



## 8

P12

**- Katipally Venkat Ramana Reddy,  
BJP Kamareddy elect**

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## -SPORTS

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy conducted a review meeting on the cyclone with senior officials on Monday, initiating various relief efforts. The India Meteorological Department

(IMD) issued an Orange alert for Andhra Pradesh on Monday. The Severe Cyclonic Storm "Michaung" over West Central & adjoining Southwest Bay of Bengal off south Andhra Pradesh moved north-north-westwards at a speed of 10 km/h as of 5:30 pm on Monday.

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**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Nellore, Prakasam, Bapatla, Krishna, West Godavari, Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema, and Kakinada districts explained the relief and rescue preparedness in

The official machinery should avail the services of village and ward secretariat staff and volunteers in relief and rescue operations, he said.

**K VENKATESHWARLU**  
 **HYDERABAD**

The Congress high command had tried to complete the process of selecting the CLP

It may be recalled that the Karnataka episode is repeating in Telangana too while selecting the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader. The Congress succeeded in selecting the CLP leader after a week after

The Congress high command decided to make TPCC President Revanth Reddy the CM and took steps in that direction. However, at the meeting held on Monday morning at the Park Hyatt Hotel with Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shiva Kumar, senior MLAs Bhatti Vikramarka, N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, the Komatireddy brothers and D. Sridhar Babu and others declared that they will not accept Revanth for the CM's post.

However, it is learnt that senior MLAs Bhatti Vikramarka, Uttam Kumar Reddy, D. Sridhar Babu, the Komatireddy brothers, and Damodara Rajanarsimha have issued an ultimatum to the high command that they will not accept Revanth Reddy as the CM.

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**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

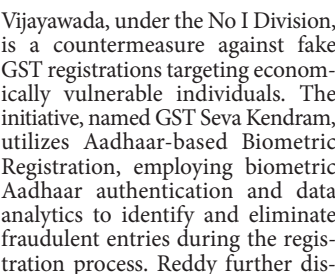
In response to a query raised by MP Javed Ali Khan, who highlighted the absence of active master plans in 39 percent of state capitals—a crucial tool for urban governance and long-term city development—the Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs, Kaushal Kishore, provided a written

Minister Kishore clarified that these state capitals without master plans are actively working on formulating the

As of the latest update, Rs. 408.94 crore has been approved, and Rs. 192.25 crore has been released under this Sub Scheme. He added that Draft GIS-based Master Plans have been prepared for 330 towns, with final GIS-based Master Plans already notified for 180 towns.

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

The Finance Minister announced that the first GST Seva Kendram in



Reddy reported a robust growth in collections from Rs 3,134 crores to Rs 4,093 crore, indicating a positive trend. Andhra Pradesh emerged as a leader in Comparative Gross Collection Position Among Other States, surpassing the growth rates of

Highlighting the GST Mitra initiative as a pioneering effort, Reddy explained that it empowers taxpayers to identify discrepancies in their filed returns. The aim is to foster a culture of voluntary compliance, reducing physical interactions between businesses and tax officers. GST Mitra leverages state-of-the-art technology to automate processes,

The event was attended by MLAs Malladi Vishnu and Vellampalli Srinivas, Vijayawada Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi, GST officials, and other dignitaries.

**C PRADEEP KUMAR**  
VIJAYAWADA

In the ad-up to the Karnataka elections, the Congress, as if in agreement with the YSRCP's policies, had announced various welfare schemes aimed at benefiting the underprivileged. YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, president of YSRCP, had earlier demonstrated a commitment to welfare by implementing schemes for the poor and vulnerable in Andhra Pradesh after a comprehensive walkathon, setting a precedent that influenced the



party's success in the 2019 elections. It is noteworthy that, rather than focusing solely on development and employment generation, welfare schemes have consistently proven to be influential in swaying voters. This trend has been observed in recent elections in Karnataka and Telangana.

After securing a significant victory and forming the government in Andhra Pradesh, CM Jagan initiated the implementation of welfare schemes despite facing criticism from the main opposition, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

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# Modi proves to be a Karma Yogi

In an endless criticism, the Opposition called Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a despot. He was accused of not paying attention to the welfare of the poor. He was described as a bad omen for the country. The PM was target of a lot of criticism by the Opposition parties.

The Opposition parties, whose alliance has been named after the name of the country INDIA, have tried to hoodwink the people. On every minor issue, they tried to filibuster the Parliament. They described Modi as an anti-democratic leader.

Raising above the criticism, Narendra Modi worked like a Karma Yogi day and night and worked hard to ensure the BJP victory in the recently concluded elections to five states. As part of the campaign, he explained to the people the development initiatives of the BJP at the Centre and also in states. He highlighted the

issues like free rations, enabling an Adivasi woman to become President of India, the honour India received through G-20 summit and the rise of the country as the third largest economy from the 10th position in world. He addressed 42 election meetings and 4 road shows explaining how corruption, family rule, politics of appeasement will come into play if the opposition parties were to come to power.

The recently-concluded Assembly polls proved that the people of the country realised which party should come to power at the Centre and also in states for the good of their future. The BJP posting grand victory in the states of MP, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh was not limited to these states alone but it demonstrated the nation's mood.

The results of elections held to the three northern states proved that the Congress is

**The recently-concluded Assembly polls proved that the people of the country realised which party should come to power at the Centre and also in states for the good of their future. The BJP posting grand victory in the states of MP, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh was not limited to these states alone but it demonstrated the nation's mood.**

not capable of entering into straight contest with the BJP. This is attributed to the failure of the Congress to play the role of the constructive Opposition.

Just for the namesake a Dalit like Mallikarjun Kharge was appointed Congress president, but the election campaign and strategy was totally devised by the members of the once ruling family and those who played second fiddle to it.

During the UPA regime, Manmohan Singh was reduced to a nominal PM, while the forces that wielded power were behind the screen. In the same fashion, the forces ran the show using the nominal president as the front.

It was campaigned that the Bharat Jodo Yatra revived the Congress. But, the people saw through the true colours of the Congress irrespective of sub-



Y SATYA KUMAR  
BJP National Secretary

jecting the party to various changes, which are not real. The people rejected Rahul Gandhi as he could not do anything except slinging mud on Modi with his immature criticism. They realised that Rahul Gandhi was not capable of leading the Congress.

The people have realised how the financial position of Karnataka became adversely affected upon handing over reins of the State to the party

attracted by the non-feasible guarantees promised by the Congress. They have noticed the scams perpetrated in all spheres of activity, including mining sector, in Chattisgarh and Rajasthan and how the governmnts played with the lives of students and failed to deliver the promises made to the people.

Similarly, the people have noticed the welfare and development programmes under way in Madhya Pradesh during the past 20 years since the BJP coming to power in the State in 2003. Results of elections held to the State legislative assemblies prove that the people realised the importance of having double-engine carcir both in the State and at the Centre and how the country would grow in such an environment.

The prediction of Congress imminent victory in

Chattisgarh and having a keen contest in Rajasthan and MP went haywire. The Opposition predicted that the people would be antagonistic to Sivraj Singh Chauhan government since the BJP was ruling MP since long. But Sivraj Singh Chauhan overcame the opposition to his government.

In Telangana too, the BJP surprised all by winning eight Assembly seats and ranked second in 19 seats. Across the State, the BJP polled 32.25 lakh, which is no mean an achievement. The BJP vote share, compared to last elections, has improved by 14% during the current polls. BJP candidate Venkatarami Reddy defeated CM KCR and pushed the PCC president Revanth Reddy to the third position, which is a historic development. It is clear that the people buried the BRS as the people noticed

how the family rule, corruption, anarchy and arrogance of power reached its heights during the past 10 years.

It became clear to outside world how AP Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy tried to save KCR government by engineering clashes at Nagarjunasagar project in the last minute. Jagan tried to ensure KCR's victory as his financial interests were linked to both KCR and Hyderabad city. However, the people of Telangana repulsed Jagan's designs.

