Andhra Pradesh is that the by-poll to Narasapuram LS segment if held will be more of an acid test to the chief minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and the opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu that the YSRCP rebel MP K Raghu Rama Krishna Raju. The 2019 poll data of Narasapuram Lok Sabha had also thrown up some interesting aspects. In a triangular fight in 2019 Raghu Rama Raju had won the seat with a thin margin over his immediate rival TDP candidate.

Going by his utterances it is apparent that Raju will seek re-election on a BJP nomination for which he has been in touch with the key leaders of the central leadership of the saffron party. In that scenario, Raju's

candidature will also be supported by Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena, which is in alliance with BJP in the state.

It is also expected that TDP may extend its support to Raju either overtly or covertly to prove a point. This means in all probability the three parties BJP, TDP and Jana Sena that had contested individually in 2019 polls will join forces with a sole agenda to defeat Jagan's YSRCP.

Interestingly Pawan Kalyan's elder brother Konidela Naga Babu had contested from the Narasapuram Lok Sabha segment and lost to Raju.

While how Jaganmohan Reddy will strategize to face the united opposition will be known only on the poll counting day, for now, the three opposition parties are hopeful that they will give a tough fight and emerge victoriously.

West Godavari especially Narasapuram is also a strong bastion for Kapus who had voted to Naga Babu in the 2019 polls.

The 2019 poll data of Narasapuram Lok Sabha shows that the vote margin between the TDP candidate Vetukuri Venkata Siva Rama Raju and the then YSRCP candidate Raghu Rama Krishna Raju was thin.

While Raghu Rama Raju secured 4,47,594 votes, the TDP candidate polled 4,15,685 votes with a difference of only 31,909 votes. The TDP candidate gave a tough fight to the YSRCP candidate. Jana Sena candidate Naga Babu polled 2,50,289 votes securing a vote share of 21.31 pc.

The YSRCP candidate secured a vote share of 38.11 pc and the TDP nominee secured 35.39 pc.

## Land resurvey, a major reform: CM

Continued from Page 1

These problems can be solved if the land markings are done scientifically and an identification number is given to all land holders.

After 100 years, the land resurvey was started with a budget of around Rs 1,000 crores, pressing 4,500 Survey teams, 70 CORS base stations and 2,000 rovers into service employing modern technolo-

gy. In the first phase, the resurvey was held in 51 villages covering 29,563 acres in which 3,304 objections were resolved. The Chief Minister dedicated these resurveyed records to the people.

The remaining lands would also be resurveyed by June 2023 in phases and the registration would be carried in the respective village secretariats with a unique identity number. Mandal Mobile

Magistrate teams will clear the objections and once the resurvey is completed the state will take forward the Permanent Land Right Certificate issuing programme.

This will put an end to the middlemen and the data can be viewed online from their respective villages besides speedy disposal of F line 15 days) and sub division applications (30 days). After the

resurvey is complete, registrations will be done at the village secretariat level, he said.

Minister for Panchayatraj and Rural Development Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Minister for Municipal and Urban Development Botsa Satyanarayana, Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh, Chief Secretary Sameer Sharma and other officials were also present.

## AP, TS R-Day tableaux rejected

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Republic Day tableaux of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states have been rejected. This year, only 12 states have received approval.

Permissions have been granted to the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Goa, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Meghalaya and Karnataka. Permissions have also been granted to the Departments of Education, Skill Development, Aviation, Information, Post, Home,

Water Energy and Culture.

TGCC chief Revanth Reddy blamed KCR for Telangana missing out on displaying a tableau at the Republic Day parade. He took to twitter and termed it as an 'achievement of KCR'. TRS leaders came down heavily on Revanth and asked if "Congress had made a BJP stooge the PCC president?"

TRS leader Krishank Manne in a tweet said, "When States are questioning the Centre for rejecting Republic Day tableaux, your Telangana PCC chief instead of questioning the BJP blames State Governments. Who is the Congress fighting?"

## 23 flights cancelled...

Continued from Page 1

Nearly 10 flights were delayed at RGIA on Monday and 22 flights were delayed on Tuesday. Cancellations have been much higher in New Delhi where 183 flights have been cancelled from Monday to Wednesday. In Mumbai 141 flights have been cancelled from Monday to Wednesday. Sources said that air-

lines are doing their best to accommodate passengers in spite of widespread problems. Many flights were cancelled in advance so that passengers can be alerted early. Sources said that all scheduled domestic flight operations will continue at the Hyderabad Airport and that passengers are requested to get in touch with the airline concerned for updated flight information.

## Night curfew...

Continued from Page 1

Exemptions are also given to persons coming from/going to airports, railway stations, bus stands on the production of a valid ticket. All inter-state and intra-state movement of goods will be permitted. Those not wearing masks would be fined and COVID restrictions are enforced in all shops, malls, and business establishments across the state. Shops and other commercial establishments allowing people inside without a mask will attract a penalty of Rs 10,000 to Rs 25,000.

Not more than 200 people should congregate in public places and only 100 people should be allowed indoors. Theatres should function at 50 percent capacity leaving one seat between each other and masks should be worn all the time in the cinema halls. COVID protocol should be followed in all religious places where physical distancing should be observed and compulsory wearing of masks. Wearing masks is mandatory in public transportation as well.

## HRA slashed & CCA removed, govt staff on warpath again

Continued from Page 1

The revised master scale will have 32 grades and Interim Relief (IR) shall not be included as pay for the purpose of fixation of the revised scale.

HRA has been fixed at 24 per cent of the basic pay for the employees in cities having a population of more than 50 lakh. It has been fixed as 16 per cent for those living in cities having 5 lakh to 50 lakh population and 8 per cent for those in places having population up to 5 lakh.

As per the revised HRA slabs those working at AP Bhavan and Andhra Pradesh government offices in New Delhi and Hyderabad will receive 24

per cent HRA while those working in Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation, Guntur, Nellore, Vijayawada and secretariat departments at Velagapudi will receive 16 percent of basic pay as HRA. Employees working in other places will be 8 per cent.

The HRA will be increased to 27 per cent, 17.5 per cent and 9 per cent respectively, when dearness allowance exceeds 50 per cent of the basic pay.

AP NGO, AP JAC Amaravati and other union leaders expressed dissatisfaction over the state governments GOs related to PRC. The union leaders alleged that without consulting

them the government has issued GOs and strongly opposes them. They said the government assured that an amicable decision will be taken after the Sankranti festival and the government deceived the employees, they said. Speaking to the media persons here on Tuesday, Srinivas Rao said that for the first time in the history of the state the Fitment was given less than IR. He alleged that most of the decisions taken by the state government are against the employees.

He slammed the State government for reducing the HRA and including Central government regulations. He pointed out that employees working in the capital region were told that

they would be paid HRA and were not paid.

Srinivas Rao said that we strongly oppose to the new GOs pertaining to the PRC and reject them. We will not accept the new PRC under any circumstances. He said that we oppose the PRC that will be given once in ten years and said that when the states' financial situation was good we did not receive PRC on time. He alleged that the pensioners lost their rights under the current government and said that the chief minister should intervene in the matter and do justice.

Bopparaju Venkateswarulu said that the State government has no

concern towards government employees and teachers across the State. The PRC was announced without DAs and we oppose the GOs issued on the new PRC announced by the government. He said that discussions were held on various occasions with the government on various issues. However, the government has issued GOs that are against the employees.

Teachers' Union president, Joseph Sudhir Babu termed it a black day for the State government employees and said that 20 main issues that were proposed were set aside by the government. He alleged that reverse fitment was given in the form of

reverse tendering. He said that we do not accept the PRC that would be a loss to the employees and appealed to continue at least the old interim allowance. The government we believe in has deceived us, said Sudhir Babu.

State Public Health department employees president Askara Rao said that the GOs issued by the government exposes the negativity and stubborn attitude towards employees. He said that the employees have been bearing the work pressure in the department, harassment of officers, displeasure of superiors and cursing and many lives were also lost during Corona, he added.

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# Nation's progress hinges on rural development: Venkaiah



Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu distributed bicycles to students at Swarna Bharati Trust office, near Vijayawada, on Tuesday. Venkaiah Naidu addressing a meeting at Swarna Bharati Trust office, near Vijayawada

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu has said that real national development will be possible only with the comprehensive development of rural areas. He appealed to the youth to come forward and provide services in the rural areas. The Vice-President was speaking at the Swarna Bharati Trust on Tuesday as part of a three-day visit. Naidu suggested that educational institutions, governments, corporate institutions and businesses should launch special initiatives to improve the skills of the youth so that they can have a better future. He lauded the Central government for setting up a special department for skill develop-

ment and said that imparting skills training to the youth would help them grab more opportunities.

The Vice-President said that he enjoyed participating in the activities of the Trust and that service was the best tool for a happy life.

He said that the essence of spirituality was to serve those in need, provide medical assistance to the sick, provide education to the uneducated and to help those in distress in the form of community service. "The places where such services are provided are the real temples and there is no limit to the satisfaction that can be obtained through service," he added. Naidu also emphasised the importance of mother-tongue and said that

## V-P underscores skill development among youth

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday stressed the importance of skill development in unlocking the demographic dividend and the 'inherent talent' of the nation's youth. Referring to the government's efforts to promote skill development through the creation of a dedicated Skill Development Ministry, the Vice President called for more individual and private institutional initiatives to complement the government's efforts. He stressed that fast-tracking rural development is integral to the growth of the nation. In this regard, he called upon industry leaders and enterprising

youth to take up rural service as a mission, with a particular focus on women empowerment. The Vice President, who is on a tour of Andhra Pradesh, interacted with the trainees of various skill development programmes at Swarna Bharati Trust, Vijayawada. Complimenting the participants for their hard work and dedication, Venkaiah Naidu said he was always enthused to see the energy and quest for innovation among them. He encouraged them to strive for excellence in their field and to always keep themselves updated with the latest technologies.

it was a matter of pride to be a Telugu person and that it was everyone's responsibility to preserve their language and thus culture for future generations. He said the role of youth was crucial in the

future of India and that only healthy youth could build a new India. He advised the youth to maintain physical health through a disciplined lifestyle and achieve mental balance with spiritual feelings

and by healthy eating habits.

The Vice-President distributed sewing machines to women, cycles to students, and pushcarts to vendors, sponsored by Chetana Foundation and Ramineni Foundation, on the occasion.

## Pokarna donates Rs 1cr for 'Nadu-Nedu'

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Pokarna Group Limited has contributed Rs 1 crore towards basic amenities in schools under the State government's 'Nadu-Nedu' programme. The cheque was handed over to Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy by the Company's CMD Goutham Chand Jain as CSR under Connect to Andhra initiative. Connect to Andhra CEO V Koteswaramma was also present on the occasion.



## Ashok Babu raps employees' leaders for 'raw' deal in PRC

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MLC Paruchuri Ashok Babu on Tuesday advised the leaders of employees' JAC and associations to resign following their miserable failure to ensure a better deal in the PRC. These leaders should have rejected the 23 percent fitment and continued their agitation. But they accepted the negative PRC and withdrew the strike and eventually lost the trust of the employees. Addressing a press conference here, the TDP MLC said the YSRCP Government was running a feudal and capitalist administration which was why a negative and reverse PRC was given. They also threatened that all their 60 lakh family members in the employees' fraternity would cause the downfall of the YSRCP regime.

**The employees also threatened that all their 60 lakh family members in the employees' fraternity would cause the downfall of the YSRCP regime.**

Ashok Babu pointed out that the government did not show any loyalty or fear when the employees' leaders issued threats. How could the employees' leaders accept an increase in retirement age? These leaders were due to retire in one or two months. For their selfish benefits, they had mortgaged the interests of over 14 lakh employees who depended on their leadership. The TDP MLC slammed the

government for reducing the HRA slabs from four to three. Even one of these three slabs was applicable to a handful of employees in AP Bhavan in Delhi only. All others would get just 8 or 16 percent HRA. This was the most atrocious HRA given by any Government in history in the country.

Ashok Babu advised the employees' leaders to resign as they were unable to fight against the injustice meted out by the government. "If a goat leads a 100 lions in a battle, they would surely meet with defeat. If a lion leads 100 goats, they would certainly get victory," he said. The TDP MLC said during the Chandrababu regime, problems arose but the government was convinced to give 43 percent fitment despite financial issues.



## Call to help people with hearing impairment

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

The Deen Dayal Sravana Foundation, with the cooperation of the State Bank of India, has distributed 150 modern hearing aids to needy people. The foundation stated that they aimed to help people with hearing impairment in all districts of AP State. Deen Dayal Sravana Foundation chairman Regula Veeranjanyulu, along with SBI, conducted the pro-

gramme at Siddhartha Auditorium in Vijayawada on Tuesday. National Medical Commission member Santosh Kumar Kraleti stressed the need to help people with hearing impairment and asked people to come forward for the purpose. He praised the services of the Deen Dayal Sravana Foundation towards providing a new lease of life to such persons. He said that he also offered full cooperation to the foundation.

## Officials misleading CM: Employees' unions

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh Dr. Sameer Sharma is acting irresponsibly towards the employees, alleged Andhra Pradesh State Government Employees' Union president K Suryanarayana here on Tuesday.

Speaking to the media persons, he said that the officials are misleading the Chief Minister on the PRC. He opined that the officials who should act as a bridge between the state government employees and the state government are acting irresponsibly.

He said that they have given in writing to the government that 23 per cent fitment was not acceptable and made it clear that fitment and HRA issues should be reconsidered by the government. He said



that whatever be the financial position of the state government and whatever the officials say the GOs issued by the government on PRC should be reviewed again.

He said that they could not understand the point of recovering IR. He said that no CM had taken such a decision even with a political motive. He also found fault with the State government saying that

the Central Pay Commission report would be implemented and questioned whether the State government would lose its hold on the state government employees. He said that they strongly opposed the GOs on PRC. Suryanarayana demanded that a committee be formed under the aegis of the Chief Minister and said that they would bear it if there is a delay of two more months. He appealed to the State government to continue the IR which is in force and do justice to the employees.

He said that with the GOs on new PRC by the government there would be a cut of 4 per cent to 12 per cent in the salary of the employees. All the employees' unions should take a united stand to fight for their rights against the government, said Suryanarayana.

## Teachers' JAC torches GO copies on PRC

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Opposing the PRC announcement made by the State government, various teachers' unions staged a protest at Dharna chowk on Tuesday and angrily torched the order copies of the government. The teachers' unions have alleged the State government had cheated the employees on PRC and announced the benefits. Under the banner of Vijayawada Teachers JAC, the teachers of the VMC schools staged a protest. Leaders of STU, APTF, YSRTE, UTA, PETA, RUTA, etc participated in the protest. They strongly condemned the announcement of lesser fitment than the IR and alleged the government has adopted unscientific methods for the calculation of employees' benefits.

**Leaders of STU, APTF, YSRTE, UTA, PETA, RUTA, etc participated in the protest.**

The teachers JAC has decided to continue the fight opposing the anti-employees' policies of the State government. The JAC leaders termed the PRC as the reverse PRC and vowed to put pressure on the government to fulfill the promises it had made to the employees. They alleged the government meted out injustice to the employees on HRA, CCA and other benefits.

## 5 held in 2 road accident cases

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Five persons who were involved in two fatal road accidents in Cyberabad limits were arrested by the police. In the first case, three persons Shashank Shekar, Manabendra Roy and Indukuri Srikanth were arrested by the Gachibowli police. In the early hours of December 31, Shekar, who was driving a car allegedly under the influence of alcohol, hit a cyclist Nithin Agarwal (45), who died the next day. Roy and Srikanth were sitting in the car and allowed Shekar to drive the car knowing well that he was intoxicated. In the other case, the KPHB police arrested two persons Odde Ravinder, driver of a tipper lorry and Kunchapu Venkatesh, the vehicle owner.

## 20 cops infected with Covid-19 at Narsingi PS

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

About 20 police personnel at the Narsingi police station in Cyberabad police commissionerate limits tested positive for Covid-19. Some of them were down with fever and had exhibited symptoms. As they continued to have symptoms, they got tested and with the results showing them to be positive, they were shifted to home isolation. Their family members were advised home quarantine and get them tested for the virus as well. After the positive cases, the Madhapur zone police officials have got all the primary contacts tested and directed other staff members, who were primary contacts to the infected persons, to get tested.