What is going to happen in 2024? The answer is obvious. Today, the BJP is in power on its own majority in 12 states. It is running coalition governments in four more states, while the Congress was limited to ruling only in three states. Moreover, the BJP will be able to emerge victorious easily in states where it is pitted face-to-face with the Congress.

## Congress in TS saddle on...

Continued from Page 1

The TDP accused the government of accumulating State debts through welfare initiatives, drawing parallels with financially distressed countries like Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, CM Jagan successfully continued the implementation of welfare schemes.

Post the pandemic, the focus of the YSRCP government shifted towards development, employment, and other constructive activities.

In a surprising turn of events, TDP Chief Chandrababu Naidu, after three and a half years of criticising the YSRCP government, adopted a similar stance on welfare schemes. During Mahanadu, Naidu announced a Mini-Manifesto aligning with YSRCP's welfare initiatives, highlighting the crucial role played by such schemes in influencing voter sentiment.

YSRCP chief and CM Jagan instructed party officials to conduct door-to-door campaigns, reaching out to beneficiaries and apprising them of the government's welfare initiatives.

This unique approach involves continuous engagement with voters, a departure from the traditional practice of political leaders making sporadic appearances only months before elections. The ongoing Samajika Sankalpa bus yatra further emphasizes the welfare achievements of the YSRCP government, with leaders openly discussing the benefits provided to citizens across the state.

According to Planning Board Vice Chairman and MLA Malladi Vishnu, YSRCP distinguishes itself as the only party that proactively engages with voters, elucidating the government's developmental and welfare endeavors and urging voters to support the party—a pioneering and unprecedented approach.

## CYCLONE MICHAUNG IMPACT HEAVY RAINS LASH AP

**Danger warning issued at ports between Machilipatnam & Krishnapatnam**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Heavy rains, accompanied by gusty winds, were reported from all over the State on Monday. The sea near Uppada in Kakinada district turned turbulent, with tidal waves striking the beach road, prompting authorities to halt rice exports at Kakinada port. Over 10 foreign ships were held back. In response to cyclone warnings, Kishore, RDO, directed officials to prohibit fishermen from venturing into the sea and to organise the immediate return of those already at sea. Revenue and Panchayat officials mandated the establishment of a rehabilitation centre at Vakalapudi High School.

The cyclone's impact prompted the barring of entries to beaches, necessitating the evacuation of the public from coastal villages such as Palakayathippa, Hamsaladeevi, Ootagundam, and Basavanipalem in Koduru mandal of Krishna district. Rehabilitation Centres were set up at Zilla Parishad High School and Arya Vaishya Kalyana Mandapam in Kodur. Buses were prepared to transport residents to rescue camps.



District authorities are arranging for the evacuation of residents in the Ramakrishnapuram area to safer locations due to the potential threat of high tides.

In Kothapatnam, Prakasam district, sea tides rose 20 meters above normal, prompting authorities to instruct fishermen to stay ashore and ensure the safety of fishing boats.

The cyclone storm has made the sea very rough along the coast of Suryalanka and Pallepalem in Bapatla Mandal.

Varadaiahpalem mandal in Tirupati district experienced heavy rainfall, resulting in overflowing canals such as Pamula kalava at Govardhan Puram, CLNPally, Sunnapu kalava at

Kaduru, and Rallavagu at Panduru. Floodwaters halted traffic, prompting authorities to take precautionary measures due to the risk of Varadaiahpalem Lake overflowing.

Tirumala witnessed heavy rainfall, causing discomfort for devotees due to the cold weather. Swarnamukhi Dam near Srikalahasti continued to experience a water flow of 2,004 feet. In response, authorities cautioned residents in the area. Floodwaters inundated Lanka Mitta in Srikalahasti, prompting preparations to move residents to rehabilitation centers.

The cyclone's impact led to flooding in the low-lying areas of Nellore city, prompting authorities to establish 13 rehabilitation centers and relocate approximately 250 people.

The education department declared holidays for schools in the affected areas. The cyclone's impact was evident in the Chittoor district, where stormy winds and rain prevailed in the coastal Sullurpet area. A helpline number was established at the Tirupati district collector's office.

The Indian Meteorological Department issued alerts for Nellore, Prakasam, Tirupati, Chittoor, Krishna, Bapatla, Guntur, Anantapur, Kadapa, NTR, and Palnadu districts, urging vigilance for the next two days. Heavy to very heavy rains are expected in these districts on Tuesday, with a red alert in effect. Additionally, an orange alert predicts heavy to very heavy rains in Nellore, Kakinada, Konaseema, Eluru, East Godavari, NTR, Palnadu, Sri Sathya Sai, Nandyala, and Kadapa districts, while a yellow alert warns of heavy rains in other districts.

Coastal areas experienced winds of 70-90 km per hour, leading to danger warnings at ports between Machilipatnam and Krishnapatnam.

## Aarogyasri cards set to roll out on December 18

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy held a comprehensive review meeting with the Department of Health. During the meeting, the CM underscored the need to further strengthen the healthcare services offered through Dr. YSR Aarogyasri. The Chief Minister highlighted the revolutionary impact of Dr. YSR Aarogyasri on public health and emphasized the need for extensive promotion and awareness.

"It is crucial to further educate people and enhance awareness of the proactive initiative-taking measures under healthcare is being provided through Dr. YSR Aarogyasri. Community Health Officers (CHOs), Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) staff should lead a comprehensive campaign. This awareness campaign is important for the public to understand how to access Aarogyasri services and avail free medical care through Dr. YSR Aarogyasri. There should also be active participation of Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) too," stated the Chief Minister.

In the meeting, officials revealed that 1,42,34,464 new Dr. YSR Arogyasri health cards are being printed and the works are rapidly progressing, with

## CM calls for a comprehensive awareness drive to assist users



distribution slated to commence on December 18. The Chief Minister stressed that all stakeholders, including CHOs, ANMs, ASHA workers, and MLAs, should actively participate in promoting awareness about availing the free medical care through Dr. YSR Aarogyasri.

Under the Jagananna Aarogya Suraksha program, officials reported quick progress, identifying 86,690 people in need of medical treatment. Of these, 73,602 people have been referred to YSR Aarogyasri empaneled hospitals, with 16,128 patients admitted for necessary medical interventions. Surgical procedures/treatments were given to 15,786 patients. The Chief Minister directed officials to re-examine those admitted as inpatients.

Eye treatments under the program have also made considerable headway, with 78,292

people identified and 13,614 already receiving cataract treatment. Additionally, 7,272 individuals with other eye-related issues have been treated, and 5,26,702 people have received spectacles.

The Chief Minister emphasized the importance of timely medications for patients identified under Jagananna Suraksha health camps and urged officials to ensure comprehensive monitoring. He further pushed for leveraging technology to streamline the process and make the Dr YSR Aarogyasri app accessible to all.

The Chief Minister announced the initiation of the Jagananna Arogya Suraksha Program-II second phase on January 1. This phase will include weekly health protection camps in rural areas, featuring necessary medical examinations with the participation of specialist doctors.

## Subway built in record time

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a remarkable demonstration of resilience and efficiency, the Waltair Division of the Indian Railways accomplished a critical infrastructure project despite the disruptive impact of Cyclone Michaung on Monday. The ambitious undertaking involved the construction of a Limited Height Subway at Kantakapalli, aiming to eliminate Level Crossing (LC) no. 477.

"The completion of the Limited Height Subway project is a testament to the unwavering commitment and resilience of our team in the face of challenging weather conditions," remarked Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Saurabh Prasad.

Despite the impending cyclone and the associated disruptions, the Waltair Division's engineering expertise and unwavering determination enabled them to commence and complete the project within a record time frame. DRM Saurabh Prasad, along with Assistant Divisional Railway Managers (ADRM)s and Senior Officers oversaw the construction process, coordination and adherence to the project's timeline.



"The teamwork displayed during the construction phase was exceptional. It reflects the dedication of our team members from various departments who worked tirelessly to accomplish this feat," added Saurabh Prasad.

The construction methodology utilised the Cut & Cover method, involved meticulous excavation below the mainline tracks, followed by the precise placement of base slabs. Prefabricated Boxes were then launched beneath the tracks, and the swift backfilling of earth and ballast showcased the team's efficiency in meeting project timelines.

The primary objective of the Limited Height Subway

project was to enhance safety and operational efficiency by eliminating Level Crossing no. 477, a significant hazard for both commuters and railway operations. With the successful completion of the project, train services resumed seamlessly in the afternoon, contributing to the overall improvement of railway infrastructure.

Saurabh Prasad stressed the collaborative nature of the project, stating that "The collaborative effort involving engineering expertise, heavy machinery operation, and the dedication of our workforce played a pivotal role in the success of this project."

Ahead of the project's commencement, DRM,

## Karnataka...

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It is learnt that the observers tried to convince the senior leaders but they did not yield to their requests. It is learnt that senior MLAs asked the high command what they have to do if the CM post is given to Revanth Reddy as they have been in the party from the beginning of their political careers.

After the sudden twist, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shiva Kumar, Karnataka Power Minister KJ George, AICC in-charge General Secretary Manikrao Thakre, Jithendra Dehade, Venugopal and Anil Kumar left for New Delhi on a special flight from the Begumpet Airport on Monday at 19:09 hours. After this development, everyone has been discussing who will become the CM of Telangana as everyone had been thinking that Revanth is going to become the CM. Party observers too moved in that direction to complete the oath-taking ceremony on Sunday itself, but it was postponed to Monday evening.

The Raj Bhavan had made all arrangements for the oath-taking ceremony on Monday evening. However, due to the seniors' ultimatum to the high command, nobody knows who is going to become the CM of Telangana.

## Orange alert issued for AP...

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The storm is approximately 80 km southeast of Nellore, 120 km north-northeast of Chennai, 210 km south of Bapatla, and 250 km southwest of Machilipatnam.

It is expected to move nearly northwards parallel and close to the south Andhra Pradesh coast, making landfall between Nellore and Machilipatnam, close to Bapatla during the forenoon of December 5 as a Severe Cyclonic Storm, with a maximum sustained wind speed of 90-100 km/h, gusting to 110 km/h.

A moderate to high flash flood threat is anticipated over a few watersheds and neighborhoods of the following Met Sub-divisions during the next 6 hours: Coastal AP & Yanam - Prakasam and Nellore districts, Rayalaseema - Chittoor and Kadapa districts.

The rainfall warning for Coastal Andhra Pradesh is

light to moderate rainfall at most places and heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places, with extremely heavy falls at isolated places over coastal Andhra Pradesh & Yanam on December 4 and 5. Isolated heavy rainfall is likely over north coastal Andhra Pradesh on December 6. For Rayalaseema, light to moderate rainfall at many places with isolated heavy to extremely heavy falls is very likely on December 4, and isolated heavy rainfall on December 5, decreasing thereafter.

The wind warning indicates squally wind speeds reaching 70-80 km/h, gusting to 90 km/h, prevailing over the west-central Bay of Bengal. It is expected to gradually increase, becoming gale wind speeds reaching 80-90 km/h, gusting to 100 km/h from the 4th morning, and 90-100 km/h, gusting to 110 km/h from December 4 evening till December 5 noon, gradually decreasing thereafter.



GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

No. 544 to 568 /ATO/2023-24

Date: 02-12-2023

Online tenders are being invited for execution of 25 works in the limits of NTR district, under various funds, with a total amount of Rs 1530.92 Lakh. The tenderers can be accessed from 11.00 am on 05-12-2023. For details, contact <http://tender.aapeprocurement.gov.in> or call 9100121309, 9494949955.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, RWS & S Circle, Vijayawada, NTR Dist

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# 421.5 mm of rainfall recorded in Krishna district

Bantumilli experienced the highest rainfall at 32.6 mm

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Michaung cyclone unleashed 421.5 mm of rainfall in the Krishna district, with an average of 16.90 mm recorded between 8:30 am and 2:30 pm. Bantumilli mandal experienced the highest rainfall at 32.6 mm, followed by Machilipatnam at 28.8 mm, Kruthivennu at 27.5 mm, Gudlavalleru at 24.4 mm, Ghantasala at 22.6 mm, Challapalli at 21.6 mm, Nagayalanka at 21.6 mm, and Pedana at 21.6 mm. Other areas witnessed rainfall ranging from 4.2 mm to 18.6 mm.

The Michaung cyclone intensified in the Southwest Bay of Bengal, moving north-north-westwards at a speed of 14 kmph over the past 6 hours. As of 2:30 pm, the cyclone was positioned approximately 200 km east-northeast of Puducherry, 130 km east of Chennai, 220 km southeast of Nellore, 30 km south-south-east of Bapatla, and 350 km south-southeast of Machilipatnam.

Seacoast areas experienced storm winds ranging from 60 kmph to 70 kmph. The Indian Meteorological Department predicts the cyclone's landfall at Diviseema. Due to intense rainfall in the Krishna district, villages in Koduru, Nagayalanka, Avanigadda, and other Mandals are facing precarious situations.

At the Manginapudi beach near Machilipatnam and Palakayatippa near Sagara Sangamam, the Bay of Bengal



Officials of the Revenue department shifting an aged woman to the rehabilitation centre in Elimoga of Nagayalanka mandal in Krishna district on Monday.

advanced about 10 m, causing concern among the fishing community.

Residents of Diviseema are haunted by memories of severe cyclones in 1977, 1990, and 2013, which caused significant losses. The district administration has implemented necessary precautions to minimize damages.

Machilipatnam, Nagayalanka, Koduru, Kruthivennu, Bantumilli, Avanigadda, and Mopidevi are

**At the Manginapudi beach near Machilipatnam and Palakayatippa near Sagara Sangamam, the Bay of Bengal advanced about 10 m, causing concern among the fishing community.**

identified as cyclone-prone Mandals. Authorities anticipate the impact on around 10,000 people in Edurumondi, Nachagunta, Elichetladibba, Yesupalem, Zinkapalem, Krishnapuram, and Chinnagollapalem.

In response, the Krishna district administration established 57 cyclone relief centers, evacuating 10,000 people to safety. Sixty-three fishermen villages, including hamlets in 7 Mandals, are identified for potential impact. Officials from various departments are providing essential amenities, and the Medical and Health Department is conducting health camps at all relief centers.

Fishermen were advised against venturing into the sea, with awareness programmes emphasising preventive measures. The police presence at seacoast villages has been reinforced to deter individuals from approaching risky coastal areas. The authorities remain vigilant to safeguard lives and assets during this critical period.

## NDRF, SDRF teams deployed on coast

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In response to the Michaung cyclone, teams from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) were deployed in seacoast villages to facilitate relief operations. At Machilipatnam Mandalam, an NDRF team comprising 25 members was deployed, while an SDRF team comprising 37 members was dispatched to Avanigadda Mandala.

On Monday, the 7th danger alert was issued for the Machilipatnam Fishing Harbour, prompting boat owners to anchor their vessels.

S. Suresh Kumar, Commissioner of the School Education Department, directed all educational institutions—both government and private—to declare a holiday on Monday, extending the closure to Tuesday based on his directive to education department authorities.

Krishna district collector P. Raja Babu and Superintendent of Police P. Joshua visited cyclone-affected areas in Diviseema on Monday. They oversaw relief measures and provided guidance on evacuating low-lying areas, as well as ensuring the supply of food, drinking water, and other essential amenities. With the collaborative efforts of the revenue and police departments, the SDRF and NDRF teams



successfully evacuated residents from seacoast villages to rehabilitation centers, including schools and various government and private buildings.

The district administration coordinated the use of 2,408 anchored boats for relief operations across the district. These boats are distributed as follows: 313 boats in Kruthivennu Mandal, 1,023 boats in Nagayalanka, 206 boats in Koduru, and 866 boats in Machilipatnam mandala.

Joint Collector Dr. Aparajith Singh, in collaboration with authorities from the agriculture,

civil supplies, and marketing departments, is overseeing efforts to store paddy gains in godowns. Paddy lifting movements are being monitored in Ghantasala, Movva, and Pamidimukkala Mandals, with the involvement of Pamarru MLA Kaile Anil Kumar.