## City clubs fail to adhere to fire safety norms

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

After the massive fire at the Secunderabad Club, fire safety officers are inspecting clubs across the city to ascertain whether they comply with fire safety regulations. Fire safety officials identified 15 major clubs in the city which were inspected on Monday and Tuesday. These are the Country Club, Jubilee Club, Gymkhana Club and FNCC Club.

Officers found that most of them did not comply with fire safety regulations and notices were issued to them. Some clubs had fire safety equipment that did not work while some had only gas sprayers. Fire officers say



that even though there was fire safety equipment at the FNCC club which was inspected on Tuesday, they were not working.

Some clubs do not renew the NoC regarding fire safety. The fire NoC has to be renewed every five years.

## Panjagutta graveyard steel bridge to open tomorrow

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

A new steel bridge which will provide direct entry into the Panjagutta graveyard here will be inaugurated by Animal Husbandry Minister T. Srinivas Yadav on Thursday.

The GHMC had taken up construction of the 140-metre steel bridge to provide an access road to the Panjagutta graveyard opposite Chutneys Hotel. The GHMC is also constructing an exit road from the graveyard via Banjara Hills.

This bridge constructed at a cost of Rs 9 crore will ease traffic movement from NFCL Junction to KBR Park Junction



and will prevent congestion at the existing gate of the graveyard.

As traffic on this route is very dense the GHMC constructed the dedicated access

road to the graveyard by providing a steel bridge on the exit road from Road No: 1, Banjara Hills. It also widened the road from the main gate of the graveyard to HT Tower.

## Cyberabad cops seize 214 kg ganja, arrest 5 culprits

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

In a special drive, the Shamshabad police team, along with Kothur police, in the Cyberabad commissionerate limits, arrested five inter-state drug peddlers and seized 214 kg of ganja from them on Monday.

According to police, ganja was purchased at Sileru in AP and was being smuggled to Maharashtra through Hyderabad. Totally, 10 persons, including 4 seekers from Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, were involved in the network. It was reported that four persons from Ahmednagar, to avoid police surveillance, were waiting in two cars at Thimmapur Cross

Roads on NH-44 (on the outskirts of Hyderabad). The material was brought to that place by two other persons. It was reported that the ganja was purchased at Rs 3,000 per kg and it was sold at Rs 20,000 per kg.

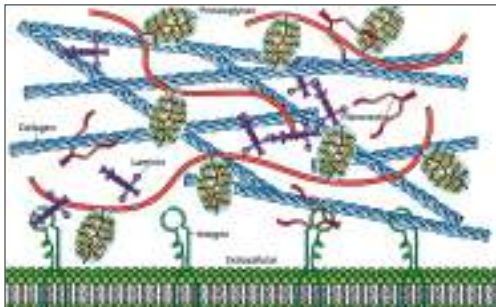
Police arrested the Ahmednagar residents - Babasow Chandekar, Phukmali Tirumali Balu, Ganesh Nolari and Rajendra. Along with them, a Suryapet resident Maloth Vinod, who was one of the transporters from Bhadrachalam to Hyderabad outskirts was also arrested. Supplier in the deal Ravi from Warangal, other drivers Balaraj, Nagaraju and Ganesh are yet to be arrested.

## New light on defences against precancerous cells

**M L MELLY MAITREYI ■ HYDERABAD**

The stiffer the network of proteins and other molecules that surround, support, and give structure to cells and tissues in the body (called ECM or extracellular matrix), the greater the susceptibility of a person to cancer, going by a TIFR study.

Researchers at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Hyderabad claim to have established a link between the elasticity of extra-cellular matrix and their defence



against mutant genes that could cause cancer. The extracellular matrix (ECM) helps cells attach to, and communicate with, nearby cells, and plays an important

role in cell growth, cell movement, and other cell functions. The ECM is subject to what is technically called 'oncogenic insults'. Oncogene refers to a gene that is a mutat-

ed (changed) form of a gene involved in normal cell growth. Oncogenes may cause the growth of cancer cells. Mutations in genes that become oncogenes can be inherited or caused by being exposed to substances in the environment that cause cancer. In their study, the researchers showed how the elasticity of extracellular matrix (ECM) of epithelial tissue affects their fundamental defence against such oncogenic insults. ECM forms the gel containing proteins

and minerals in which our tissues are embedded. Diseases like obesity, fibrosis etc. are known to cause pathological stiffening of this matrix. Patients with such conditions show heightened susceptibility to cancer, though little is known as to what could be the cause, according to the researchers.

Shilpa P. Pothapragada (Ph.D. student at Tamal Das' lab in TIFR Hyderabad) and colleagues deciphered how ECM elasticity plays a decisive role in determining the outcome of

this defence, also known as Epithelial Defence against Cancer (EDAC). They used Ras oncogenic mutation to create precancerous cells which when in contact with their normal counterparts, are forced to move out of the tissue only when the ECM is soft. When they used an ECM which is stiff instead, non-cancerous epithelial cells could now no longer remove these precancerous cells. As a result of this, the precancerous cells can freely expand and grow without restriction.

## NTR fought fearlessly against suppression: Nara Lokesh

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Tuesday made glowing tributes to TDP founder NT Rama Rao on the occasion of the latter's 26th death anniversary.

Lokesh asserted that honesty, selflessness and fearlessness were the weapons used by NTR in his struggle for self-respect and self-rule. Following in his footsteps, the same weapons should be used now to re-establish a truly egalitarian welfare state.



In a statement here, the TDP MLC stressed the need for reclaiming an equal and free society that would be

devoid of robbers, looters and arrogant rulers. NTR took many bold decisions and successfully overcame the most critical challenges during his time. Nara Lokesh pointed out that the credit for bringing in historic reforms in AP would go to the NTR regime. This was one of the many reasons why he was always called 'Teluguvari muddu bidda' (foster son of Telugus). NTR stood like a pillar of inspiration as he turned every challenge into a victory with his hard work and determination.



# CI episode exposes growing rivalry between MP and MLAs

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The rivalry and dissensions among the YSRCP MP and MLAs have come to the fore again in the issue of suspension of a Circle Inspector and revoking the same within a couple of days in Guntur district.

The suspension of a Circle Inspector for registering a case against a farmer Narendra further aggravated the rivalry between MP Lavu Sri Krishnadevarayalu and MLAs Vidudala Rajani and Bolla Brahma Naidu groups.

When the farmer complained to the MP that paddy produce was not being purchased at the RBKs, Vinukonda MLA Bolla Brahma Naidu reportedly tried to slap him with footwear. The CI registered a case against the farmer. However, in the police enquiry, it is probed that the CI wrongly registered a case against



the farmer and the CI was suspended.

YSRCP sources said that MLA Brahma Naidu suspected the MP's hand behind the suspension of the Circle Inspector. Irate over this, the MLA met Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and explained to him the situation. He informed the Chief Minister that the suspension of the Circle Inspector for registering false cases would send a



wrong message that MLA behaved excessively against the farmer. With the Chief Minister's intervention, the suspension of CI was revoked. The simmering rivalry between the MP and MLAs reached its peak in the CI's suspension and revocation, a YSRCP leader said on the condition of anonymity. YSRCP sources said that MLA Brahma Naidu told his followers that MP



Krishnadevarayalu is interfering in all issues and extending patronage to his rivals. The simmering rivalry between the MP and some MLAs is widening causing embarrassment to the huge cadre. The differences between Chilakaluripet MLA Vidudala Rajani were already exposed and the MP was not invited to some official programmes. The MP and MLA organise officials and party pro-

grammes separately.

MLA Rajani has differences with former MLA Marri Rajasekhara and the MP is extending support to Rajasekhara which angered MLA Rajani. YSRCP sources said that tussles between MP Sri Krishnadevarayalu and the MLA were taken to the notice of high command which made a vain bid to pacify both the groups.

Like adding salt on the wound, the MP is backing former MLA Makkana Mallikharjun Rao who has a rivalry with MLA Bolla Brahma Naidu. The MP is also extending patronage to MLC Janga Krishna Murthy who revolted against Gurajala MLA Kasu Mahesh Reddy. The YSRCP cadres appealed to the high command to interfere and do away with the group politics in the district.

## Blood donations, poor-feeding mark NTR death anniversary



A blood donation camp being organised by TDP leaders to mark the death anniversary of party founder and former CM NT Rama Rao at Vemuru on Tuesday



TDP Eluru Parliamentary constituency president Ganni Veeranjanyulu and Assembly constituency convener Badeti Radhakrishnaiah paid rich tributes to former CM NT Rama Rao in Eluru on Tuesday

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Blood donations and poor-feeding programmes were organised on the occasion of the 26th death anniversary of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) founder and former chief minister N T Rama Rao held in programmes organised across the district on Tuesday.

TDP senior leaders, including former ministers Nakka Ananda

Babu, Alapati Rajendra Prasad, former MLA Tenali Sravan Kumar, official spokesperson Pili Manikyala Rao and a host of other leaders paid rich tributes to N T Rama Rao at a programme organised in the district TDP office today. The statue of N T Rama Rao was garlanded by the leaders on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, Nakka Ananda Babu recalled that N T Rama Rao had brought

recognition to Telugu people. NTR launched welfare schemes in those days and the schemes are being implemented even now, he claimed.

Taking a dig at the Jagan Mohan Reddy headed regime, Ananda Babu alleged that all sections of people were deceived by Jagan Mohan Reddy. The anarchic and undemocratic regime ruling the state, he flayed.



## Declaration of cow as national animal demanded

PNS ■ ONGOLE

A rally was taken out with cows to Collector's office demanding that the government declare the cow as national animal. The cow-lovers, led by Goshala trust representative Palloboina Madhu Yadav, took out a rally from Keshava Swamypet Siva temple to Collector's office on

Tuesday. The cow lovers submitted a representation to the Central government, which they handed over to Joint Collector T S Chetan, demanding to declare cow as the national animal.

Talking to the media, Madhu Yadav said that the cow is venerated by all Hindus and the slaughter of cows should be banned and implemented the

same strictly. He vowed to prevent the illegal transport of cows. He demanded to punish the cow meat sellers firmly. Viswa Hindu Parishad district secretary I Sitaramaiah, Prachara Pramukh Radha Ramana Gupta, BJP district vice president P V Krishna Reddy, representatives of RSS and ISKCON participated in the programme.

## 2 inter-district burglars arrested, gold jewellery recovered

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The police arrested two notorious inter-district offenders and recovered gold jewellery, silver ornaments and electronic gadgets worth Rs 13 lakh from them.

Superintendent of police Malika Garg told the media on Tuesday that Shaik Mogul Rahool and Kagita Sreenadh were involved in several offenses including the lifting of two motorcycles and burglars in Ongole and at other places. Rahool involved house-breaking cases at Nallapadu, 2 house-breaking cases in Bhattiprolu PS limits, one house-breaking case in Tenali Rural PS limits and 8 house-breaking cases in Repalle PS limits. The second accused Kagita Sreenadh was involved in one property offense case and one Ganja case at Tenali I Town and Pattabhipuram PS respectively in Guntur District. The police recovered 160 grams of Gold articles, 3,250 KGs of Silver articles, LED TV, two Motorcycles, and one



**The police recovered 160 grams of Gold articles, 3,250 KGs of Silver articles, LED TV, two Motorcycles, and one Redmi mobile phone worth Rs 13 lakh.**

Redmi mobile phone worth Rs 13 lakh. One of the arrested accused Shaik Sahool (convicted 7 years imprisonment in property offences) who is the brother of Shaik Rahool met the accused A-2 Kagita Sreenadh at Guntur jail and through him Shaik Rahool was came into contact to A-2 and gave shelter to Shaik Rahool at Repalle by A-2 K.Sreenadh. Shaik Rahool was involved in 30 cases in Prakasam District, 2 cases in Nellore and in Guntur Districts earlier.

The suspect sheet No.357 was opened against Shaik Rahool in Ongole Taluka PS.

## DIG appeals to people to follow Covid curbs

PNS ■ ELURU

DIG K V Mohan Rao appealed to the people to strictly follow the Covid curfew restrictions during the night and cooperate with the officials to check the spread of the pandemic. He told the media on Tuesday that in order to prevent the spread of the Omicron variant of Coronavirus night curfew would be enforced from tonight from 11 pm to 5 am till January 31. He asked the people to cooperate with the officials to check the Covid. He said that hospitals, diagnostic centres, laboratories, pharmacy centres, print and electronic media, telecommunications, home, Telecommunications, Internet services, Broadcasting and cable services, IT and IT-enabled services, Petrol pumps, LPG, CNG, Petroleum and gas outlets, Power generation, transmission and distribution, Water supply and sanitation, Cold storage and warehouse services, Private security services, Employees in central and state services, employees working in urban and local bodies could move in the curfew hours by showing their identity cards.



SP said that those working under emergency services would be exempted from night curfew. Hospitals, diagnostic labs, pharmacies Print and electronic media, telecommunications, home, Telecommunications, Internet services, Broadcasting and cable services, IT and IT-enabled services, Petrol pumps, LPG, CNG, Petroleum and gas outlets, Power generation, transmission and distribution, Water supply and sanitation, Cold storage and warehouse services, Private security services, Employees in central and state services, employees working in urban and local bodies could move in the curfew hours by showing their identity cards.

## 2 killed as bus hits bike

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Two persons were killed when their motorcycle was hit by a private bus on National Highway no 216 near Ananthavaram of Mummidivaram mandal in the Konaseema region on Tuesday. Police said that the deceased was identified as Dorababu (28) of T Kothapalli and Abbadasula Durgababu (32) of Mummidivaram.

## Municipal Executive Engineer trapped

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Anti-Corruption Bureau officials claimed to have trapped Municipal Corporation Executive Engineer P Raman, while accepting Rs 17,000 bribe from a contractor at his chamber in the office on Tuesday. According to ACB police, Raman demanded the bribe from a contractor, named Madhu, to clear his bills. The ACB police laid a trap and caught the Executive Engineer red-handed.

## Harish Rao lays stone for 30-bed Community Health Centre

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Health Minister T Harish Rao has said that Chief Minister K Chandrababai Naidu will lay the foundation stone for the 900-bed hospital in Mahabubnagar soon. A trauma centre will be provided to the community health centre at Balanagar will strive to enhance the status of Nawabpet PHC.

He was addressing a gathering after laying the foundation stone for the Rs 4.75 crore and 30-bed community health centre at Balanagar in Jadcharla constituency of Mahabubnagar district on Tuesday.

In the new state of Telangana, the Government set up over 40 dialysis centres and provided government hospitals at Taluk level with ICU beds. All three medical colleges have been sanctioned to the undivided Medak district. The CM will soon lay the foundation stone for the 900-bed hospital in Mahabubnagar.

He asked people to wear masks without fail and receive two doses of vaccines against Covid. He suggested teenagers in the age group of 15 to 17 to undergo vaccination. People who have already received two doses of the vaccine should be prepared to receive the booster dose. In all, over two-crore Corona testing kits have been kept ready in the state and there are one-crore Covid isolation kits available in the state. Also, there are stocks of 2.50 lakh Remedisivir injections, ICU beds, and ventilators. Elected people's representatives should take precautions and at the same time sensitise people on the precautions. He asked the people to remain careful as the new variant cases are likely to increase in the next 15 days. Special Covid-19 wards have been set up in all hospitals to treat expectant mothers. Pending irrigation projects - including the Palamuru-Rangareddy LI Scheme - have been taken by the government under the leadership of the CM. The works are being executed on a war-footing, he said. Efforts are underway to take the state to the top position in medical and health realms, he said pointing out that the state government earmarked Rs 7289 Crore to introduce English medium education in government schools from the Anganwadi level under the Manavooru-Manabad programme. Corporate level school education would be provided in government schools offering all amenities to students.

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## Nutri gardens to be set up at every Anganwadi centre

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

District Additional Collector Muzammil Khan on Tuesday said the district administration will set up nutri gardens on the premises of every Anganwadis

with permanent buildings. During his visit to Anganwadi centre at Subhashnagar-Prasanti Nagar here, the Additional Collector planted saplings for growing nutri garden. He interacted with the children. He said

the administration would complete the nutri garden programme

in two months. A meeting to review the functioning of each The anganwadicentre would be held on every Friday, he

said. Muzammil Khan further stressed the need for child growth monitoring. He also felt that there was a need to create awareness on the health of children and ensure that the children do not suffer malnutrition.