According to Krishna district collector P. Raja Babu, 57 rehabilitation centers have been set up in all seven seacoast mandals in the district. Currently, 1,899 individuals have been relocated from low-lying areas to these centers, where they are provided with

breakfast, milk, food, and other necessary facilities. Depending on the severity of the cyclone, an additional 7,000 people are expected to be relocated from villages to rehabilitation centers.

Sanitation maintenance is a priority at all rehabilitation centers, with the provision of torch lights, raincoats, and generators. Health camps operate 24/7, with departmental officials regularly supervising relief measures.

Following state government directives, financial assistance of Rs. 1,000 per individual and Rs. 2,000 per family will be provided. The government is taking all necessary measures to minimize the significant loss of paddy. Currently, 45,000 tons of paddy grain have been transported to rice mills, and 20,000 tons are stored in godowns.

Krishna district SP Joshua reported that 1,000 police personnel have been deployed for cyclone relief measures. Measures have been implemented to prevent any issues with the information system, he assured.

Minister for Housing Jogi Ramesh inspected the seacoast area at Nidamarru village of Kruthivennu Mandal on Monday in light of the severely intensified Michaung cyclone. He offered suggestions to concerned officials and engaged with members of the SDRF and NDRF.

## Navy honours war heroes

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command (FOC-in-C ENC), led a wreath-laying ceremony at the War Memorial on RK Beach Road here on Monday. The event marked the culmination of Navy Day celebrations, honouring the Indian Navy's remarkable victory in Operation Trident during the 1971 Indo-Pak War.

The ceremony unfolded against the backdrop of the Bay of Bengal, its serene waters mirroring the solemn mood of the occasion. Veterans stood beside the Naval personnel, their presence a testament to the enduring spirit of the Indian Navy.

As the Last Post reverberated through the air, a two-minute silence descended upon the gathering. The wreaths, adorned with vibrant flowers, were gently laid at the base of the war memorial.

Vice Admiral Pendharkar addressed the gathering. "Navy Day serves not only as a moment of remembrance, but also as an occasion to showcase the Navy's dedication to duty and its pivotal role in safeguarding the nation's maritime borders," he said.

## VMC gears up to face cyclone threat

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a pivotal meeting convened on Monday at the Command Control Room of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation's (VMC) central office, Municipal Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar, alongside key corporation officials, strategically devised and implemented proactive measures to address the imminent threat posed by Cyclone Michaung.

In anticipation of the approaching Michaung cyclone, Municipal Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar has spearheaded a comprehensive set of preven-

tive measures aimed at safeguarding the well-being of the city's residents. The Commissioner issued a plea to residents, urging them to keep children indoors to mitigate potential accidents resulting from heavy rain and subsequent runoff.

Highlighting health precautions, citizens are advised to consume boiled water to prevent waterborne diseases. In consideration of the anticipated strong cyclonic winds, it was collectively decided during the meeting that no new banners and hoardings would be permitted. This precautionary measure is intended to avert potential hazards posed by the

**The Commissioner asked citizens to reach out via the provided contact channels—landline number 08662 422 515, toll-free number 1800 425000, or WhatsApp number 818 196 0909—to report any cyclone-related complaints.**

force of the winds. Furthermore, the

Commissioner issued a directive to evacuate individuals from vulnerable areas in the city, underscoring the importance of promptly relocating residents to rehabilitation centers. Residents are encouraged to contact volunteers or Village Revenue Officers (VROs) to obtain information on the nearest rehabilitation centers.

Additionally, the Municipal Commissioner has instructed officials to proactively manage the outfall drains, ensuring unhindered flow and preventing any obstruction to drain services.

Special attention is being given to clearing scrap and

garbage from the drainage out-lines to facilitate smooth water flow. The Commissioner has assembled a specialized team to address public concerns, including drainage cleaning, road waterlogging issues, water pipeline leaks, repairs, seasonal diseases, and fallen trees.

To ensure round-the-clock assistance, special officers will operate in three shifts, promptly addressing public needs. The Commissioner asked citizens to reach out via the provided contact channels—landline number 08662 422 515, toll-free number 1800 425000, or WhatsApp number 818 196 0909—to report any cyclone-related complaints.

## BJP demands white paper on power line for private firm

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

BJP State chief spokesperson Lanka Dinakar has alleged that unjust favour is being done to Indosol Solar Private Limited by giving forest and revenue lands worth crores of rupees for the incorporation of power projects in the state illegitimately without adopting the proper procedure.

Lanka Dinakar demanded the Jagan Mohn Reddy government release a 'white paper' on the construction of power line and substation with funds

of the State government, alleging that the State government has diverted public funds to private companies with corrupt practices.

The BJP leader slammed that the State government is providing the power line and substation construction required for the solar panel plant to be set up at Nellore by Indosol Solar Private Limited as a free gift to the company from the state government funds.

The state government has given necessary orders for the construction of a power line and

substation with the funds of Trans Co., which costs about Rs 80 to 90 crores for the benefit of Indosol Solar Private Limited. As per the information, this amount is provided from the AP Trans Co for free to Indosol Solar Private Limited, Lanka Dinakar alleged.

Public perception is that Indosol Solar and Shirdi Sai Electricals promoters are like the benamis of AP CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and these two companies are enjoying undue benefits from the public exchequer of the state, he stated.

## Rain disrupts normal life in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Michaung cyclone has brought heavy rains to Visakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh, India, disrupting normal life. The district administration has issued an alert to the fishermen's community to refrain from venturing into the sea, and schools and colleges have been closed down as a safety measure.

The rains have led to flooding at various junctions, with vehicular movement slowing down. Localities such as Pendurthi, Convent Junction, Sheelanagar, Old Gajuwaka, Gnanapuram, and Gopalapatnam have reported instances of inundation due to the continuous rains. Weather officials predict a similar situation for the next day or two, urging residents to exercise caution.

The impact of the cyclone on transportation is evident, with several trains being cancelled due to the heavy rains. Passengers have had to either cancel or revise their travel plans in light



of the adverse weather conditions.

The district administration is closely monitoring the situation and urging residents to stay informed about weather updates. Preparedness measures are in place to address any emergencies that may arise as a result of the cyclone's impact.

## MADHURAPUDI AIRPORT UPGRADATION JYOTIRADITYA, JAGAN TO LAY STONE ON DEC 8

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

The long-pending dream of the people of the area for an international airport is going to be true as Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, along with Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyothiradiya Scindia, will lay the foundation stone on December 8 to develop the Madhurapudi Airport as an international airport.

Disclosing this to the media in Madhurapudi airport, near here, on Monday, MP Margani Bharat Ram said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy,

along with Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyothiradiya Scindia, would lay the stone to upgrade the existing airport as an international airport on December 8. The development of Rajahmundry airport as an International airport would be taken up at a cost of Rs 347.15 crore.

"If the Madhurapudi airport is updated as an international airport, it will be helpful to the people including businessmen to travel abroad comfortably. Going abroad will become easy if the airport upgrade is completed", the MP said. The

Rajahmundry airport would be the biggest in the state if the project was completed, he stated.

For the construction of the airport terminal building and other development works, The Central government has sanctioned Rs 347.15 crore. This biggest project is going to be materialized as pressure was exerted in the Parliament and during the board meeting for the development of Madhurapudi airport as an International airport, he claimed, adding that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy also strove for the project.



## 25 PHCs get NQAS certification

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As many as 25 Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in Vizianagaram district have been awarded the National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) certification. Recognising their commitment to healthcare excellence, patient safety, and quality management, the

Centre will grant Rs 1 lakh per year to each certified PHC for three years to further enhance and develop their facilities.

The NQAS certification, a benchmark for excellence in healthcare, is an acknowledgment of the 25 PHCs' dedication to providing superior healthcare services to the local population.



## 'Congress will be strengthened in AP'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In the wake of the Telangana State Assembly elections' triumph, the leadership of the Congress party is committed to fortifying its presence in Andhra Pradesh, stated Janga Gowtham, the working president of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC). Gowtham urged those who aspire for the State's development and take pride in its progress to rally behind the Congress party.

The solemn commemoration of former chief minister K Rosaiiah's death anniversary took place at the Andhra Ratna Bhavan in Vijayawada on Monday. Congress party lead-

ers paid heartfelt tributes to the late leader.

Addressing the gathering, Gowtham said that the Congress party is poised to play a pivotal role in the upcoming State Assembly elections. To strategise effectively for this objective, the party's Political Affairs Committee will convene on December 13 in Vijayawada to formulate a comprehensive roadmap for the impending electoral challenges.

Congress Party Vijayawada City president Naraharasetti Narasimha Rao, APCC organising secretary Sri Rama Murthy, vice president V Gurunadham, AICC leader Kolanukonda Sivaji, and others attended.

## Two women drown in Sarada River

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

In a tragic incident on Monday morning, two women lost their lives while taking a holy dip in Sarada River in Kasimkota mandal of Anakapalli district. The victims have been identified as A Manga (35) and M Lakshmi (40), residents of Jogaraopeta village.

The four women, including the deceased, had ventured to the Sarada River from Jogaraopeta village to partake in a customary holy dip, a ritual observed on the auspicious occasion of Karthika Monday.

During the sacred bath, tragedy struck as A Manga and M Lakshmi faced an unfortunate drowning incident. Residents in the vicinity managed to rescue the other two women, averting a potentially more devastating outcome. The Kasimkota police have initiated an investigation into the incident.

## GVMC hopes to open renovated parks by Dec 15

Commissioner inspects Yoga Theme Park in PM Palem, Sports Park in Bakkannapalem

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) is accelerating efforts to complete park renovation projects across the city, aiming to open them to the public by December 15. This initiative aligns with GVMC's commitment to enhancing the livability and recreational opportunities for Visakhapatnam residents.

GVMC Commissioner C M Saikanth Varma recently conducted inspections of several parks, including Yoga Theme Park in PM Palem, Madhurawada, Sports Park in Bakkannapalem, Nandu Park in Madhurawada, and Farm Garden Theme Park in Gollala Yendada. During these visits, Commissioner Varma emphasised the importance of timely completion and adherence to quality standards.

At Yoga Theme Park, landscaping enhancements are underway with the planting of low-maintenance saplings and



installation of statues depicting yoga postures. Additionally, the park will feature walking tracks, water fountains, a gym, yoga zones, a children's play area, and toilets, creating a holistic wellness and recreational space.

Bakkannapalem Sports Park is receiving renovations to include shuttle badminton, basketball, and volleyball

courts, catering to the diverse sporting interests of the community. Following the commissioner's instructions, a kabad-di court will be replaced with a children's playground, ensuring that younger residents have a dedicated area for safe and enjoyable play.

Commissioner Varma also directed officials to expedite

the renovation of Shivaji Park, including walking tracks, water fountains, a gym, yoga zones, a children's play area, and toilets. This renovation is set to transform Sivaji Park into a vibrant hub for fitness, recreation, and social interaction.

GVMC has entrusted the maintenance of the revamped parks to the respective resident

welfare associations, fostering a sense of ownership and community engagement. The corporation remains steadfast in its commitment to providing these revitalised green spaces for public enjoyment by December 15, contributing to the overall well-being and quality of life for Visakhapatnam residents.



# Collector puts Electricity dept official on high alert



PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has directed the electricity officials to be alert as the electric poles might be uprooted due to heavy winds during the cyclone.

He ordered them to be prepared to restore the power supply and erect the uprooted electrical poles on a war footing. He said that under the influence of the Michaung cyclone heavy rain accompanied by gales might lash the district from the midnight of Monday to till afternoon of Tuesday.

"The responsibility lies on the official machinery to ensure that there will be no loss of life in the district. Steps should be taken to ensure that no one tries to cross the streams, canals, nalas, and rivers during the cyclone time," he told the officials.

Collector Prasanna Venkatesh ordered the officials to identify the dilapidated buildings and take steps to evacuate the dwellers to relief camps and sensitize people not to stand near electric poles, trees, and compound walls as there is scope for collapse and uproot. He appealed to the people to cooperate with the officials during the cyclone,

adding that the officials are constantly monitoring the situation.

The Collector also directed the officials to take steps to purchase the paddy produce from the farmers after making it offline and make transport arrangements to shift the paddy to the rice mills. Officials were appointed mandal-wise to monitor the paddy purchase process, the Collector added.

Meanwhile, the education institutions declared a holiday on Tuesday because of rain under the influence of cyclones in the district.

Earlier, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy held a video conference with the Collector and reviewed the arrangements being made to face the cyclone threat. He instructed the Collector to purchase paddy from the farmers on war footing irrespective of colour or moisture. He also asked the Collector to focus on the emergency services management and enumeration of crop loss after the rains subsided.

SP Marry Prashanthi, Joint Collector B Lavanya Veni, APEPDCL SE Salman Raju, and Agriculture officer Y Ramakrishna were among those who were present.

## 12 relief camps set up

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector P Prashanthi has said that 12 relief camps have been set up for the rain-affected victims in the district in Mogaluru and Narasapuram mandals. The Collector instructed the officials to take all steps to avoid loss of life and loss of property due to cyclone. The Collector held a meeting with the officials and reviewed the measures being taken to face the cyclone threat in the district. Speaking on the occasion, Collector Prashanthi said that 12 relief camps were set up for the victims and 6 pregnant women were shifted to the GGH. Collector Prashanthi said that paddy was cultivated in 85,264 hectares in WG district of which paddy crop has been harvested in 30,652 acres so far. The paddy crop is ready to be harvested in 54,611 hectares in 10 days. "So far 1,15,483 tonnes of paddy produce has been purchased by the government from the farmers and the farmers have sold 48,266 tonnes of paddy on their own in the open market. As much as 9,700 tonnes of paddy produce has been shifted to safer places so far to avoid drenching in rainwater," the Collector informed, adding that steps were taken to shift 8,456 tonnes of paddy produce to safer places. The Collector directed the officials to evacuate the people living in low-lying areas to safer places on war footing and provide them food, drinking water and other basic facilities at the camps. She said that the NDRF, SDRF teams and expert swimmers are ready to swing into action if needed. Mechanized boats were kept ready for rescue operations. She directed the officials in coastal areas like Achanta, Narasapuram, Mogaluru, and Yalamanchili mandals to be more alert. "Teams should be kept ready with haxsaw machines to remove uprooted trees and electricity poles should be kept ready to restore power supply at the earliest at the affected areas. Transport, R&B, Transco, Revenue, Police, Fire, Panchayati Raj staff, and MPDOs should be part of the team," she said, adding that medical camps should be set up in the relief centers and snake bite medicines should be kept ready along with all medicines. Earlier, the Collector visited some villages including Pedamainavani Lanka, Piyamlanka Chinamainavani Lanka Vemuladeevi (East), and Biyyaputhippa, and saw the sea erosion. She also saw the fishing harbor colony. Joint Collector S Ramasundr Reddy and RDO M Achut Ambarish were among those who accompanied the Collector.



# People living near Peekalavagu to be evacuated

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Municipal Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri directed the officials to evacuate the people living near Peekalavagu stream and put on alert those who are living in the dilapidated buildings due to the Michaung cyclone storm.

The Municipal Commissioner visited the low-lying areas at Velangini Nagar, Yetukuru Road, Budampadu Road, Balajinagar, and Nallacheruvu areas on Monday. She also inspected the outfall drain and low-lying areas.

She noticed the silt inhibiting the free flow of water in the outfall drain and vented her anger over the officials. She instructed the engineers to take steps for de-silting and removal of plastic waste from the outfall drain on a war footing and submit a report in this regard to her.