## SP appreciates secretariat women police for preventing suicide by woman

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police Malika Garg has appreciated two women secretariat police for saving the life of a septuagenarian woman from committing suicide and presented them appreciation letters.

The SP congratulated them for their timely efforts and saving the life of a 75-year-old woman who attempted suicide at the NSP canal at Kurichedu village. The SP gave them away appreciation letters. The septuagenarian woman Binde Galemma belongs to Vinukonda, went to her daughter's house at Ganivipadu village in Konakanamitla mandal. Due to family disputes, on January 17, she left her daughter's home and reached the NSP



canal with an aim of ending her life. Noticing her attempt, secretariat Mahila police Sk. Mastan Bee approached her and saved her. However, the elderly woman gave wrong

details about her family members. Mastan Bee sent the details of an elderly woman through WhatsApp groups. However, Vagumadugu secretariat police personnel B

Yashoda gathered the details of the elderly woman and informed the police. The police handed over Galemma to her son Sreenu. The police also counselled him.

## Farmer Narendra sees threat to life from MLA Bolla

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Gadipudi Narendra, who was arrested and sent to jail when he complained to MP Lavu Sri Krishnadevarayalu that RBK was not being purchased paddy produce and following an attempt by MLA Bolla Brahma Naidu to slap him with footwear, made a sensational statement that he fears life threat from MLA Brahma Naidu.

The farmer Gadipudi Narendra was released from the Vinukonda sub-jail on



Tuesday. Talking to the media at the sub-jail, he said that he

fears life threat from ruling party MLA Bolla Brahma

Naidu and urged Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy to provide him protection. He said that he carried the flag of the Congress party as long as Y S Rajasekhara Reddy was alive and now he is carrying the YSRCP flag. But MLA Bolla Brahma Naidu tried to attack him with footwear and scolded him using filthy language. "Moreover, a false case was registered against me and sent me jail. How far it is justice to act in a vindictive manner with me. As a YSRCP

activist I demand the party to take action against MLA Bolla Brahma Naidu", Narendra said.

In the presence of MP Lavu Sri Krishnadevarayalu the MLA tried to attack him with a slipper, he alleged. Narendra dared the MLA to come to Ramalineswara Swamy temple to swear on the god to say that he did not try to hit him with footwear. Having the name Brahma Naidu, the MLA is insulting and degrading the name of Palnati Brahma Naidu, he ridiculed.

## TRS govt diverting central funds meant for Dalits, says BJP

SNCR ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

"The TRS government is diverting the funds allotted by the Centre for the welfare of Dalits. We will expose this and tell the people how the TRS government is cheating them," said BJP Mission-19 (SC Coordination Committee) Chairman AP Jitendar Reddy.

The BJP is formulating plans to exploit the anti-establishment sentiment prevailing in these areas in order to ensure victory in all the 19 SC reserved Assembly constituencies in Telangana.

There is also an impression that the party which wins a majority of the SC reserved Assembly seats will form the government. The TRS government failed in implementing



the Dalit Bandhu scheme and KCR has forgotten his promise to make a Dalit the Chief Minister, said Jitendar Reddy.

Speaking to 'The Pioneer' Jitendar Reddy said that their Mission-19 action plan will start soon. He said that the action plan may start from

Vikarabad, Chevella and Secunderabad Cantonment.

Jitendar said the Centre is implementing several welfare schemes for Dalits. He said that the schemes are divided into two categories. One is core schemes and the other is core of core schemes.



INDIA CORNER

## BJP protests in Thane Palghar against Patole's 'beat up, badmouth Modi' video

The BJP on Tuesday held protests in Thane and Palghar districts against Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole in connection with a video in which he is purportedly heard saying he will beat up and badmouth 'Modi'. The video was widely circulated on Monday after a television channel aired it and Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis tweeted about it, though Patole had clarified that the Modi referred to in his conversation with villagers of Bhandara district was not the prime minister but a local goon. Protests were held in Thane, Kalyan, Nalasopara, Dahanu and other places in the two districts. Among those who took part were local BYJM unit vice president Manoj Barot, KDMC unit president Srikant Kamble, Palghar unit chief Nandakumar Patil and Thane BYJM president Sarang Medhekar. BJP group leader in the Thane Municipal Corporation Manohar Dhumbre submitted a complaint at Kapurbawdi police station against Patole.



## PM interacts with BJP workers in Varanasi through NaMo app

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held an audio interaction with BJP workers of his Varanasi parliamentary constituency and reaffirmed the BJP's commitment towards development. Restoration of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, women empowerment, infrastructure and healthcare development were among the topics that came up for discussion during the interaction. Interacting with one of the 'karyakartas' (party workers), Prime Minister Modi asked him to expand the reach of the government's welfare schemes to farmers and said they should make farmers aware of the use of chemical-free fertilisers. Modi also talked about several central schemes which are benefitting the people of Varanasi at large. He urged people to contribute to a section -- 'Kamal Pushp' -- on his NaMo app that features some 'inspiring' party members.



## K'taka govt warns medical professionals of action for spreading misinformation

The Karnataka government has warned certain medical practitioners of action for allegedly spreading misinformation pertaining to the COVID-19. In a statement on Tuesday, the Commissionerate of Health and Family Services said some medical practitioners were allegedly giving incomplete, inaccurate and unsubstantiated information about COVID-19. "Such misinformation leads to confusion in public at large on the prevailing COVID scenario in the State and encourages them to deviate from well laid out guidelines issued by the health and revenue authorities," the statement said. Asking the medical professionals to exercise utmost care and caution while communicating with public on COVID-19, the Commissionerate asked them to refer to the government guidelines, circulars and orders thoroughly before appearing on any media or social platform.



# ED raids Punjab CM's relative, others in probe against 'illegal' sand mining

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday raided multiple locations in poll-bound Punjab, including those linked to a relative of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, as part of a money laundering probe against the 'sand mafia' and companies linked to alleged illegal sand mining in the border state, officials said. They said at least a dozen locations in the state including in Chandigarh, Mohali, Ludhiana and Pathankot are being covered by the officials of the federal agency. They are being assisted by armed personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). The



action is being undertaken under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Reacting to the raids, Chhni told reporters that relatives of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee were raided during the assembly polls in that state and the 'same pattern' is being followed by the ED in Punjab to 'pressure' him, his ministers and Congress party members. "We are ready to handle the pressure..." he said, adding he had no links with the case. Premises linked to a person identified as Bhupinder Singh alias Honey, a nephew of Chhni, are also being covered. Sources said Honey's links with a person identified as Kudratdeep Singh are being investigated by the agency.

Opposition parties have earlier linked Chhni with the dealings of Honey which the former had denied. The ED action, sources said, has been initiated after taking cognisance of a 2018 FIR of the Nawanshahr (Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district) Police and some other such police complaints against some companies and individuals alleged to be involved in the business of illegal sand mining in the state. A number of truck drivers and other operatives involved in the extraction and transportation of sand were named as accused in these police FIRs. Voting for 117 assembly seats in Punjab is slated on February 20.

## Court rejects Anil Deshmukh's bail plea in money

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A special court here on Tuesday rejected a plea filed by former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh seeking default bail in an alleged money laundering case. Deshmukh, an NCP leader, was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on November 2, 2021, and is currently in judicial custody. In his application, Deshmukh contended that the special court for Prevention of Money Laundering Act cases did not take cognisance of the charge sheet filed by the ED before remanding him in further judicial custody. Therefore, he was entitled to bail by 'default'



(on technical grounds), he said. The ED opposed the plea saying the charge sheet had been filed within stipulated time. Special Judge R N Rokade rejected the NCP leader's plea.

## Army rescues civilians stuck in avalanche

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

The Army on Tuesday rescued over a dozen civilians after their vehicle came under an avalanche triggered by recent snowfall in border district of Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. The vehicle got stuck on the Tangdhar- Chowkibal axis, following which the nearest Army unit was alerted and a rescue operation launched, they said. "The civilians, which included a child, were evacuated to safety by the Army rescue team," the officials said. One of the civilians told the rescuers that they had a narrow escape as they managed to jump out of the vehicle before it was buried under snow, the officials said.

## Cong, SP in competition over who can target Hindus more: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP alleged on Tuesday that its rivals Samajwadi Party and the Congress appeared to be in a competition over who can spew more venom against Hindus and protect those who do so. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra cited Islamic cleric Maulana Tauqueer Raza Khan's support to the Congress in Uttar Pradesh assembly polls and the SP nominating several Muslims allegedly accused of involvement in riots and making communal remarks to attack these parties. Khan had recently made a speech targeting Hindus, Patra said and noted the Congress had allied in the past with parties



which draw its support from Muslims in states like Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal and were accused of making communal remarks aimed at the majority community. The SP has also given tickets to people like Nahid Hasan, an MLA currently in jail, and Muharram Ali, accused of stoking riots, Patra said.

## Karnataka invites Elon Musk to set up Tesla plant

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Joining the growing list of Indian states wooing Tesla's billionaire founder and CEO Elon Musk to start a manufacturing unit, Karnataka on Tuesday projected itself as the 'Electric Vehicle (EV) hub' of India and an ideal destination to set up a plant. Several Indian states like Telangana, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu have already invited Musk to set up shop. "With over 400 R&D centres, 45+ EV startups & an EV cluster near Bengaluru, Karnataka has emerged as EV hub of India. Mr @elonmusk, Karnataka would be an ideal destination to set up @Tesla plant. Bengaluru is



already Tesla's maiden address in India," Karnataka Minister for Large and Medium-scale Industries Murugesh R Nirani tweeted. Musk had recently tweeted that the US-based firm is working through a lot of challenges with the government to launch its products in

India. "Still working through a lot of challenges with the government," Musk tweeted in reply to a Twitter user, who asked: "Yo @elonmusk any further update as to when Tesla's will launch in India? They're pretty awesome and deserve to be in every corner

of the world!"

In January 2021, Tesla registered its Indian arm amid indications that the company is set to enter the country's automobile market. According to a regulatory filing, the firm registered Tesla India Motors and Energy Pvt Ltd with RoC (Registrar Of Companies) Bengaluru. The company has been registered as an unlisted private entity with a paid-up capital of Rs 1 lakh. In February 2021, the then Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa too had said that "American firm Tesla will set up the car-manufacturing unit in Karnataka." Last year, Tesla had sought a reduction in import duties on electric vehicles (EVs) in India.

## BSF seizes fake driving licences from truckers at Bangladesh front

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Border Security Force (BSF) has seized 82 fake driving licences from truck drivers this week at the India-Bangladesh border check post at Petrapole in West Bengal stating these illegal acts could "compromise" national security. The south Bengal frontier of the force and its officials headquartered in Kolkata said in a statement on Monday that while they do not want to create any "disruption" in cross-border trade between the two neighbours, rules in this regard will have to be followed. The border guarding force said its troops launched

an intensive search on January 16 and 17 at the Petrapole integrated check post (ICP) in the North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal after it got "inputs that few drivers (of heavy vehicles like trucks) are involved in carrying out trans-border crimes such as smuggling of gold, silver, phensedyl syrup (a cough syrup abused as narcotics drug in Bangladesh), drugs etc. while engaged in export and import of goods between India and Bangladesh." The Bangladeshi side opposite this border post is called Benapole and everyday hundreds of trucks with goods cross over to the either side.

## No revision of decision on exclusion of TN, WB and Kerala tableaux on R-Day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The decision to not include the tableaux of Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu at the Republic Day parade will not be revised, senior officials of the Defence Ministry said on Tuesday and noted that a total of 12 states have been selected to display their models. The remarks by the defence ministry officials came amidst ongoing controversy over the tableaux exclusion, prompting West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin to seek Prime Minister Narendra Modi's immediate intervention. Some leaders of the non-BJP ruled states also alleged that the exclusion was an "insult" by the Centre. Reacting to the controversy, a senior defence ministry official said, "it is not possible to accept requests from these three states' and polite responses have been sent to their



CMs explaining the long process of selection of tableaux." "It is not possible to revise or reconsider the decision as Tableau making process is a very long process and an expert committee takes these decisions sufficiently in advance," the official added. Officials said tableaux of Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand will be shown at this year's parade.

Moreover, tableaux of nine ministries and departments of the Central government will be shown at this year's parade, they stated. These nine tableaux would be Education and Skill Development, Civil Aviation, Communications and Posts, Home Affairs, Housing, Textiles, Law and Justice, Jal Shakti and Culture, they added. Therefore, a total of 21 tableaux would be shown at this year's parade, they added. Overall, there were 56 proposals to show tableaux this year, they said.

## R-Day: Delhi-NCR under high-security cover

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of Republic Day, the Delhi-National Capital Region has been put under a "very high-security" cover after police received inputs from Intelligence agencies about a possible terror attack, officials said on Tuesday. Operation of sub-conventional aerial platforms, including UAVs, paragliders and hot air balloons, over the national capital has been prohibited in the city from January 20 in view of Republic Day celebrations, according to a Delhi Police order issued on Tuesday. The order shall come into force from January 20 and remain in effect till February 15. The order has been issued by Delhi Police Commissioner Rakesh Asthana in the wake of reports of the possibility of certain criminal or anti-social elements or terrorists posing a threat to the safety of the general public, dignitaries and vital installations, it said.

## Centre flags decline in Covid testing, asks states to enhance it

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Flagging a decline in the number of COVID-19 tests in many states and union territories, the Centre on Monday asked them to enhance testing so that an effective track of the spread of the pandemic can be kept and immediate citizen-centric action can be initiated. In a letter to states and UTs, Additional Secretary in the Union Health Ministry Arti Ahuja advised them to pay attention to this aspect immediately and increase the testing in a strategic manner keeping in view the trend of case positivity in specific areas. She highlighted that Omicron, which has been designated by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a variant of concern, is currently spreading across the country. Referring to the ministry's earlier letters and the Home Ministry advisory of December 27 last year laying out the broad framework of pandemic management in the context of Omicron, Ahuja said testing remains



a key and crucial component. "However, it is seen from the data available on the ICMR portal that testing has declined in many states and union territories," she wrote. She said in all advisories on testing issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), including the latest on January 10, the basic objective remains early detection of cases for

quick isolation and care. In addition, testing remains a key strategy for pandemic management as it helps in identification of new clusters and new hotspots of infection which can in turn facilitate immediate action for containment such as setting up of containment zones, contact tracing, quarantining, isolation and follow-up.

## UP polls: Political parties locked in musical war

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the battle for the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, a musical war has broken out between political parties which are resorting to catchy campaign songs to promote their policies and ideologies. The Election Commission has imposed restrictions on poll rallies till January 22 in the wake of rising COVID-19 cases in the five poll-going states. After the BJP, Congress and Samajwadi Party, the Aam Aadmi Party too has



released its theme song for the elections. Although, the custom of resorting to songs during elec-

tions is old, with the campaign going virtual due to the Covid pandemic, the competition

among parties to grab the attention of voters has only intensified. While the ruling BJP refers to the party's "Hindustani pride" and the "development" done under the Yogi Adityanath government, the opposition Samajwadi Party echoes the socialist sentiments and the achievements of the previous government led by Akhilesh Yadav. BJP MPs and Bhojpuri actors Ravi Kishan and Manoj Tiwari have come out with various songs and some more are in the pipeline. Among

these, 'damru jab bajega to dekhna nazara kya hoga' -- apparently referring to the damru of lord Shiva -- is quite popular while similar songs like 'Jo Ram ko laye haye, hum unko layenge' (those who have brought lord Ram, we will bring them to power) and 'mandir banne laga hai, bhagwa rang chadhne laga hai' (construction of temple has begun, saffron colour is on the rise) are testament to BJP leveraging on the upcoming Ram temple in Ayodhya.

## Beating Retreat ceremony to have 1000 drones

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The annual Beating the Retreat ceremony, which takes place in the national capital on January 29, will have a show of nearly 1,000 drones by a IIT-Delhi-based startup to commemorate 75 years of the country's independence, senior officials of the defence ministry said on Tuesday. Moreover, for the first time, on the parapet of the north block and the south block, there



will be a laser projection mapping show to commem-

orate 75 years of independence, they added.