She asked the engineering and public works department officials to work in a coordinated manner to bail out the water from the outfall drain. She ordered the ADH to keep ready park staff to remove uprooted trees on the roads. She asked the AE officials to keep ready generators to supply drinking water in case of power failure.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that the district has received heavy rain under the influence of the Michaung cyclone and the

people living in the low-lying areas should be evacuated to safer places. She directed the officials to identify dilapidated buildings and asked the dwellers to be on high alert during the next few days.

The Commissioner directed the officials to take all needed steps to ensure that there would be no loss of life anywhere in the city limits. She said that the Peekalavagu would receive heavy floodwater and the dwellers around it should be

shifted to safer places. She said that there is scope for the collapse of old structures and asked the people not to come out unnecessarily during the next two days.

Keerthi Chekuri asked the double cellars building owners to take care as there is scope for gushing of water into the cellars. She said that a control room was set up with the number 0863-2345103 in the GMC office and people could call for any assistance and advice. She said that four special teams comprising GMC officials were formed to constantly monitor the situation, she stated.

She asked the volunteers to sensitize the people to the imminent threat of a severe cyclonic storm in the next 24 hours. SE Sundararami Reddy, EE Konda Reddy, AE Sunil Kumar, and other officials were among those accompanying her.



# Desilting enabled flow of 6,000 cusecs water into Nakkala Vagu: Minister

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Agriculture Kakani Govardhan Reddy has said that desilting was carried out in the Nakkala Vagu stream which enabled the flow of 6000 cusecs in the Nakkala Vagu stream without inhibitions.

The Minister visited the Nakkala Vagu stream on Monday along with the officials at Pottampadu village in Muttukuru mandal.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that the desilting works yielded good results as 6000 cusecs of water are flowing freely now in the Nagala Vagu stream and merging with the sea.

The Minister said that the

flood water of Nakkalavagu used to inundate agriculture fields and some villages previously. Now there is no such situation as the water in the Nakkala Vagu is flowing freely and merging with the sea without obstacles as silt was removed from the stream.

Kakani Govardhan Reddy said that 7000 cusecs of water were released from the Sarvepalli reservoir by lifting 15 crest gates through the Kanupuru canal to the Nakkala Vagu stream. No government had evinced interest to modernize the canal for the last 15 years, he regretted. The government has taken steps to complete some other pending irrigation projects, he stated.

# Rythu Bazaar development project faces scrutiny

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The development works undertaken three months ago in 13 Rythu Bazaars of the district have come under scrutiny following concerns raised by farmers and bazaar staff. The allegations centre on the prioritisation of unnecessary expenditures over essential repairs and maintenance, raising questions about the effectiveness of the project.

A primary concern is the replacement of cement sheets with zinc sheets on bazaar stalls. Farmers have expressed discomfort working under the zinc sheets during the summer months, citing excessive heat absorption. The decision to replace functional cement sheets with an alternative that proves impractical has drawn criticism for its lack of consideration for user needs.

In another instance, the installation of new price boards has been inconsistent across bazaars. While some markets have received new boards, others continue to rely on damaged ones, hindering effective communication with customers.

The lack of functional CCTV cameras has emerged as a significant security concern. Despite repeated requests from bazaar staff and the availability of funds, the authorities have failed to address this issue, leaving ven-

**The lack of functional CCTV cameras has emerged as a significant security concern. Despite repeated requests from bazaar staff and the availability of funds, the authorities have failed to address this issue, leaving vendors and customers vulnerable to theft and other crimes.**



dors and customers vulnerable to theft and other crimes.

Furthermore, the modernisation efforts have focused on only four stalls in the Sitamadhara Rythu Bazaar, while neglecting the remaining 50 stalls. This selective approach has raised questions about the fairness and effectiveness of the development project.

Moreover, essential maintenance work, such as toilet upkeep and sewage management, has been overlooked. The neglect of these basic amenities has resulted in unsanitary and unpleasant working conditions for farmers and bazaar staff.

Despite generating a month-

# 99% promises fulfilled by CM: MP Suresh

PNS ■ RAPTHADU

After the successful completion of two phases of the Samajika Sadhikara Yatra, the YSRCP resumed the third phase with huge political fervour in the Raptadu assembly constituency in Sri Satya Sai district (South Zone) today. The yatra witnessed a multitude of people from various backward communities, making the ruling party's social empowerment yatra a big success.

Leaders representing BC, SC, ST, and Minority communities actively participated in the yatra emphasizing the social, political, and welfare along with development done by the YSRCP government under the able leadership of CM Jagan over the last 4.5 years.

While addressing a sea of supporters, Minister of Labour Gummanur Jayaram lauded CM Jagan as a beacon of hope for BC, SC, ST, and Minority communities, crediting him for their social and political empowerment. He also took a dig at the opposition TDP-JSP alliance and said, "Chandrababu and Pawan Kalyan must understand that their parties' future in AP is not guaranteed. People are all set to place their trust in Jagan and reinstate him as the chief minister in 2024."

MP Nandigama Suresh drew a parallel between CM Jagan



and the previous TDP government, stating, "CM Jagan fulfilled 99% of the promises outlined in the 2019 election manifesto and diligently implemented all welfare schemes despite the financial challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. In contrast,

Chandrababu Naidu consistently sought ways to evade fulfilling manifesto promises, impeding the welfare of the underprivileged."

MLA Thopudurthi Prakash Reddy highlighted, "For three consecutive years, we supplied water to the Peruru tank. In the

fourth year, the dam reached full capacity due to abundant rains. We also secured three reservoirs. CM Jagan allocated ₹2,500 crores to beneficiaries in the Raptadu constituency through both DBT (direct benefit transfer) and non-DBT methods."

## Man gets lifer for murder of medico

PNS ■ GUNTUR



The Principal District Court here on Monday sentenced a man convicted for the murder of a medical college girl student to life Imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 6,000.

SP Arif Hafiz told the media that on December 5, 2022, the accused Manne Jnaneswar stabbed to death a dental college third-year student Tapaswi.

The incident took place in Pedakakani police station limits, a case was registered as Cr. No 589/2022, u/s452,342 302, IPC (SC No 375/2023 and CI Suresh Babu started an investigation and arrested the accused. The accused Jnaneswara (27) belongs to Unguturu village.

The SP said that Public Prosecutor MS Sulthan Sirajuddin succeeded in probing the case in the court. Under the trial monitoring, witnesses were produced before the court in time and the court sentenced the accused to life imprisonment. It may be mentioned here that the murder of a third-year dental student created a sensation in the two districts.

# Orders issued for purchase of moist paddy: Minister

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM

Minister for BC Welfare and I&PR Chelluboina Venugopala Krishna has made it clear that orders have been issued to the officials to purchase soaked paddy from the farmers.

The Minister visited some villages in Kajuluru mandal and saw the paddy produce that the farmers were trying to save from being drenched in the rain. The Minister interacted with the farmers and assured them of purchasing their paddy produce.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Venugopala Krishna said that the state government had taken steps to protect the interest of the farmers

and steps were taken to buy all the paddy produce from farmers and asked the farmers to be ready to sell their paddy produce.

Steps were taken to shift the paddy produce to seven rice mills as soon as rice subsided, he said, adding that gunny bags, weighing machines, tractors, and lorries were kept ready for the same. Responding to the cyclone threat, the minister said that nature is testing the people and the farmers should face the challenge without losing self-confidence.

"The government always stands with the farmers and takes all steps to ensure that they will not incur loss," the minister said.



# BJP would have done better if Sanjay was TS prez: Katipally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Giant killer Katipally Venkat Ramana Reddy said that the BJP would have done much better in the TS Assembly elections if Bandi Sanjay Kumar had continued as the BJP's TS unit president.

Speaking to the media on Monday, Katipally said that people are saying that the BJP would have done better if Sanjay had continued as the president of Telangana BJP. He said that he didn't know why the central party leadership removed him.

He said that the party expects 30 to 40 seats but the party's important leaders lost elections.

He said that it is sad that the party stood second in 19 constituencies.

Katipally Venkat Ramana Reddy said that Kamareddy had attracted national attention as former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao and TPCC President Revanth Reddy had contested Kamareddy and had lost elections.

Katipally thanked both KCR and Revanth Reddy for contesting from Kamareddy as they gave him a chance to attract national media attention. He appealed to Revanth Reddy to run the Assembly for full days, unlike KCR who used to run the House for three days as they liked.



## Bakery worker electrocuted

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

A youth working in a bakery store was electrocuted when he came into contact with the Iron Gate through which electricity was passing in Macherla on Monday.

Police said that the deceased Nijamuddin (18) was working in a bakery store.

When he was talking on a mobile phone, he held an iron gate through which electricity was passing. He was electrocuted and died instantaneously. The deceased youth belonged to Jharkhand state.

The police registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH for postmortem.

## SBI allays customers' fears over missing gold

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In an effort to address public concerns, senior officials from the State Bank of India (SBI) on Monday issued assurances that all customers who have cleared their loans would soon have their mortgaged gold returned. This statement follows the unsettling discovery that gold ornaments pledged by customers for gold loans at SBI's Gara branch in Srikakulam have mysteriously disappeared.

The bank's Regional Manager, TRM Raju, filed a complaint at the Gara police station after the shocking suicide of Deputy Manager Swapna Priya. The missing gold, amounting to a total of 86 bags, has become the focal point of a detailed investigation.

SBI Deputy General Manager Pankaj Kumar provided insights into the ongoing inquiry, assuring the public that the bank is committed to safeguarding the interests of its customers. He emphasised that no customer would face undue hardships and confirmed that 26 out of the 86 missing gold bags had already been recovered and their contents verified.

"The process for the recovery of the remaining gold bags is underway. All customers who have repaid their gold loans will get back their items soon," stated Pankaj Kumar.

The missing gold scandal has taken a dark turn, with police suspecting the involvement of various individuals, including the brother of the deceased Deputy Manager Swapna Priya, a private financier, and others. The accused are believed to have mortgaged the stolen gold in three private banks, adding another layer of complexity to the investigation.



INDIA CORNER

## Senior White House official meets External Affairs Minister Jaishankar

The US' Principal Deputy NSA Jonathan Finer on Monday separately met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval with a focus on shoring up bilateral ties, in the first publicly announced engagement between the two sides after Washington alleged an Indian link to a foiled plot to kill a Sikh separatist on its soil. Finer, currently on a visit to New Delhi, and his Indian counterpart Vikran Misri undertook the first comprehensive mid-term review of the India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) during wide-ranging talks. In May last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joe Biden launched the iCET to facilitate outcome-oriented cooperation between the two nations in new and emerging technologies. "During the consultations, the two Deputy NSAs reviewed key bilateral issues and exchanged views on regional and global developments," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.



## Army deploys double humped camels for logistical support

The Army on Monday said it has deployed double humped camels for logistical support to the troops in eastern Ladakh. Ladakh, a cold desert, is home to the domesticated form of the Bactrian camels, also known as double-humped camels, which are mainly used for carrying goods but are also popular among tourists for safaris in the Nubra valley in the Union Territory. "Bactrian (double humped) camels are deployed in Eastern Ladakh as an innovative means for last mile delivery of critical load and mounted patrolling in sandy terrain of plateau," the Army's Udhampur-based northern command wrote on X. "The utilisation of camels, generated employment for Awam (public) and also paved way for conservation of fast dwindling population of double humped camels in Ladakh," the post added. The Army also shared a video of the deployed double humped camels along with the post.



## Amazon to introduce advanced coding & AI modules in schools

Amazon.in on Monday announced the expansion of its Amazon Future Engineer (AFE) program to introduce advanced coding and artificial intelligence (AI) modules in 100 Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Society (KREIS) schools. The company said in a statement it will also provide digital infrastructure enhancements for 30 KREIS schools. "This expansion will impact over 13,000 students in grades six to eight across 30 districts of Karnataka," it said. The expanded module will enable students to develop complex computer applications incorporating advanced programming concepts like control conditions, variables, and functions, the company said. "Additionally, through project-based learning, students will also be introduced to the basics of AI with a further understanding of its relevance and future possibilities.



# RS passes Post Office Bill to amend 125-yr-old Act

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Monday passed the Post Office Bill, 2023 that seeks to repeal the 125-year-old Indian Post Office Act and consolidate and amend the law relating to post offices in the country. According to the proposed legislation, "the central government may, by notification, empower any officer to intercept, open or detain any item in the interest of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, emergency or public safety, or upon the occurrence of any contravention of any of the provisions of any law for the time being in force". Replying to the discussion for the consideration of the Bill in the Upper House of Parliament, Communications Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw explained the provision for interception. "In a society which is as complex and diverse, and times



which are as difficult as they are, it is very important that interception is done. This kind of a provision is kept for national security," he said. The Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha during the Monsoon Session of Parliament. According to the statement of objects and reasons of the bill, over the years, the services available through post offices have diversified beyond mail and the post office network has become a vehicle for delivery of a variety of citizen-centric services, which necessitated the repeal of the Indian Post Office Act.

### Bill infringes right to privacy: Oppn

Several opposition parties like the Left and AAP in Rajya Sabha on Monday opposed the new post office bill, which has provisions allowing the postal officer to "open, detain, or destroy" parcels in the interest of national or public security. They claimed it was an infringement of the fundamental right to privacy. Members from parties including the NCP, AIADMK, and TDP also raised concerns over Section 9 of the Post Office Bill, 2023, which grants the "Power to intercept, open or detain any item or deliver the item to customs authority" and said it against federal principles. Some MPs alleged that the Act can be "misused" and is akin to allowing surveillance of citizens. Participating in the debate, Congress' Shaktisinh Gohil objected to the provision of the

bill that gives the power to intercept shipments to specified officers, saying it would infringe on the right to privacy. "The right of privacy is a fundamental right. I understand that security is important and you are doing it for the safety of the people but in the name of security...in which direction are we going?" he asked. The act allows the interception of a shipment being transmitted through the post on certain grounds such as any public emergency, or in the interest of public safety or tranquillity, Gohil said, asking the government to clarify what is a "public emergency, public safety or tranquillity". "Such interceptions may be carried out by central, state governments or any officer specially authorised by them."

## 71% rural households have tap water connection

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 71 per cent rural households across the country have tap water connection under the Jal Shakti Mission till now, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Monday. In a written reply, Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti Prahlad Singh Patel said nine states/Union territories -- Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Telangana, A&N Islands, Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman Diu and Puducherry have reported that they had provided tap water connection to all rural households as on September 30. At the time of announcement of Jal Jeevan Mission on August 15, 2019, 3.23 crore (17 per cent) rural households were reported to have tap water connections. So far, as reported by states/UTs as on November 29, around 10.46 crore additional rural households have been provided with tap water connections, the minister said.

### MIZORAM POLLS

## ZPM dethrones MNF, bags 27 of 40 seats

PNS ■ AIZAWL

The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) stormed to power in Mizoram by dethroning the Mizo National Front (MNF) bagging 27 seats in the 40-member House on Monday. Prominent ZPM winners include the party's CM face Lalduhoma, who secured the Serchhip seat defeating his MNF rival J Malsawmzuala Vanchhawng by 2,982 votes. The ruling Mizo National Front won nine seats and was leading in one. The BJP won the Palak and Saiha seats. The Indian National Congress bagged the Lawngtlai West seat. Prominent losers include Deputy Chief Minister and MNF candidate Tawnluia who lost to ZPM candidate in Tuichang, Health Minister and MNF candidate R Lalthangliana who lost to ZPM's Jeje Lalpekhluia in

South Tuipui and Rural Development Minister Laruatkima who lost to ZPM nominee Lalnghinglova Hmar in Aizawl West II, according to the Election Commission. Chief Minister and MNF chief Zoramthanga lost to ZPM's Lalthansanga by 2,101 votes, it said. ZPM emerged winners in Kolasib, Chalfih, Tawi, Aizawl North-I, Aizawl North-II, Aizawl North-III, Aizawl East I, Aizawl East II, Aizawl West-I, Aizawl West-II, Aizawl West-III, Aizawl South-I, Aizawl South-II, Aizawl South-III, Lengteng, Tuichang, Champhai North, Champhai South, Tuikum, Hrangturzo, South Tuipui, Lunglei North, Lunglei East, Lunglei West, Lunglei South, Lawngtlai East and Serchhip seats. The MNF won in Hachhek, Mamik, Tuirial, Serlui, Tuivawl, East Tuipui, West Tuipui, Thorang and Tuichawng seats and was leading in one.