## Mockery

Political goodwill reaches to Dalits only when the elections are around

The Election Commission has postponed the date of voting for the election to the Punjab Assembly from February 14 to 20. By itself the change is not noteworthy; a mere administrative exercise. Politically, however, the significance is not lost on anyone in the country. It is a curious display of unity amid diversity by all political parties to set aside their electoral differences to ensure that the election date does not come in the way of a section of Punjab's electorate conducting an important religious ritual. The deferred election date allows a particular Dalit community to visit Varanasi on the occasion of Guru Ravidas Jayanti on February 16. The 'Ravidassias', as the followers of the mystic poet-saint are called, mostly inhabit Punjab's Doaba region and their numbers have a say in 23 Assembly constituencies. Dalits comprise 32 per cent of the State's population. Over a third of them are concentrated in the Doaba. And over 60 per cent of Doaba's Dalits are Ravidassias. This is the political context to the 'humanitarian' gesture by the political parties. After the deferment, the parties are in a race to take credit for it. The prize is such. In a multi-cornered election, anybody bagging the maximum support of the Dalits can dream of an edge in the 117-member Assembly.



Would not the Dalits be wondering why the goodwill of the political parties does not reach out to them when elections are not around? The Dalits, for whom the election date was changed because their votes count, otherwise complain of indifference from these very parties. They are certainly on the path to emancipation because of affirmative actions like reservation, but are as vulnerable today as before to casteist attacks in terms of a ban on entry into temples, sporting a moustache, riding a horse, using cremation grounds and the like. The National Crime Records Bureau tells us that a Dalit in India was the victim of a crime every 10 minutes in 2020 and the situation was no different in 2021. Dalits are attacked for the silliest of excuses — beaten up for wearing leather shoes in Gujarat, paraded naked for swimming in a well in Maharashtra, even killed for sitting cross-legged during a temple ritual in Tamil Nadu. They are subjected to gross and inhuman insults like being urinated upon. In a case from Bihar a month ago, a person who lost a village election blamed the Dalits for his defeat and forced a Dalit to lick spit as punishment. Dalit women and girls are molested, raped and killed at whim. Dalit politics takes centre stage whenever elections are around and sympathy to their cause replaces the usual indifference. If the deferment of the Punjab election date is not to be construed as merely a gesture with a selfish motive, political parties must proactively address discrimination and violence against Dalits and not dismiss them as an embarrassing relic of the past.

### PICTALK



Tourists visit the Taj Mahal on a cold winter day

PTI

## Due diligence

The CPI(M) is better advised to be responsible and speak in cohesion and unity

Political discourse in Kerala touched the nadir of decency as leaders shout at each other using the choicest of abuses. Though there is no election round the corner in Kerala, political one-upmanship continues to rule the roost. KP Anil Kumar, a Congress leader who defected to the CPI(M) for not getting his share in the reorganisation of the party, was seen threatening K Sudhakaran, the Pradesh Congress chief of dire consequences. "We will lynch Sudhakaran like a mad dog in the streets of Kerala," shouted Kumar while addressing a public meeting. The recent murder of an activist of the SFI owing allegiance to the CPI(M) is the root cause of the outbursts by Anil Kumar. The CPI(M), which returned to power in the 2021 Assembly election much against the precedence of the party in power biting the dust in the subsequent election, should have shown maturity and restraint on the murder of its own activist. Though the police has arrested three Congress workers in connection with the murder, the CPI(M) leaders allege Sudhakaran to be the master brain behind the killing. The media in Kerala known for its pro-CPI(M) stance parroted the allegation and blacked out the version of Sudhakaran from the narrative. This led to a verbal



duel between the PCC chief and journalists at the Press Club in the Capital.

Media is entrusted with the responsibility of reporting facts and they should never misinterpret words. Let it be done by political observers or commentators to suit their line of thinking. If the media has strong evidence linking Sudhakaran to the murder, it could ask him for clarification and not accuse him of a crime about which he was in the dark. Sudhakaran, who is known for his boldness and uprightness has always been an eyesore to the Marxists because of his ability to take the comrades head on in northern Kerala's party villages where only the writ of the Marxists run whoever is in power in Thiruvananthapuram. The CPI(M) is better advised to speak in cohesion and unity. Polit Bureau member SR Pillai was heard alleging that India is tormenting China. Party's State secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan is on record declaring that India got independence because of the CPI(M), a political outfit that was formed in 1964. Re-education is a must for leaders and cadres alike because of the information technology era in which we live.

# National integrity, cohesive people

Despite the Partition on religious lines, we are still religious factions whose ultimate loyalties are similar to those of Indians in the UK



PRAFULL GORADIA

The anniversary of Capitol Insurrection — when an incumbent President Donald Trump gestured through an apparent revolt that he was not accepting the electoral verdict in favour of Democrat Joe Biden — was all over the media last fortnight. Some writers seem to suggest that the Red States in the USA (Republican majority) could be prepared to separate from the Blue ones (Democratic majority). That might be a split between the Liberal and the Conservatives Americans, but by no means is wide enough to justify the breakup of the country. Lest one forgets, a bitter Civil War was fought for four years from 1861 to 1865 between the northern Yanks and the southern Confederates. Abraham Lincoln led the former with a missionary zeal, winning the war and preserving the Union, gaining recognition as the greatest President of the USA.

It is, however, true that being a creation of random immigration from the 15th century onwards, the USA does not have an integrated ethos. There are people of European, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Hispanic, Arab and other Islamic origins. Most Indians do not raise their political heads. The others have a political muscle which they could use to further their cause. Indian-origin citizens, when they show up at cricket grounds in the UK, cheer the ethnic team, i.e., India, despite themselves holding British passports. Nevertheless, this is not a desirable symptom because it reflects that the nation does not have a single ethos and holds out a threat of a breakup which we are discussing.

But why go far? India has one single ethos plus several other political sentiments. Despite the partition on entirely religious lines in 1947, we are still religious factions whose ultimate loyalties are similar to those of Indians in the UK. Unlike the USA and the UK, India has not undergone random immigrations. India's is a unique tale, which can be told by a historian who cannot justify its lack of an integrated ethos that can ensure national unity for all times and under all circumstances.



There are times when circumstances override national interests. In fact, until the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, there was little by way of a national awakening. If there was an ideology, it was either religion or language.

More than circumstances, the fault lay with the leadership at points of time of the countries concerned. Take France, for example. As a gesture of civilisation, Paris declared its overseas empire to be metropolitan France. This made it easily possible for people from French colonies like Algeria, Morocco, etc., to emigrate to the cities and towns of France. Today, this European country has two huge segments of people, European and African. Being culturally and religiously very different, they find it difficult to coexist. Germany and Turkey were allies during the two world wars. There were many Turks who did not have sufficient employment whereas Germany wanted cheaper labour. The former, therefore, arrived in droves to make Deutschland their home but Berlin insisted that they could settle only as guest workers, not as citizens. But what happens to children born to such guest workers? To add



THERE ARE TIMES WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES OVERRIDE NATIONAL INTERESTS. IN FACT, UNTIL THE END OF THE 18TH CENTURY, THERE WAS LITTLE BY WAY OF A NATIONAL AWAKENING. IF THERE WAS AN IDEOLOGY, IT WAS EITHER RELIGION OR LANGUAGE

further to the population of Asians in the country, when refugees recently came rushing in from the civil war-ravaged Syria, Chancellor (now former) Angela Merkel welcomed many of them.

Britain made the same mistake after World War II when it needed cheaper labour. There were ready arrivals from the West Indies, India and Pakistan. Now there are problems with civic living in this multi-racial national life. In the 17th and the 18th centuries, the USA imported slaves from West Africa on a large scale. As we have noted, there was a four-year civil war between the northern States who wanted to abolish slavery and the southern ones, who saw this evil and inhuman institution as their legitimate way of life. But the American leadership did not learn their lesson and freely allowed in more and more settlers. The Democratic Party supports them whereas the Republicans wish to largely retain the white (European) character of the USA. Hence the Blue versus Red States divergence referred to above.

Who is India to give advice to these countries? It has also blundered. At Partition time and throughout 1946-47, the Muslim League insisted on an

exchange of population as the homeland called Pakistan was for all the Islamic people of the subcontinent. Dr Rajendra Prasad, Independent India's first President, wrote a book on the subject called India Divided, offering an answer for those who could not move out. They could stay on, but not as citizens. Instead, they would be treated as aliens with residence visas, sans political rights. Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah endorsed Dr Prasad's views. But Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru not only opposed this practical solution, but were unjust to millions of people. The distinguished Pakistani scholar Ayesha Jalal in her book The Sole Spokesman has raised the question: why Partition then? The Muslim-majority provinces like Punjab and Bengal did not need nor want the break; it was mainly the Muslim-minority provinces like UP and Bombay Presidency which pressed for it. Eventually, their minorities largely got left behind in India. What a fiasco it has turned out to be?

(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

### DIRTY POLITICS OVER TABLEAUX

Sir — The exclusion of tableaux proposed by Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal from this year's Republic Day Parade has no rational explanation or justification; it constitutes a politically motivated and biased move to exclude what is not in conformity with Hindu Right's exclusive Hindutva or Hindu nationalist narrative and agenda and a response to the electoral defeats inflicted on the BJP in the aforesaid States. India is a federal Republic for the ruling dispensation to be so summarily dismissive of regional pride. We are totally justified in saying that the Republic Day pageantry should showcase India's diversity. We are not so naive as to believe that the Union Government had no role in nixing the tableaux of the three Opposition-ruled States and the 'apolitical subject experts' found them without merit 'after due process and deliberations' and took the decision.

By dropping the tableau of West Bengal featuring Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, Nazrul Islam and Birsu Munda and the tableau of Tamil Nadu portraying Mahakavi Subramania Bharathiyar, VO Chidambaram, Rani Velu Nachiyar and Maruthu Brothers, the Modi Government has betrayed the kind of patriotism it practises. As a descendant of those political forces that took no part in the freedom struggle, the BJP does not seem to be quite interested in celebrating India's valiant freedom fighters on the occasion of the Republic Day.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

### BANK SERVICES NEED IMPROVEMENT

Sir — It has been reported that the State Bank of India (SBI) has hiked the interest on fixed deposits. The hike is nothing but a pittance. What was 4.9 per cent is now 5.1 per cent. It means an increase of 20 paise over the previous rate. Does this require publicity? The publicity given indicates as though we are living in the 1950s when a rupee was able to

## Kohli will only emerge stronger



In the majority of team sports, a captain is as good as his team. A win, and the captain takes most of the credit. A loss, and the captain is panned more than anybody else. There is no denying that there were, and there will be, exceptional captains. Great captains are born leaders who marshal their team members with a deep sense of instinct. Their gut feelings almost always fall in place when they carry their teams to glory. These leaders are respected and loved — generally these don't go together. In recent

times, Saurav Ganguly and MS Dhoni were two Indian cricket captains who commanded awe and affection in equal measure. The former was flamboyant while the latter kept to himself. But the end result was the same. Players who played under Ganguly and Dhoni recall their association with the two with admiration and fondness.

Everything was not hunky-dory in the Indian dressing room, and Kohli's reported rift with Rohit Sharma and Ravichandran Ashwin will rankle. But nothing can beat his repeated display of tantrums on the ground that prompted experts to call him "immature". The Cape Town Test against South Africa saw Kohli in full blast on the field; not as a batsman but as a captain. That said, free from the captaincy burden, master batsman Virat Kohli should regain his pristine touch, and carry India to more victories with his batting exploits.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

fetch 20 seers (not kgs) of rice.

The quality of service in banks has been deteriorating. Bank customers have been given the responsibility of making pass book entries by themselves in the machine kept outside. Installation of ATM machines has further reduced the work burden of bank employees in the case of withdrawal of deposit amount. When a bank account holder shifts to another place, a single request letter to transfer his account to the bank branch of his choice does not draw the attention of the concerned to consider the request. Fixed Deposits account is also not being transferred easily on request. Because of this, aged persons in particular are facing an ordeal of traveling to the bank where the account was held earlier. The difficulty is more pronounced at a time when the corona is at its peak.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

### RAJAPPA'S DEMISE IS A BIG LOSS

Sir — The passing away of veteran journalist Sam Rajappa, whose name is syn-

onymous with the Kolkata based daily The Statesman, is a huge loss to Indian print journalism. His rich experience in the profession, deep knowledge in politics, and absolute command over the English language, have all made him one of the finest ever Indian journalists. A fact well known by contemporary journalists that Sam Rajappa strongly favoured and followed "Queen's English" throughout his journalistic career and never compromised on the language, both in style and grammar.

Years ago, I was working with a leading publication office in Chennai, located close to The Statesman's office, and I had the opportunity to interact with Mr Rajappa a few times. Not only was he affable and down-to-earth, but I also found him to be an encyclopedia, who could reel out information on any subject at the drop of a hat.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

All-out war between Mamata Banerjee and her nephew Abhishek. Mamata's pictures missing from posters in Diamond Harbour.

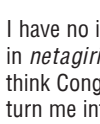


BJP leader — Amit Malviya



I don't regret it (my arrest) for a second. This is our country and we have no other.

Kremlin's critic — Alexei Navalny



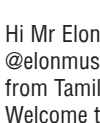
I have no interest in netagiri .... but I think Congress will turn me into a leader.

Film director — Kangana Ranaut



Saleem Malik had this smug look on his face, like, 'You should have taken the cash'.

Australia ex-bowler — Shane Warne



Hi Mr Elon @elonmusk. I'm from Tamil Nadu. Welcome to India's EV capital. #tnforpartnership



TN Industries Minister — Thangam Thennarasu



FIRST COLUMN

NEET AND THE POLITICS OF TAMIL NADU

That the test is against social justice is a fallacy



S KALYANASUNDARAM

Tension is brewing between Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK and state Governor over the latter not forwarding the Tamil Nadu Admission Undergraduate Medical Degree Courses Bill 2021, passed by the Legislative Assembly, for consideration of the President. The bill seeks to bypass the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical students in Tamil Nadu by allowing admissions to be made based on marks obtained by students in Class XII or Plus Two. All parties, except the BJP, support the Bill. As it attempts to bypass a Central law, the Bill needs Presidential assent to come into force. Now as the state governor has not acted on the legislation sent to him, the state government has put pressure on him. Various DMK MPs tried to meet the President of India but in vain. They had to satisfy themselves by submitting a memorandum to the President's office. Their meeting with the Union Home Minister also did not materialise. A meeting of all the legislature parties chaired by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister was conducted on January 8 to take necessary legal steps to abolish NEET. The meeting decided to take other state governments into confidence and put up a collective fight against NEET. Senior BJP leader and MLA Vanathi Srinivasan rightly denied the contention of the Dravidian parties that NEET for medical admissions was against the principles of social justice and the reservation policy followed in Tamil Nadu. When all the reservations applicable for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Backward Class, etc., are intact even after NEET system, how is it against any social justice? Hence, the contention that NEET affects social justice is a blatant lie.

The Constitution backs the governor who "shall declare either that he assents to the Bill or that he withholds assent therefrom or that he reserves the Bill for the consideration of the President." When it is not a Money bill there is no compulsion for him to return the bill immediately. Even if the said bill is sent to the President, the Central Government in all likelihood may not agree for giving consent for the legislation of the Tamil Nadu Government due to the following factors. First, the TN legislation is against the Central Government Act and any tinkering will amount to violation of a Supreme Court ruling. Secondly, among all the states in India, only Tamil Nadu is against NEET and there is no political compulsion for Centre to side with the TN government. Thirdly, the ruling dispensation in TN is politically against BJP at the Centre and there is no need for BJP to help DMK to fulfil its election promise. Fourthly, even when BJP's alliance partner AIADMK was in power in TN, the BJP government was not inclined to remove NEET. When the GO issued by the TN Government for admission to academic year 2017-18, it was contested by the students from CBSE stream. While delivering the judgement the following comments were made by the judge: "The case as projected by the Government by treating the students from the CBSE Board undoubtedly indicates the mind of the State Government that they want to look at those students as though they do not belong to this State." It seems still the present state government has not learnt any lesson from the above observation. More number of students from Tamil Nadu have cleared NEET this year. Among the top 50,000 national rank holders, the number of TN students has increased to 2874 this year, as against 2747 last year. Hence there is no truth in the statement that TN students cannot pursue medical education due to introduction of NEET.

(The writer is a retired banker. The views expressed are personal.)


# OBC is the new catchphrase in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh

## Akhilesh has astutely moved away from his father's trusted Muslim-Yadav formula to a new kind of social engineering for a larger social coalition

Former Uttar Pradesh chief minister and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has emerged as the primary challenger to the BJP in the February Assembly polls now that the poll scene is explicit.

The massive turnout at the young Yadav chieftain's election rallies is testimony to Akhilesh's growing popularity. Most psephologists say that the polls have become a bi-polar contest between the Samajwadi Party and BJP. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also remarked about the growing support base saying 'Lal topi' (red cap) is a 'Lal batti' (red light) for UP.

Yadav Junior came out of the shadows of his father and former chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav a long time ago,



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

# Caste coalition in UP at crossroads

## OBCs may have been satisfied with the call of Mandirs and mutts, but what they want is true empowerment where they have an equal share of power

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party got a major setback when a tall OBC leader representing the numerically dominant Kushwaha, quit Yogi's cabinet and later joined Samajwadi Party with a vow to finish the BJP from the State. The day he joined SP, Swamy Prasad Maurya claimed that "it is a history that the party I leave is finished with the passage of time". It could be a boastful assertion which he made when probably he got swayed by the massive crowd that assembled at the Samajwadi Party office to welcome him. But this switch is an indication that the rainbow coalition of upper caste, backward, and Dalits which the BJP had stitched assiduously in the last seven years has started crumbling.

The importance of Swami Prasad Maurya could be gauged from the fact that after him quitting the Government, two more ministers and around a dozen BJP lawmakers, all non-Yadav OBC leaders, resigned from the party. They have shown their loyalty to Maurya and claimed that they will swim with him. The indications are more desertions may follow. Incidentally, the majority of them were originally with BSP and had joined BJP along with Maurya after deserting Mayawati.

The revolt by these OBCs leaders against the BJP leadership ahead of the crucial UP assembly elections has come as a shot in the arm for the opposition Samajwadi party. Akhilesh Yadav tweeted a picture of himself with Maurya and wrote: "Saamajik nyay kaa inqalabhoga, baees me badlavhoga (There will be a revolution in the field or social justice and there will be change in UP)".

The sudden political development caught the BJP leadership, which appears to have grown complacent after three back-to-back electoral successes in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the 2017 UP assembly elections, unawares. This victory centered around the support of backward communities, which account for 54 percent of the population. This support base was built brick by brick by Amit Shah in 2016 when he was the national president of the party. He was the one who picked up Swamy Prasad Maurya and persuaded him to join BJP along with his supporters. The BJP needs to introspect as to why and how this support group disintegrated putting the party in a soup.

The resentment among backward against the Chief Minister Yogi is not new. The anger was simmering for the last couple of years. There is an impression that the BJP Government is pro-Thakur because Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath belongs to that caste. Word started spreading that the members of the backward community were being ignored.

Even the Deputy Chief Minister in the Yogi cabinet, Keshav Prasad Maurya, himself an OBC who belongs to the same caste as Swamy Prasad Maurya, showed



IN THE BUDGET FOR 2021-22, THE FINANCE MINISTER ANNOUNCED

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



his annoyance at the way the members of the backward community were ignored. The RSS leadership placated him and early last year when Yogi along with senior BJP leaders had a luncheon meeting with Maurya at his residence. The indications were that "everything has been sorted out" but the meeting failed to douse the anger of the backward.

Political analysts, however, point out that the BJP in the last eight years with its social engineering politics along with the benefits through 'Direct benefit transfer' (DBT) believed that it has upstaged the caste-based identity politics. The BJP leadership believed that the members from the SC and the OBCs are no longer attracted to caste lines. It is believed that the economic needs of this section have been fulfilled by the Narendra Modi and Yogi Adityanath governments in the last five years through the free distribution of food grains.

In fact, BJP mis-read the trend. Free distribution of food grains does not lead to empowerment of any caste. It is a feelgood factor for shorter period of time but at a longer run, it proved detrimental for the party. There is a belief among the villagers that the freebie scheme which has started, will not be withdrawn by the next government.

The way OBC leaders are leaving BJP is not a good sign for the ruling party particularly when an election bugle has been sounded because leaders like Swami Prasad Maurya and his colleagues still command clout in their respective communities and enjoy ideological weightage.

The voters from the OBCs and SCs will face the dilemma on the day of voting whether to respond to the traditional optics of caste appeal or go with the politics of economic and social empowerment. The Yadavs are already with Samajwadi Party and after leaders like Swami Prasad Maurya, Lalji Verma, and Ram Achal Rajbhar joined SP, now Akhilesh has become the focal point around whom the backward politics will revolve now.

What has happened last week is a clear indication that caste-based politics is threatening to upstage Hindutva politics, despite the saffron-clad Yogi Adityanath is the Hindutva icon for the BJP and the party's campaign is revolving around Ram Janmabhoomi and Kashi Vishwanath Dham. There were rumours that Yogi would contest assembly elections from Ayodhya but later it was communicated he would contest from Gorakhpur.

BJP continued to play around the arrogance of Yogi by projecting him as the staunch Hindutva icon. Slogans like "Raj tilak ki karo tayari, aa rahen hai bhagwadhari (Get ready for coronation as a saffron-clad is coming)" were shared widely during the digital campaign kicked off two days back.

The party added further doses of Hindutva by propagating the construction of Ram Mandir and the inauguration of Kashi Vishwanath Dham as its achievements. A new twist was added to this Hindutva story when BJP leaders started talking about Mathura.

In contrast, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav who had contested the 2017 election on the development plank with the tagline of "Kaam bolta hai", chose realpolitik as he shed all inhibitions and joined the caste bandwagon. He started his crusade by first asking for the caste-based census and even gave a slogan of "85 vs 15" indicating that the OBCs were 85 percent of the population while the upper castes were a minuscule minority of 15 percent.

He followed it up by scouting for new caste-based parties as allies. He even made it clear that Samajwadi Party will never have any trucks with big parties. He patched up with his estranged uncle Shivpal Yadav to consolidate the backward caste vote bank. The creation of a large coalition of the neglected, excluded and undocumented backward castes and Dalits could be a game-changer for the Samajwadi Party.

On the other hand, BJP's social engineering tactics meant regrouping of the non-Yadav, non-Jatav OBC, and Dalit sub-castes in its favour. But what had happened in last two days is a clear indication that the members of the backward community are now asking for their pound of flesh. They are satisfied with the call of Mandirs or mutts but they want empowerment in the true sense — where they have an equal share of power. This has crumbled the cookie of Hindutva.

In short, the ghost of Mandal is out of Kamandal and it is set to turn the UP election on its head.

POINT COUNTER POINT

MY ASSESSMENT THAT THE AAP WILL ONLY FRACTURE THE NON-BJP VOTE HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY ARVIND KEJRIWAL. —CONGRESS LEADER P CHIDAMBARAM



GOANS WILL VOTE WHERE THEY SEE HOPE AND THE CONGRESS IS HOPE FOR THE BJP, NOT GOANS. —DELHI CHIEF MINISTER ARVIND KEJRIWAL

and today he is the only leader for his party. Akhilesh has gone through many ups and downs in his two decades of political life. Leading the election campaign for the coalition, he is a much more mature politician today.

SP's political strategy is well calibrated. Akhilesh has strengthened himself within the party and sorted out his family fights with his uncle Shivpal Yadav who is now back in the fold.

Single-handedly he stitched up alliances, particularly with Jayant Chaudhary-led Rashtriya Lok Dal. What is working to the benefit of the SP is the support from the farmers community in western Uttar Pradesh. They have been upset with the BJP for almost one year, as the Centre did not



heed their protests against the three farm laws passed in Parliament in 2019. The Jats hold the key in Western UP and they back RLD.

The junior Yadav has astutely moved away from his father's trusted Muslim-Yadav formula to a new kind of social engineering for a larger social coalition. Akhilesh has learned lessons the hard way. He had experimented with several combinations. As joining hands

with Congress in the 2017 Assembly elections and with the BSP in 2019 polls failed to yield the desired results, he is now depending on smaller caste-based regional parties, particularly those with a non-Yadav OBC base. He has roped in smaller parties like Rashtriya Lok Dal, Mahan Dal, Sanjay Singh Chouhan's Democratic (Socialist) Party, Krishna Patel's Apna Dal (Communist), Rajesh Siddhartha's Political Justice, and Ram Raj Singh Patel's Akhil Bhartiya Kisan Sena.

Interestingly, the SP chief has promised a caste census if elected to power. Though backward classes parties have been in power in Uttar Pradesh since the early 1990s, his predecessors did not take any risk.

His calculations are based on the Samajwadi Party's internal survey which revealed that in the 2017 elections, over 50 per cent of OBCs voted for BJP while around 15 per cent supported SP. Akhilesh has given an open invitation to all parties and sections to join him in throwing out the BJP.

He successfully poached on several OBC leaders from the BJP, including Swami Prasad Maurya, in his efforts to broaden his party's social base. Two influential ministers and some MLAs quit BJP and joined SP days before the poll announcement. Swami Prasad Maurya, a powerful OBC leader and five-time MLA, joined BJP in 2016 after quitting Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party. Many from BSP like Yogesh Verma, Mithai Lal Bharti have already

switched to SP.

As for countering Kamandal politics, Akhilesh has embraced the "me too" line to counter BJP's politics. He has also promised to establish Vishnu Nagar and a massive statue of Parashuram on the Purvanchal expressway.

He raises other issues like Covid handling, development, law, and order, poor health infrastructure, reservation, and inflation. He also presents the controversial incidents in Gorakhpur, Hathras, and Unnao.

BJP is counting on Brand Narendra Modi to get votes. Yogi is contesting for the Assembly for the first time. The BJP seems to be banking on the polarisation of Jat votes like in the 2017 polls to maintain its dominance.

To counter the SP caste strategy, BJP has given tickets to 44 OBC names, including 16 Jats, followed by 43 upper castes and 19 from Scheduled Castes. The list indicates that the BJP is hopeful of getting the Jat votes in western UP, where the rural community is concentrated.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who leads the Congress in UP is banking on women's votes and has promised all kinds of freebies. The BSP chief Mayawati is lying low but working quietly after her party's miserable performance in 2017 and 2019.

UP is known for casting votes on a caste basis. Whether Akhilesh's Mandal politics or BJP's Kamandal politics works in these polls is a million-dollar question.



# Bidding for CBM blocks to start on Feb 15, end on March 15: DGH

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bidding for 15 blocks offered in the first coal-bed methane (CBM) round in more than a decade will start on February 15 and end on March 15, the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH) said on Tuesday.

Bids under the Special CBM Bid Round-2021, which was launched in September last year, were originally due on February 20, 2022, but the deadline was postponed.

"Bid submission for Special CBM Bid Round-2021 will start on 15th February, 2022 and end on 15th March, 2022," DGH said in a notice.

The government has offered 15 blocks in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh for extracting gas from coal seams (CBM).

This is the first CBM bid round in more than a decade. The last round was held in 2010.

CBM is gas or methane found below coal seams in coal fields. It is similar to natural gas and can be used as fuel to fire power plants, run fertiliser units, or be used as



CNG in automobiles.

The maximum number of five coal-bed methane (CBM) blocks have been offered in Madhya Pradesh, and two blocks each in Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Odisha. Three blocks are on offer in Chhattisgarh and one in West Bengal.

The government has awarded 29 CBM blocks in the previous four rounds of bidding.

"Companies are invited to bid for exploration, development and monetisation of 15 CBM blocks likely to contain

both conventional and/or unconventional hydrocarbon resources, distributed in the sedimentary basins of India," DGH had said in the notice inviting offers in September last year.

All the 15 blocks are in Category-III basins that hold prospective resources to be explored and discovered.

India's sedimentary basins are divided into three categories -- Category-I are basins with reserves being produced and exploited, and Category-II are ones with contingent

**The government has offered 15 blocks in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh for extracting gas from coal seams (CBM).**

resources to be developed and monetised.

Under the current CBM round, bidders offering to do maximum exploration work will be awarded the block, DGH had said.

The bid round is part of the government's attempt to raise domestic oil and gas production to cut reliance on imports. India imports roughly 85 per cent of its oil needs and about half of the gas requirement.

Prior to the CBM launch, the

government offered 21 conventional oil and gas blocks for bidding in the sixth round under the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP). Last date for bidding for these blocks is February 15, 2022.

In parallel, the government has offered 32 small and marginal discovered fields. These were discovered by state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL) but the companies could not develop them for a variety of reasons, including uneconomical size.

Now, 32 such areas have been offered under the third Discovered Small Field (DSF) round."Bid submission for DSF Bid Round-III will start on 01st February, 2022 and end on 15th March, 2022," DGH said.

These are part of government efforts to more than double the share of natural gas in the country's energy mix to 15 per cent by 2030 from the current 6 per cent.

State gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd is adding around 15,000 kilometres of gas pipelines in east India to an existing network of around 17,000 km to form a national grid that will tie into city gas networks.



## Coal India committed to meet 'elevated' demand of power sector

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Mining major Coal India Ltd is committed to meet the "elevated" demand of the dry fuel from the power sector, including coastal plants dependent on imports, a company official said on Tuesday.

The miner had hoped the demand would ease by December last year, but that did not happen, he said.

"We are committed to catering to the coal needs of the power sector, be it domestic or those dependent on imports, despite CIL being stretched," a

senior company official told PTI when asked whether it was capable of plugging the gaps arising out of Indonesian supply disruptions. "We have already started supplying some amount of coal to the coastal plants to cut down on imports," he added.

Indonesia had banned coal exports since January 1 due to domestic shortages and the impasse still prevails. This has led to a surge in prices in the international market.

India imports 5-9 million tonnes of coal per month from Indonesia, officials said.

The world's largest miner is trying to keep up to the demand by dispatching over 1.75 million tonnes of coal per day to the power sector, they said. India's power consumption grew by 4.5 per cent in December 2021 to 110.34 billion units (BU) over the same period a year ago, according to power ministry data. In the first 16 days, Coal India's average daily production stood at 2.35 million tonnes. It is targeting 670 million tonnes of production in the 2021-22 fiscal. Till January 16, the total output was at 445 million tonnes.

## MONEY MATTERS

### Tata Motors to hike passenger vehicle prices



Tata Motors on Tuesday said it will increase prices of its passenger vehicles by an average of 0.9 per cent with effect from January 19, in order to partially offset the impact of rise in input costs. The Mumbai-based automaker sells various models like Tiago, Punch and Harrier, in the domestic market. Effective January 19, 2022, an average increase of 0.9 per cent will be implemented, depending on the variant and model, the automaker said in a statement. At the same time, the company has also taken a reduction of up to Rs 10,000 on specific variants, in response to feedback from customers, it added. "While the company is absorbing a significant portion of the increased costs, the steep rise in overall input costs has compelled it to pass on some proportion through this minimal price hike," Tata Motors noted. It noted that in line with the company's customer-first approach, it has again decided to offer price protection to all its customers who have reposed faith and confidence in the Tata Motors' passenger vehicles range. There would be no impact of the price increase on the cars booked on or before January 18, 2022, Tata Motors stated. Last week, Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) raised prices of its models by up to 4.3 per cent with immediate effect. The company has enhanced prices across its models from 0.1 per cent to 4.3 per cent owing to rise in various input costs.

### Oppo India partners BITS Pilani for skill enhancement of India R&D



Oppo India on Tuesday said it has inked an agreement with BITS Pilani to upskill its R&D engineers with advanced technological learnings. With the advent of industry 4.0 and in the era of specialisation, this initiative reiterates Oppo's focus to help employees acquire skill up-gradation while focusing on innovations centric to advance technologies, a statement said. Under the partnership, BITS Pilani's Work Integrated Learning Programs (WILP) division will support Oppo India R&D engineers to strengthen their technical knowledge through various courses, it added. Through this partnership, Oppo aims to develop its engineers from India R&D in various emerging technology areas, including network, imaging, and extended reality. The programme will be fully sponsored by Oppo, and the nominated candidates will be admitted through a structured admission process, the statement said. "The impact of rapid technological changes has led OPPO to ensure we are ahead of the game to ensure we develop innovations that revolve around user experience. This association complements OPPO's aim to deliver the best training for our employees and accelerate our Make in India efforts." Tasleem Arif, Vice President, India R&D Head at Oppo India, said. BITS Pilani WILP has been behind over 97,000 working professionals to strengthen the foundation of their technical expertise and assist them to stay relevant by upgrading their knowledge and skills.

### Rupee slumps 33 paise to close at 74.58 against US dollar



Continuing its fall for the third consecutive session, the rupee on Tuesday slumped 33 paise to close at 74.58 (provisional) against the US dollar as strong American currency and elevated crude oil prices continue to weigh on investor sentiments. Forex traders said muted domestic equities and dollar buying by banks on behalf of importers also dragged the local unit down. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 74.36 against the American currency and witnessed an intra-day low of 74.60 during the session. The rupee finally settled at 74.58, down 33 paise over its previous close of 74.25 against the greenback. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.09 per cent up at 95.34. "Higher crude oil prices and risk-off sentiments following a surge in bond yields are enough for the rupee to become the worst-performing currency among Asian currencies," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities. Parmar added that "strong dollar demands have been seen from oil importers after Brent crude oil prices started quoting above USD 87 a barrel on the back of supply worries".

## Oil price tops \$87/bbl but petrol, diesel prices stay unchanged

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

International oil prices jumped to the highest level since 2014, topping USD 87 a barrel but domestic petrol and diesel prices remained unchanged for the 74th day in a row - a freeze that may be linked to ensuring assembly elections in states like Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

Brent - the key global oil benchmark - soared to USD 87.7 per barrel mostly due to rising geopolitical tensions and supply-side disturbances due to Yemen's Houthi group's attack on oil facilities in the United Arab Emirates. Also, global inventories are waning.

The attack, some analysts believe, may lead to more hostile behaviour between the two power centres in the Middle East - Iran and Saudi Arabia.

But domestic fuel prices - which are directly linked to international oil prices - have not been revised for over two months now.

Petrol costs Rs 95.41 a litre in Delhi and diesel is priced at Rs 86.67. This price is after accounting for the excise duty cut and a reduction in VAT



rate by the state government.

Prior to these tax reductions, petrol price had touched an all-time high of Rs 110.04 a litre and diesel came for Rs 98.42. These rates corresponded to Brent soaring to a peak of USD 86.40 per barrel on October 26, 2021. Brent was USD 82.74 on November 5, 2021, before it started to fall and touched USD 68.87 a barrel in December.

Prices, however, started to rise thereafter and on Tuesday soared to USD 87.7 per barrel - the highest since 2014.

Petrol and diesel prices have been in the past frozen before crucial elections.

There was a 19-day price freeze on petrol and diesel ahead of Karnataka polls in May 2018, despite international fuel prices going up by nearly USD 5 per barrel. However, no sooner were the elections over, oil companies rapidly passed on to customers the desired increase - over 16-straight days post-May 14, 2018. Petrol price climbed by Rs 3.8 per litre and diesel by Rs 3.38 per litre after the hike.

Similarly, they had stopped revising fuel prices for almost 14 days ahead of the assembly elections in Gujarat in December 2017.

## Sri Lanka averts major default; repays US \$ 500 million

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sri Lanka has repaid USD 500 million international sovereign bond (ISB) that was due for settlement, the Central Bank said on Tuesday, averting a major default amidst deepening forex crisis and spiralling external debt in the island nation. The development came days after India earlier this month announced a USD 900 million loan to Lanka to build up its depleted foreign reserves and for food imports.

"Sri Lanka has paid the USD 500 million sovereign bond that matured today (Jan 18)," Central Bank Ajith Cabraal tweeted. The

international rating agencies had expressed doubts over the island nation's ability to meet its international sovereign bond payments of USD 1.5 billion, including the first USD 500 million which matured on Tuesday. The settlement of these bonds, issued in 2012, came despite calls from the business fraternity, economic analysts and opposition politicians to defer the payment in view of the severe foreign exchange crisis. They opined that the nation's foreign currency reserves should be used to pay for the imports of essentials. Shortages of food and essentials are prevailing due to scarcity of foreign exchange.

## Nazara acquires majority stake in Datawrkz for Rs 124 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gaming and sports media company Nazara Technologies on Tuesday said it will acquire a 55 per cent stake in programmatic advertising and monetisation company Datawrkz for about Rs 124 crore.

The transaction values the Bengaluru-based company at Rs 225 crore (approximately USD 30 million), linked to CY 22 EBITDA performance, a filing said. The Board has approved the strategic investment by the acquisition of 37,498 equity shares - representing 55 per cent of the equity share capital, on a fully diluted basis -- of Datawrkz Business Solutions Private Limited along

with its wholly-owned subsidiaries at a total consideration not exceeding Rs 124 crores in two tranches, it added.

The shares will be bought from existing shareholders Senthil Govindan, Karthigha Dhanabalan, K Arunprabu, Mayank Khirwadkar and Vishal Tukaranm Garale, it said. In the first tranche, Nazara will acquire a 33 per cent share for Rs 60 crore during the first quarter of FY2022-23 and it reserves an option to acquire an additional 22 per cent share in the second tranche that is expected to close in the fourth quarter of FY2022-23, the filing added.

In a statement, Nazara said of the Rs 60 crore payable, Rs 35 crores are partly payable in



cash and the balance consideration of Rs 25 crore will be paid either in cash or swap of shares in the first tranche by April 2022.

Datawrkz tech offerings will enhance the in-house capabilities of Nazara for optimising its customer acquisition spends as well as enhance yields on ad monetisation of its large con-

sumer base. This ad revenue monetisation is expected to assist many of the companies in the 'Friends of Nazara' network.

With this transaction, Datawrkz also aims to establish itself as a key player in gaming, covering both demand and supply side offerings for the gaming ecosystem in the US and India.

## Cyberattacks surge amid accelerating pace of COVID-driven digitalisation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The accelerating pace of digitalisation, fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a record-breaking year for cybercrime with ransomware attacks rising 151 per cent in 2021, and an average of 270 cyberattacks per organisation being faced, a new study showed on Tuesday.

The World Economic Forum's 'Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2022', released during its online Davos Agenda summit, further said that each successful cyber breach cost a company USD 3.6 million (nearly Rs 27 crore) last year, while the average share price of the hacked company underperformed NASDAQ by nearly

3 per cent even six months after the event in case of the breach becoming public.

The WEF said the global digital economy surged on the back of the COVID-19 pandemic, but so has cybercrime and nearly 80 per cent of cyber leaders now consider ransomware a 'danger' and 'threat' to public safety.

At the same time, there is a large perception gap between business executives who think their companies are secure and security leaders who disagree.

Some 92 per cent of business executives surveyed agree that cyber resilience is integrated into enterprise risk-management strategies, but only 55 per cent of cyber



leaders surveyed agreed. This gap between leaders can leave firms vulnerable to attacks as a direct result of incongruous security priorities and policies, the report said.

Even after a threat is detected, the WEF survey conducted in collaboration with Accenture, found that nearly two-thirds would find it challenging to respond to a cyber-

security incident due to the shortage of skills within their team.

Even more troubling is the growing trend that companies need 280 days on average to identify and respond to a cyberattack. To put this into perspective, an incident that occurs on January 1, may not be fully contained until October 8.

"Companies must now embrace cyber resilience -- not only defending against cyberattacks but also preparing for swift and timely incident response and recovery when an attack does occur," WEF Managing Director Jeremy Jurgens said.

Accenture Chair and CEO Julie Sweet said organisations

need to work more closely with ecosystem partners and other third parties to make cybersecurity part of their ecosystem DNA, so they can be resilient and promote customer trust.

The survey also found that less than one-fifth of cyber leaders feel confident that their organisations are cyber resilient.

Also, they do not feel consulted on business decisions, and they struggle to gain the support of decision-makers in prioritizing cyber risks, while recruiting and retaining the right talent is their greatest concern.

Besides, nearly nine in ten see SMEs as the weakest link in the supply chain.



# Oscar Isaac is Marvel's newest superhero with *Moon Knight*

Marvel Studios has unveiled the first trailer for its Disney Plus series *Moon Knight* and it has a new superhero played by actor Oscar Isaac.

The teaser was unveiled on Monday night, officially launching the 2022 slate for the Marvel Cinematic Universe, reports variety.com.

In *Moon Knight* premiering on March 30, Isaac plays Marc Spector, a former soldier with a profound case of dissociative identity disorder that manifests as fully distinct individuals. He becomes the conduit for the Egyptian moon god Khonshu, which only further exacerbates Marc's anxiety over his mental illness.

In the trailer, set to Kid Cudi's *Day an' Night*, Marc can't tell the difference between his normal life and his dreams. He plays with a Rubik's cube, unable to fall asleep, only to jump out of bed in a panic with his foot chained to his bed, though he seemingly forgets he was the one who restrained himself the night before. After visiting a museum on ancient Egypt, he sees a vision of Khonshu and later meets Ethan Hawke's villain, a cult leader who encourages Marc to embrace the darkness within himself.

The trailer ends with Marc being



enveloped by the Moon Knight costume and a shot of him brutally beating someone up on a bathroom floor.

Unlike all of Marvel Studios' previous series for Disney Plus, which were based

on existing characters from the company's pre-2019 feature films, *Moon Knight* charts a brand new path, with a totally new set of characters and a storyline that has no clear initial connection to the MCU.

Making his Marvel comics debut in 1975, *Moon Knight* initially had superpowers based on the phases of the moon, but more recent iterations have kept his abilities mortal, aided by sophisticated gadgetry.

That has drawn comics fans to compare the character to the DC Comics superhero Batman.

*Moon Knight* co-stars Hawke and May Calamawy, while Jeremy Slater serves as creator and head writer, with Mohamed Diab and the team of Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead directing.

The show inaugurates Marvel Studios' second year delivering TV series for Disney Plus alongside its feature films. Also expected in 2022 for the streamer: *She-Hulk*, a legal comedy starring Tatiana Maslany, Mark Ruffalo, Tim Roth, Renee Elise Goldsberry, Josh Segarra and Jameela Jamil; *Ms. Marvel*, a coming-of-age comedy starring newcomer Iman Vellani in the title role; and Season 2 of the animated series *What If?*



## Netflix pulls the plug on *Cooking With Paris* after one season

Streaming platform Netflix has cancelled Paris Hilton's cooking show after its first season.

According to *Entertainment Weekly*, *Cooking With Paris* premiered in August 2021 with six episodes.

The show saw the hotel heiress and reality star try her hand at a variety of recipes alongside a range of celebrity guests, including Demi Lovato, Saweetie, Kim Kardashian, mother Kathy Hilton, and sister Nicky Hilton.

It was inspired by Hilton's YouTube video of the same name, which went viral in January 2020. She also served as an executive producer on the show, along with Aaron Saldman, Eli Holzman and Rebecca Hertz. The series hailed from The Intellectual Property Corporation, an Industrial Media company.

# what's brewing?

## Tusshar Kapoor on debut book *Bachelor Dad*

Actor-producer Tusshar Kapoor, who is turning author with *Bachelor Dad*, says his debut book offers a deep dive into his journey to fatherhood and will touch upon several aspects of being a single parent.

Tusshar opted for surrogacy and became a father to son Lakshya Kapoor through surrogacy in June 2016.

The 45-year-old actor said people would often ask him to write down his experience of raising a child as a single parent in the form of a book but he thought it was a "far-fetched idea".

Two years ago, however, when publishing house Penguin India approached him with the idea, Tusshar said he thought it was an opportunity to set the record straight on questions he was asked privately.

"The questions were mostly about 'Why did I do it? How is it possible? Is it the right thing to do?' and 'Will I be able to do it?' After I became a father, the questions were about how I am managing it. The initial surprise was because I was one of the very first people in the fraternity to become a single parent in this manner."

"A lot of people were curious about the medical aspects, even going into the idea of whether I should have adopted or just got married. People had their own notions," the actor, son of veteran actor Jeetendra and producer Shobha Kapoor, told PTI in an interview.

Tusshar, known for films like the *Golmaal* series, *Shootout at Wadala* and *The Dirty Picture*, said, though people around him were "curious" about his fatherhood, the response was not negative.

In fact, the actor said, his bigger challenge before becoming a father was to first navigate his own doubts and introspect.

"Nobody really reacted negatively. There was a lot of positivity, they were all supportive, but there were questions about how my journey will be. Which is why I have written this book, to give an honest account of my journey. I was nervous before taking the step



of becoming a father. There were lots of questions that came to my mind as well. (For example) if people will accept it positively? Will there be too much of a shock? Will there be a backlash in the media because I was breaking cultural norms? The book sheds light on all these queries and also chronicles how I decided to take the plunge and eventually found my true inner calling," he added.

Through the course of 10 chapters spread across 224 pages, the book chronicles the last decade of Tusshar's life.

As a first-time writer, he said he was initially bogged down by the idea of writing a book but slowly got comfortable as he began writing, every day.

Initially, I wondered how I would be able to pull this off and write all these chapters. It has been a journey, so the apprehension was if I would be able to remember it all. Another challenge was time. I was busy working during the lockdown, the day time was spent in my son's online schooling. So I allotted night time to write the book. When I started writing, I started enjoying it. My writing speed increased, and I was able to finish the book in 11 months. I took it up as a challenge but the process in the end became quite fun and enjoyable," he added.

*Bachelor Dad* is expected to hit the shelves in the first week of February.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



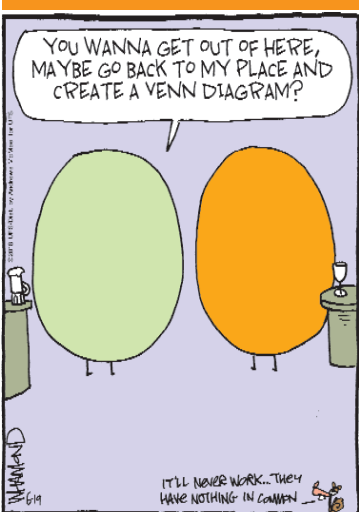
### GINGER MEGGS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- Beard
- Movements of the sea caused by the moon's pull on the Earth
- A sour oily fruit from a tree
- One of the continents
- An alcoholic drink
- Look at something for a long time
- Me
- A type of small bird
- A clothing size
- A chart of months and days

#### DOWN

- Broader
- A six-legged creature
- Round handle

- Up
- People not known to you
- Extremely frightened
- An eye's cover
- A striped animal
- Mistake
- A joint in the leg



### SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution								
6	1	7	5	8	2	4	9	3
4	5	9	7	3	6	1	2	8
2	3	8	9	4	1	6	5	7
1	4	3	8	9	7	2	6	5
8	2	6	3	1	5	7	4	9
9	7	5	6	2	4	3	8	1
3	8	2	4	7	9	5	1	6
7	6	1	2	5	8	9	3	4
5	9	4	1	6	3	8	7	2

#### 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.



## SHIKHA DUGGAL

The series wasn't a fictitious one, Rohit Shetty was actually living the life of a police officer for



the khakee cops; it's  
a special task  
force. They are  
the first guys  
to react in a  
dangerous  
situation  
before  
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there. They  
aren't  
deployed, they  
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close to operating a police  
station — such is the dif-  
ference. The kids are  
born there and then  
join the forces,  
what better  
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tism?."

When *The Pioneer* exclusively asked him to narrate one of his fondest memories that he spent with any of the commandos, Golmaal director states, "There was a story at every turn, not just a story but an emotional saga unfolding before me. The senior most commando turned to a cop in 90s only because his father was killed by a terrorist — the moment I heard this it shook me. While patrolling, I heard many of the commandos telling me how they lost one of their fellow commandos, it's sad to hear. There was no fear in their eyes, not any of them and I was stunned. Despite knowing the circumstances, no one ever backed out. For a matter of fact, an engineer turned to a commando because his father was killed by a terrorist — this will be so inspirational for the youngsters because it will lead them to know how one must channelize their anger. Today, the same person is a highly decorated cop in his

department.”

Clarifying further how *Singham* 3 will always stay as Ajay Devgn's brand, yet episodes like this in life upgrade him as a director to showcase more perspectives towards the world through his movies. Even during *Mission Frontline*, the director in him was popping out during suitable intervals to which he laughed his heart out. After serving as a host and mentor for a reality television show based on fear itself for such a long time, it was only natural for the press to ask fears of Rohit Shetty and he asserts, "I don't fear anything, pressurising situations do arise. Anything can go wrong at any given point of time. I have gotten upset too but I never overthink. I don't have that time to consume myself, every year I have a film or show to do."

The episodes will see him spend a day with J&K Police's Special Operations Group in Srinagar and we can't wait to watch him come to blows with it!



result, a whole new post-covid world scenario has emerged with enterprises attempting to build and maintain a solid IT infrastructure in order to deploy hybrid work models at the workplace which led to increased flexibility of IT developers and businesses towards remote working. — iXceed seized the opportunity, and developed a specific 5F strategy structure with aspects such as Focus, Find, Filter, Fit, and Flex that allow employers and workers to make quick and informed decisions about cooperating. As an organisation we believed that 'when you share risk, the collective risk goes down.' Buckling delivery methods led to fastening adoption and expansion. Concomitantly they assisted companies in appropriating the applicants on one side, on the other side afforded assistance to the potential employees in making the proper decision about their future employer with respect to their growth opportunities and cultural fit," tells Yogita on the challenges the firm faced during the pandemic and how it overcame with grace.

The firm has become so successful that they now plan to expand in new geographies — specially US. They also plan to enhance the growth of new service lines — technology solutions and enterprise services. “We also focusing on creating a better ecosystem for employees to boost their growth and add value to themselves. We plan to increase our revenue growth by 40% YOY and become the employer of choice across Europe and India. We intend to grow our global customer base. We’re also planning to create valuable relationships for businesses and people by providing efficient talent solutions. Connect talent with global opportunities. Expand footprints in Americas and expand more in Asia Pacific. We recently started working in South-East Asian and Middle East markets as well. Not just this we’re also planning proliferation across varied industries beyond IT. Expanding workforce in India, Poland, ME and other parts of world,” concludes Yogita.

**I**nno-  
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technology is revamp-  
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The technology  
is the most evident  
available talent to

fit the needs of an employer, yet the major players are contingent on the automation of process efficiencies. In an interview with **The Pioneer**, Yogita Tulsiani, MD CO-Founder at iXceed Solutions, discusses the same. As the race to hire top talent in IT heats up, Yogita tells their mission is to enable organisations to match their growth with business demand and clients to modernise and adapt new technologies for staying ahead of the curve, by improving employee-employer relations via trust-based-hiring, seamlessly merging the practises of contractual staffing, solutions delivery and recruitment into a custom-fit solution.

"The start of the pandemic, as well as the introduction of technology has hastened the pace of distant work. The employment contracts were floating around the market and qualified people with many offers were still looking for better chances, amidst a lot of time in the interim. As a

**T**he face of men grooming rituals has undergone a sea change, and it is having a moment lately. With the pandemic imposing closures of salons and barbershops, there is a boom in demand for men's grooming products and services. Notably, men's grooming is incomplete without manscaping. However, most of us are unaware of this term and wonder what exactly manscaping is? To put it plainly, manscaping is a routine of removing or trimming men's body hair to enhance their appearances.

With the prominence of manscaping, its ways have transformed with time. Today, in the age of body positivity, men are no longer shamed if they sport a neatly trimmed chest, arms and legs. It is widely accepted today if men choose

to remove unwanted body hair like their women counterparts. For your ease of building up a routine, here's a list of 4 ways to master the art of manscaping with perfection.

## Choosing the ideal trimmer & blade

There are four manscaping options for men (trimming, waxing, shaving, and applying depilatory creams), and they have to decide which one suits them the best. Among all, trimming is considered the safest and hassle-free. This is because shaving has a high chance of causing nicks and cuts. Besides, men do not use separate blades for shaving specific body parts, owing to their careless and lethargic nature. They hardly keep a separate razor for shaving their sensitive-prone private

parts. Although shaving is a fast process, it causes cuts, and the razors are usually designed for removing facial hair.

On the other hand, neither waxing provides the much-needed trimmed sophisticated look, nor do depilatory creams suit the skin type of everyone. This indicates the importance of choosing a body trimmer specially designed for body trimming over an ordinary beard trimmer meant for facial hair to keep your chest groomed every time.

The Ballistic Body Trimmer by Zlade is an exceptionally curated body hair trimmer that seamlessly trims the intimate parts of your body. It is equipped with ceramic blades and safe-edge technology, which phenomenally protects the skin from nicks and cuts.

### Not forgetting the aftercare

Whatever method of body hair removal you choose (waxing, shaving, or trimming), your body skin will thank you for slathering it with some post-manscape love. Aftercare is incredibly essential as your skin tends to become vulnerable to sensitivity, irritation, and infections after manscaping. Aftershave balms help keep your skin on your chest, legs, and crown area soothing and reduce any kind of skin irritation or razor bumps. Therefore, avoiding an aftershave routine is a lousy skincare move.

### Manscaping under shower

It is always advisable to conduct a manscaping routine when the water is running or after a shower. You can

smoothly clean the delicate parts of your body through friction and minimize the risk of cuts and razor burns by manscaping under the shower. Shaving under the shower also ensures that all the mess goes right down the drain, making the process more accessible and convenient. Keeping your skin wet or moisturized while manscaping prevents skin itchiness and makes your work done smoothly.

### Trimming the neck hair

Skipping the neck hair trimming routine is a major mistake, as it can ruin a good hairstyle by making your hairline look truly messy and ugly. With the right neck hair trimmer, you can shape, line up, and cut a clean neckline by trimming your neck hair anytime to get the perfect well-groomed look. Besides, at-home trimming also eradicates your frequent visits to salons and barber-shops.

## Summing up

Manscaping has indeed emerged to be an art of manliness over the years. It has helped men to scale up their presentability and boost their self-confidence. So, incorporating a manscaping regimen into your personal grooming routine is a boon that will undoubtedly help you look more hygienic and polished.





# ALL EYES ON VIRAT KOHLI THE BATTER AS INDIA TAKE ON SA

PTI ■ PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA)

The mighty Virat Kohli's presence in the Indian playing eleven as a mere player for the first time in seven years will be keenly followed while his potential successor in red-ball cricket, K L Rahul, will be judged for his captaincy in the three-match ODI series against South Africa beginning here on Wednesday.

Whether he is batting in the middle or fielding at the boundary line, Kohli's every move is tracked but some of that attention will now have to be shared by Rahul.

More importantly, will he be at his usual animated best on the field or will the cricketing world see a rather subdued Kohli after his stunning resignation from Test captaincy brought an end to his innings as official leader of the

team across formats?

He did not want to leave ODI captaincy after relinquishing the role in the shortest format and it led to a war of words with the BCCI on how the entire matter was handled.

His supporters and Indian cricket in general will be hoping that Kohli has put his differences with the BCCI firmly behind him and come Wednesday, he starts a new innings with his willow doing most of the talking. A highly desired century after two years would be cherry on top.

Rahul, who is leading the side in the absence of an injured Rohit Sharma, is expected to turn to Kohli for advice during the series.

Not only Kohli has a major role to play as a batter, but as vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah said on the eve of the series, the star "will always be a leader" in the team.

With the new leadership and

support staff, India will look to win the series with one eye on preparations for the 2023 World Cup and also make up for the disappointment of unexpectedly going down in the Tests last week.

The last time a full strength India played an ODI series was at home against England in March before a second string squad travelled to Sri Lanka in July.

Rahul batted in the middle-order against England but it remains to be seen if he moves back to the top alongside Shikhar Dhawan. Ruturaj Gaikwad, who made the squad following an exceptional domestic season, might have to wait longer for his ODI debut.

It will be crucial three games for the seasoned Dhawan, who has already lost his place in the T20 side. The southpaw has thrived under pressure in the past and will be looking to solidify his

position as the first-choice opener alongside Rohit when the latter returns from injury.

Kohli will bat at his usual number three spot while there will be a toss-up between Suryakumar Yadav and Shreyas Iyer for the number four position.

Rishabh Pant is expected to come at number five while Venkatesh Iyer is likely to make his 50-over debut as the all-rounder at six, having shown promise in the T20s against New Zealand.

The two spinners likely to play are Yuzvendra Chahal and R Ashwin, who has made a comeback after more than four years.



## K L Rahul set to lead Lucknow IPL franchise

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

K L Rahul will captain the yet-to-be-named Lucknow franchise in the upcoming IPL, a league source told PTI on Tuesday.

It is learnt that Rahul is one of the players Lucknow has picked from the draft ahead of the mega auction on February 12 and 13 in Bengaluru.

The other two are likely to be Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis and uncapped leg spinner Ravi Bishnoi.

"Rahul will captain Lucknow. The team is deciding on the other two draft picks," an IPL source told PTI. Rahul led Punjab Kings for the past two seasons but did not want to stay at the franchise. Bishnoi was also with Punjab while Stoinis represented Delhi Capitals. RPSG Group had shelled out Rs 7090 crore to buy the Lucknow franchise.

Rahul is currently the stand-in captain of the Indian ODI team in South Africa in the absence of an injured Rohit Sharma.

## India eye improved batting performance against Ireland

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO)

In-form batter and captain Yash Dhull will be expecting a much improved batting effort from his team when record four-time champions India take on Ireland in their second Group B match of the ICC U-19 World Cup here on Wednesday.

Having started their campaign with a 45-run win over South Africa, the Indians are brimming with confidence and are expected to steamroll Ireland at the Brian Lara Stadium.

Both India and Ireland have registered wins in their openers. While India beat South Africa, Ireland defeated Uganda by 39 runs.

Dhull single-handedly anchored the Indian innings against the Junior Proteas as they lost both their openers — Harnoor Singh and Angkrish Raghuvanshi early after being put into bat. Dhull added vital 71 runs with Shaikh Rasheed (31) for the third to resurrect the Indian innings first and then stitched valuable contributions with Nishant Sidhu (27), Raj Bawa (13) and Kushal Tambe (35) to give his bowlers a decent target to defend. But come Wednesday, Dhull would be looking for more support from his openers to ease the pressure on middle and lower-order going into the knockout stages of the tournament. If Indian batters were not upto the mark against South Africa, it was completely contrasting performance from the bowling unit. Left-arm spinner Vicky Ostwal (5/28) turned out to be the star performer with the ball while right-arm fast bowler Raj Bawa (4/47) gave the perfect support from the other end as India bowled out South Africa for 187 runs.

Jalandhar-born left-handed opener Harnoor, who was India's leading run-getter in the Asia Cup



with 251 runs in five games and struck an unbeaten 100 against Australia in the team's final warm-up game on January 11, is expected to score a bagful of runs in the tournament but managed only 1 in the opener. Right-arm pacer Rajvardhan Hangargekar (1/38), who has played senior cricket for Maharashtra and impressed with his raw pace in the Asia Cup, and left-arm fast bowler Ravi Kumar both had ordinary outings against South Africa. Meanwhile in the other match of the day, Australia will take on Scotland in a Group D game in Basseterre.

**Squads (from):**

**India:** Yash Dhull (c), Harnoor Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, SK Rasheed (vc), Nishant Sidhu, Siddarth Yadav, Aneeshwar Gautam, Dinesh Bana, Aaradhya Yadav, Raj Angad Bawa, Manav Parakh, Kaushal Tambe, Rajvardhan Hangargekar, Vasu Vats, Vicky Ostwal, Ravi Kumar, Garv Sangwan.

**Ireland:** Tim Tector (c), Diarmuid Burke, Joshua Cox, Jack Dickson, Liam Doherty, Jamie Forbes, Daniel Forkin, Matthew Humphreys, Philipus le Roux, Scott MacBeth, Nathan McGuire, Muzamil Sherzad, David Vincent, Luke Whelan, Reuben Wilson.

India vs Ireland  
Live from 6:30pm IST  
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

## Former IPL cricketer R Sathish claims "fixing approach"

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former first-class and IPL cricketer Rajagopal Sathish was allegedly offered Rs 40 lakh to fix matches during the Tamil Nadu Premier League 41-year-old Sathish was part of Chepauk Super Gillies squad that won the TNPL last season. The former Tamil Nadu player has also been part of Mumbai Indians, Punjab Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL. A person named Bunny Anand made the offer to Sathish via Instagram.

"He informed us as well as the International Cricket Council earlier this month that he was offered money through social media. Since we are only facilitators in such cases, we advised him to lodge a police complaint. He has done that and now police will investigate and do the needful," BCCI ACU chief Shabir Khandawala told PTI.

The complaint has been filed with Bengaluru Police.

The TNPL was played from July 19 to August 15 last year.

Asked why Sathish chose to approach the BCCI only now, the ACU chief said: "Whatever the circumstances were, it needs to be seen by the police."

"We don't want to discourage him. If he has decided to come out, our duty is to show him the way," Khandawala, who is a former Gujarat DGP, added.

## Skipper Wellalage's all-round show hands SL 4-wicket victory

PTI ■ BASSETTERE ST KITTS & NEVIS

Dunith Wellalage led from the front with an all-round show as Sri Lanka defeated Australia by four wickets to register their second consecutive win in Group D of the ICC U-19 World Cup here.

Wellalage (5/28) first spun the web around Australia batsmen with his slow left-arm tweakers to bundle out the opposition for 175 runs after opting to bowl at the Conaree Sports Club on Monday.

Opener Campbell Kellaway was the top-scorer for Australia with a 77-ball 54-run knock as Sri Lankan bowlers picked up wickets at regular intervals to make life difficult for their opponents.

Besides, Wellalage, Treveen Mathew (2/32) and Matheesha Pathirana (2/34) picked up two wickets apiece for Sri Lanka.

Chasing a modest target, Sri Lanka suffered early jolts and were reduced to 49 for four at one stage before Wellalage steadied the ship with a 71-ball 52 and stitched two crucial partnerships with wicketkeeper Anjala Bandara (33) and Ranuda Somaratne (32 not out) to take Islanders home in 37 overs.

Sri Lanka are leading Group D with four points from two games, while Australia are placed third with a win.

West Indies beat Scotland in a Group D match in Basseterre.

In another Group D match in Basseterre, West Indies thrashed min-



nnows Scotland by seven wickets to register their first win of the tournament.

Electing to field, West Indies first bundled out Scotland for 95 in 35.4 overs and then chased down the target in 19.4 overs by losing just three wickets. Right-arm pacer Shiva Sankar (3/17) was the star performer for West Indies with the ball, while off-break bowler Onaje Amory (2/26) and left-arm spinner Anderson Mahase (2/16) also chipped in with wickets.

Pakistan register easy win over Zimbabwe in Group C in Trinidad.

Opener Haseebullah Khan smashed a brilliant century as Pakistan showed their batting prowess to start their campaign on a positive note, beat-

ing Zimbabwe by 115 runs in Group C at the Diego Martin ground.

Wicketkeeper Haseebullah scored 135 off 155 balls, the highest score of the tournament so far, while Irfan Khan made 75 off 73 deliveries to propel Pakistan to 315 for nine after being sent into bat.

Haseebullah and Irfan shared 192 runs for the third wicket to set the platform for the total.

For Zimbabwe, pacer Alex Felao (5/58) picked up a fiver.

Brian Bennett (83) played a lone hand for Zimbabwe but they were never really in the hunt after early dismissals and were all out for 200 in 42.4 overs.

## Prannoy enters second round of Syed Modi badminton



PTI ■ LUCKNOW

India's HS Prannoy entered the second round of the men's singles competition at the Syed Modi International badminton tournament after registering a straight-game win over Ukraine's Danylo Bosniuk but seventh seed

Sourabh Verma was stunned by Azerbaijan's Ade Resky Dwicahyo here on Tuesday.

On a comeback trail, the fifth seeded Prannoy took just 36 minutes to get the better of Bosniuk 21-14 21-18 in his opening match.

A former top-10 player, Prannoy,

who gave a good account of himself before being stopped by 20-year-old Lakshya Sen in the quarterfinals of the India Open last week, will next meet compatriot Priyanshu Rajawat, who got a first round walkover from Rahul Yadav Chittaboina.

However, the tournament was over for fourth seed Sameer Verma after he retired hurt against Ireland's Nhat Nguyen.

Sameer was trailing 2-7 in the first game before he decided to concede the match due to a calf muscle injury, which he had sustained in October last year.

Subhankar Dey also conceded his match against compatriot Kartikey Gulshan Kumar due to an injury when he was trailing 2-9 in the opening game. Later in the day, Sourabh suffered a 15-21 21-19 first-round defeat to Dwicahyo in a match that lasted one hour and seven minutes.

Among women, Ashmita Chaliha gave a first round walkover to Malvika Bansod, while Aakarshi Kashyap defeated Mugdha Agrey 21-13 21-14 and Anupama Upadhyaya eased past Rituparna Das.

## Lakshya reaches career-high 13th

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Young Lakshya Sen reached a career-high 13th in the latest badminton world rankings after winning the men's singles crown in the India Open, a title triumph in which also lifted the men's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty to eighth place.

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and former world number one Kidambi Srikanth remained static at seventh and 10th spots, respectively, even as Satwiksairaj and Chirag moved up two places.

Sen made a jump of four places, moving up from the 17th position with 66470 points to close in on reigning world champion Loh Kean Yew at 12th spot. Sen defeated Yew in the final of the India Open.

Last year, Sen reached the BWF World Championships semifinal where he lost to Srikanth in a hard fought match 21-17, 14-21, 17-21 and settled for a bronze medal.

## We hope to break down Iran defence to start with a win: Dennerby

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India head coach Thomas Dennerby on Tuesday said the hosts would aim to break down a strong Iranian defence with an attacking game to eke out a win in their women's AFC Asian Cup opener here on Thursday.

The match against Iran would be crucial for India in their bid to qualify for the quarterfinals. Iran are the lowest ranked team in Group A which also has China and Chinese Taipei. They are ranked at 70th in the world as against India's 55th.

"Our first target is to get to quarter-finals, we think we have a realistic chance to do that. Iran is going to be a real tough game. We have followed them through videos and they are really a fighting team," Dennerby said in

a virtual media interaction.

"They (Iran) have strong defence, they defend very well around their box. It is going to be a challenge for us to score. It is not going to be an easy game. We are hoping that with some creative and good passing game, we can break down their defence," he added.

"We have a lot of players that can create chances and score goals. We have to be good all through the match." A win against Iran will give India a big chance to make it to the knock-out stage -- the quarterfinals. A quarterfinal berth will virtually ensure at least an Intercontinental Play-offs berth for the 2023 FIFA World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Five teams from the tournament will directly qualify for

the 2023 women's FIFA World Cup while another two will make it to the Intercontinental Play-offs. Australia, which finished runners-up in the last edition of the AFC Asian Cup, have already qualified for the 2023 FIFA World Cup as co-hosts.

"It is a big challenge obviously for us, but it is also a very big opportunity. If we qualify for the quarterfinals, we have a chance for qualifying for the FIFA World Cup next year and that will be huge for Indian football," said captain Ashalata Devi.

"We are hoping that the Asian Cup being hosted in India will give a big boost to women's football in our country. Everyone in the team now wants to play the first match right away," said the pivot of Indian defence with 64 caps under her belt.

Since taking charge of the Indian team in August last year, Dennerby has been trying to change the playing style from a predominantly long ball game to short passing one.



AP ■ MELBOURNE

Five years and five long sets later, five-time Australian Open runner-up Andy Murray finally has won another match at the season-opening Grand Slam tournament.

The former No 1-ranked Murray, playing thanks to a wildcard invitation as he continues his career comeback from hip operations and thoughts of retirement, beat 21st-seeded Nikoloz Basilashvili 6-1 3-6 6-4 6-7(5) 6-4 on Tuesday to reach the second round at Melbourne Park.

He lost a five-setter in the first round in 2019 — a match he, and everyone else, thought might have been his last in Australia — after missing the 2018 edition with an

## Andy Murray wins in Australia for 1st time

injury. He missed the 2020 tournament with a pelvic injury and last year's event because of COVID-19.

"It's been a tough three, four years. Put in a lot of work to get back here," Murray said in his post-match TV interview at John Cain Arena, which was formerly known as Hisense and is parochially referred to as the People's Court.

"I've played on this court many times, the atmosphere is incredible. This is the one where I thought I'd played my last.

"Amazing to be back, winning a five-set battle like that. Couldn't ask for more." Murray beat

Basilashvili in a three-hour three-setter last week in Sydney, where he reached the final of the tuneup tournament.

This one went almost four hours.

When the 34-year-old Murray clinched it on his third match point, he turned to the back of the court, closed his eyes and pumped his fists to celebrate.

After walking over to his court-side chair and dropping his racket, he returned to the court, punched the air and yelled "Let's go!"

It was Murray's 49th win in an Australian Open singles match,



moving him ahead of Andre Agassi and Ivan Lendl into fifth-place all-time. Match win No 50 is the immediate priority.

"I think there's things in my game I can do better," said Murray, who lost the 2010 final to Roger Federer and four others to Novak Djokovic.

"Would love to have a deep run here, if possible.

"It's something I've not had in one of the Slams since I've come back from the injury, and it's something that's motivating me."

Murray's wasn't the only dramatic five-setter that finished in the

early evening on Day 2.

Ninth-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime fended off Emil Ruusuvuori 6-4 0-6 3-6 6-3 6-4, and Maxime Cressy overcame 20 double-faults to upset fellow American and No 22-seeded John Isner 7-6(2) 7-5 6-7(4) 6-7(4) 6-4.

Second-seeded Daniil Medvedev, one of the biggest potential beneficiaries of Djokovic's deportation, had a much more routine first round.

Nine-time champion Djokovic was already back in Serbia — two days after losing his legal challenge to stay in Australia despite being unvaccinated against COVID-19 — when Medvedev went into Rod Laver Arena for a 6-1 6-4 7-6(3) win over Henri Laaksonen.



# Meet Allam Gaari Pellikuthuru Rukshar Dhillon

SHIKHA DUGGAL

**R**ukshar Dhillon is going to be that one gorgeous young face to watch out for in Tollywood now! Having made her mark with her big-screen debut with *Akatayi* in which she looked sizzling, the beautiful Rukshar has been on the radar of Tollywood directors that see a huge potential for her in the near future.

Sprinkling some good cheer for our readers, the London returned actress has now been roped in by director Vidya Sagar Chinta to star in his new movie *Ashoka Vanam Lo Arjuna Kalyanam*. After giving a blockbuster hit with actor Nani, this is her another big pocket film that she has signed in a remarkably quick time. Quickly getting in touch with her amid a busy schedule, Rukshar paints a very clear picture about her upcoming romantic entertainer in which she'll be seen romancing actor Vishwak Sen! She

enlightened us, "In no time I seized this project because of the variety it was offering to me as an upcoming actress one can root for. As compared to my earlier Telugu films, this seemed like a distinct role to me. I was busy wrapping up my OTT project and besides that I couldn't stop myself from coming on board with the *Falaknuma Das* director."

Talking a little more about the variation she mentioned before, she gives details saying, "Having talked about the multifariousness in the character that I am playing in the movie written by Ravi Kiran Kola, it's true that it's demanding but the kind of demands that I would love to fulfill. The role is all about doing less talking and depicting it all through emotions. *Ashoka Vanam Lo Arjuna Kalyanam* team infused me with unbreakable confidence that I was able to execute my character so well opposite Vishwak."

When talking about films with any of the actors, it's mandatory for us to touch upon the fondest set memories while they are busy doing precarious shoots and Rukshar had her optimistic memories too, especially with a lovely co-star like Vishwak Sen. She highlights, "While in conversation with Vishwak, I realised that what we share in common is that the thought of appreciating valuable opportunities coming our way. Neither of us belong to a film background, and the kind of discussions we indulged on set was something to cherish. I noticed Vishwak never tried to gain control over me while performing a scene, he knew exactly what sharing screen space meant. Our end goal was to make the scene look better and not one of us in the movie! Moreover, he's

extremely talkative on sets and that's the kind of vibe that I appreciate too."

Back-to-back Telugu films are being churned out in the theatres but the romantic entertainers will continue to ruminate on our screens and as for that reason we were eager to know what romance for the actress is like too! She snickers a bit and reflects, "I am a hardcore romantic girl. Love and care are the two facets I endear in any relationship. I have a deep affection for love stories and probably that's why *Ashoka Vanam Lo Arjuna Kalyanam* seems like the right fit for me to move ahead in my Telugu career." Further in conversation with the star to watch out for, we learnt it wasn't the language that pushed her to do movies but the whole concept of 'cinematic values' that made her go for it! She continues, "I have grown up watching Hindi and English movies, but I always ensured that I also watch the dubbed versions of other regional movies too. That's the kind of engrossment I have with movies despite not knowing Telugu. The one thing I really liked about Tollywood is the way Tolly fans worship these movies and their actors! Regardless of doing very few films in T-town, I have never faced a thumbs down from Telugu audiences."

Elaborating more about the character that we'll see Rukshar playing on screen when this SVCC banner movie goes on floors, she says, "It boiled down to the rearing and raising my character Madhavi has in the movie. She comes from a space where she fears taking uncompromising decisions she's brought up in a very protective environment. And, when we compare Rukshar to

Madhavi, the combat changes! I have always been asked to embrace individuality in real life and Madhavi is closely knit to her family. She never reacts impulsively in the movie, she's observant and sensitive. This feature made me go back to the times while I was growing through this phase of life."

Relentlessly going ahead with this fun conversation, she didn't shy away from sharing her association with actor Nani too and she recollects, "I had just stepped into this industry while I got the chance to star opposite Nani. Initially, I was this highly strung girl coming to the sets but it was actor Nani who taught me how to be your windless self before the shot takes place. He knew I wasn't affluent in Telugu language, but he educated me on how to deliver the scene not with the correct word but the correct emotion. That has stayed with me all this while. It gives me a much better closure now."

Concluding the swift interview on a jolly note, Rukshar who is working non-stop in this industry has been getting plenty of requests from her Punjabi descendants to make her grand debut in a full-fledged Punjabi movie too. If she does it, she confirms it's going to be for her grand-parents! "Regional tag has been pushed aside, its pan-India movies now. I would love to be part of the movie that hugs me with my own culture. But *Ashoka Vanam Lo Arjuna Kalyanam* should be the talk of town. Through my Telugu ventures I would love to change perceptions, create a broader point of view towards societal pressures. It's as pretty as a picture to see actresses helping big-ticket movies on their shoulders!," she signs off.

**C**hoosing to end their 18-year-long marriage, actor Dhanush and director Aishwaryaa Dhanush, who also happens to be the daughter of superstar Rajinikanth, have announced that they have decided to part ways.

## Dhanush-Aishwarya end their 18 years of marriage

Late on Monday night, both the actor and the director put out a letter, which looked similar for the most part, on their respective social media handles. Dhanush, who was most recently seen with Sara Ali Khan in *Atrangi Re*, shared his letter on Twitter, Aishwarya chose Instagram.

In the letter posted on his timeline, Dhanush said, "18 years of togetherness as friends, couple, as parents and well-wishers to each other. The journey has been of growth, understanding, adjusting and adapting. Today, we stand at a place where our paths separate. Aishwaryaa and I have decided to part ways as a couple and take time to understand us as individuals for the better. Please do respect our decision and give us the needed privacy to deal with this. Om Namah Shivaya! Spread love!" Aishwaryaa's letter read pretty much the same except for the last line in which she said: "Much love always to you all! Godspeed."

On Instagram, while posting the letter, Aishwaryaa added: "No caption needed. Only your understanding and your love are necessary!" The decision of the couple, who have two sons, Yatra and Linga, comes as a bolt from the blue to the film industry.

Ravi Teja's *Ravana* shoot begins

## K.V. Vijayendra Prasad to pen story, screenplay for Sri Vaari Films

**L**egendary screen writer K.V. Vijayendra Prasad, who is also the father of ace director S.S. Rajamouli, is to pen the story and screenplay for the third production venture of Sri Vaari Films.

Disclosing this, producer P. Ranganathan of Sri Vaari Films said that work on the project would com-

mence soon.

Vijayendra Prasad has written the screenplay for more than 25 superhit pan-Indian films in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi, including the *Baahubali* films, *Bajirangi Bhaaijaan*, *Manikarnika* and the highly-anticipated *RRR* that has been directed by Rajamouli.

Ranganathan said leading actors would be a part of the project and the official announcement about the cast and crew would be made in the coming days. Sri Vaari Films has already bankrolled two successful films — *Dharmaprabhu* and *Anandham Vilayadum Veedu*. *Dharmaprabhu* was a fantasy flick which had Yogi Babu in the lead role while *Anandham Vilayadum Veedu* was an emotional family drama featuring Cheran and Gautham Karthik in prominent roles.



**M**ass Maharaja Ravi Teja and creative director Sudheer Varma's unique

action thriller *Ravana* was launched grandly on Sankranti with megastar Chiranjeevi attending it as a chief guest. The *Ravana* shoot begins, as the team begun its regular shoot. Night sequences are currently being shot. *Ravana* is being mounted on a massive scale by Abhishek Nama under Abhishek Pictures and RT Teamworks. The makers recently announced to release *Ravana* on September 30, 2022. Ravi Teja plays a lawyer, while Sushanth will be seen a crucial role as Ram in the film. *Ravana* will star a total of five heroines- Anu Emmanuel, Megha Akash, Faria Abdullah, Daksha Nagarkar and Poojitha Ponnada. All the heroines will have equal importance in the movie.

Srikanth Vissa who's associated with few exciting projects as a writer has penned a powerful and a first of its kind story for the movie. Known for his stylish and exceptional taking expertise, Sudheer Varma will be presenting Ravi Teja in a never seen before role in the movie. Some prominent actors and noted craftsmen are part of the project. Harshavardhan Rameswar and Bheems together provide music for the film, while Vijay Kartik Kannan handles the cinematography and Srikanth is the editor.



**M**ega Star Chiranjeevi's youngest daughter Sreeja has dropped her actor-husband Kalyaan Dhev's name from her social media handles amid rumours that their marriage is on the rocks. Her unilateral action has triggered speculation about the couple's impending separation. Sreeja changed her Instagram handle name to Sreeja Konidela from Sreeja Kalyan. Ever since Sreeja started using Instagram, her display name has been Sreeja Kalyan up until a couple of days ago. Samantha Ruth Prabhu, who got separated from Telugu actor Naga Chaitanya, also had taken down her then surname — Akkineni — much before their divorce announcement. Industry watchers believe that Sreeja's



now, there have been rumours that all is not well between Sreeja and her husband Kalyaan Dhev. No one from Chiranjeevi's family was seen promoting Kalyaan Dhev's

## Rumours rife as Sreeja drops husband's name

action could be an indication that her divorce formalities have been initiated.

For a while recent movie *Super Machi*, which only added fuel to the fire of the speculation surrounding the couple's marriage. There has been no official confirmation regarding the split. Sreeja and Kalyaan Dhev were married in March 2016. The couple was blessed with a daughter in 2018. Before Kalyaan Dhev, Sreeja was married to Sirish Bharadwaj, through whom she had her elder daughter. Their relationship ended in 2011 after Sreeja filed a harassment case against him.

## Abhirami Suresh spills the beans on her all new avatar in *Aanandham Aarambham*

**A**ctor Abhirami Suresh is all set to take us on a romantic ride this cozy winter with the micro-series, *Aanandham Aarambham*, now streaming on Disney+ Hotstar. Over the years, Abhirami Suresh has impressed us with her exquisite style and stupendous performances across movies and reality shows. She will be joined by co-actor Santosh Prathap to take the audience on a heart-warming tale of love in the modern age.

In a candid conversation, Abhirami Suresh opened up on what excited her about the series. "The characterization of Ranjini in the series is exactly what I am in my real life. The character very well resonates with the real me. When Jagan narrated the character to me in his own funny way, I was instantly convinced. The very moment I heard the script narration, I decided that I wanted to do this. Another thing that excited me was the story's concept. The

romantic quotient is happening for me for the very first time. I have essayed all types of characters and been part of stories of different genres- be it emotional, suspense, thrilling but never been a part of a romantic drama. It is the very first time when I will be a part of a romantic series and hence it is a whole new experience for me. The excitement of doing the on-screen romance series thrilled me," she said.

Diving deep into the insight of a simple cup of coffee bringing two individuals together, the eight-episode micro-series traces the heart-warming relationship of two coffee lovers, Ranjani and Ramcharan, starting from their proposal to their first wedding anniversary. Each four-minute episode displays how coffee becomes an integral part of their everyday life to build an equal relationship. For Ramcharan, starting from their proposal to their first wedding anniversary. Each four-minute episode displays how coffee becomes an integral part of their everyday life to build an equal relationship. For Ranjani, filling bitter-gaps becomes easier over coffee and eventually becomes a back-in-love tactic.