### Lalduhoma, the man who guarded Indira Gandhi, set to be Mizoram CM

From earning the dubious distinction of the first MP to be disqualified under the anti-defection law to being all set to becoming the chief minister of Mizoram, 73-year-old Lalduhoma's political journey has been all about battling against odds. Lalduhoma, an ex-IPS officer who served as the in-charge of former prime minister Indira Gandhi's security, is the chief ministerial face of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM). The ZPM which was registered as a political party only in 2019 secured a majority in the Mizoram assembly on Monday, winning 27 of the 40 seats and leading in one other, as votes were being counted, according to the Election Commission.

## ‘Over confidence’ cost us Rajasthan, MP, Chhattisgarh: Assam Cong chief

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Congress chief Bhupen Kumar Borah on Monday said that the grand old party lost the assembly elections in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh due to "over confidence". He praised the "fighting spirit of the BJP" in the three states and said that the saffron party was "striving for victory even when all indications were pointing at the BJP's defeat". "The results of the assembly elections were a warning for us not to be too confident," Borah told reporters at state party headquarters Rajiv Bhavan here. He said that during his interaction with Congress leaders of these states, there was no indication from them that the party could lose the assembly polls. "We have to give it to the BJP that they fought till the end



even when they were told that they are losing. But we (Congress) thought that we had already won," he said. "It is a lesson for us in Assam also (not to be over confident)," Borah added. The BJP retained Madhya Pradesh, while it wrestled Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh from the Congress in the state assembly polls, the results of which were declared on Sunday. Telangana was the only state where the grand old party emerged victorious. He maintained that the elec-

toral results in these states would not have any bearing on the party's fortunes in Assam. "The election issues are state-specific. In Assam, our main issues will be corruption and syndicate raj by the BJP-led regime here. Wherever we fought with corruption as the main agenda, like in Karnataka or Telangana, we emerged victorious," he said. Borah claimed that central agencies such as CBI and ED, which the opposition accuses of working at the behest of the BJP-led NDA government, would align with the INDIA bloc as soon as they see that public opinion was in favour of the now opposition camp. "These agencies are being used to create problems for Congress leaders. But in 2024, as soon as the agencies see that INDIA bloc is gaining ground, they will shift allegiance towards us," he added.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The recently concluded Assembly polls that saw the BJP win three states will not impact the INDIA bloc but the opposition parties need to work harder for the Lok Sabha polls next year, opposition leaders said on Monday. The BJP swept Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh on Sunday, inflicting a resounding defeat on the Congress to tighten its stranglehold in the Hindi heartland, in a big boost for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and setting the tone for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. In some consolation for the

Congress in the face of the saffron wave after it lost Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, the party ousted the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) in Telangana. A day after the results, National Conference (NC) leader Farooq Abdullah said the opposition INDIA bloc parties will have to work harder. Asked about the results and its possible impact on the alliance, he said, "It will make no difference to the alliance. We will have to work harder." "Victories and losses happen. We should learn from the defeat, as well as from those who have won. India has to be one, it is for everyone, and we



need to strengthen the country," the NC leader said. Asked about the Samajwadi Party not being accommodated in Madhya Pradesh by the Congress while announcing its candidates for the state and its possible impact on the

results, Abdullah said, "All will have to be accommodated and we will have to move forward." Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Manoj Jha also said the results will not impact the alliance.

"These were state polls. These should be left behind. National elections will be held on different issues. It (Assembly poll results) will not have any impact, everyone will have to understand the unity of the INDIA bloc... there is no contradiction," he said. ongress General Secretary KC Venugopal said his party will introspect on what went wrong in the polls and maintained that it will not impact the opposition grouping. All opposition parties attended the meeting at Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's office in Parliament on Monday morning, he said.

### NEED TO WORK HARDER, SAY OPPOSITION LEADERS

## Assembly poll results won't impact INDIA bloc

## Centre curbed state's role in running panchayats: Mamata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said with the Centre directly sending funds to panchayats, the power of state governments has been curbed. Because of this, the state is not always updated about the work done by the respective panchayats in an area, she said in the assembly. "As the Centre is now directly sending funds to panchayats with the state having little role, our power has been curbed. We don't have updates about the works done by panchayats," she said. The ruling TMC has sever-



al times claimed that due to non-release of funds for MGN-REGA and Awas Yojana by the Centre along with other projects, lakhs of poor people in West Bengal are being affected. "Despite the Centre's attitude (towards Bengal), we will ensure that people do not face hardship," she said. As the chief minister was about to begin her speech, around 25 BJP legislators present stood up and walked out shouting "chor chor" (thieves) donning black badges. The treasury bench did not react and she resumed her speech soon afterwards.

## Results indicate BJP returning to power at Centre : Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday hailed the BJP's victory in three states as a "spectacular" feat and said the results indicate that the party will return to power at the Centre with a clear majority in 2024. "A spectacular victory it is," Singh told reporters in Parliament Complex. "It seems that the country has made up its mind to ensure that BJP forms its government, winning the 2024 Lok Sabha elections with a clear majority," the former

BJP president added. The BJP swept Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh on Sunday inflicting a resounding defeat on the Congress to tighten its hold in the Hindi heartland, in a big boost for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and setting the tone for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. In some consolation for the Congress in the face of the saffron wave after it lost Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, the grand old party ousted the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) in Telangana.



### OPPN MEMBERS TO LS SPEAKER BIRLA

## Discuss Moitra's expulsion report before taking any decision

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition members on Monday demanded a discussion in the Lok Sabha on the Ethics Committee report, recommending the expulsion of TMC member Mahua Moitra, before any decision was taken on the matter. The opposition members made the demand during the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee chaired by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to finalise the agenda for the House this week. Parliamentary sources said the report of the Ethics Committee on the expulsion of Trinamool Congress leader Moitra from the Lok Sabha was expected to be tabled in the House on Tuesday. The report was listed for presentation in the Lok Sabha on Monday, but the agenda item was not taken up by the presiding officer, raising questions over the continuance of Moitra as a parliamentarian. The Business Advisory Committee also decided to allot 12 hours for discussion on the three bills to replace the colonial-era criminal laws. It also decided to allocate three hours for discussion on the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill. The Lok Sabha's Ethics Committee, chaired

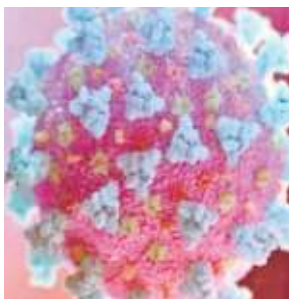


by BJP member Vinod Sonkar, had adopted its report at a meeting on November 9, recommending Moitra's expulsion from the lower house over the "cash-for-query" allegation. Six members of the panel, including Congress member Preet Kaur who had earlier been suspended from the party, voted in favour of the report. Four members of the panel belonging to opposition parties submitted dissent notes. The opposition members termed the report a "fixed match" and said the complaint filed by BJP Lok Sabha member Nishikant Dubey, which the panel reviewed, was not supported by a "shred of evidence". Moitra can be expelled only if the House votes in favour of the panel's recommendation. Speaking to reporters outside Parliament, Moitra said that Trinamool leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay asked the presiding officer as to why the report of the Ethics Committee was not tabled in the Lok Sabha. She said Congress' K Suresh and RSP's N K Premachandran also raised the same question but there was no reply. Later, Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that for reasons best known to the committee, the report has not been tabled. He said there would have been some reason which "forced them" not to table the report on Monday.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Being overweight can impair the body's antibody response to SARS-CoV-2 infection but not to the protection offered by COVID-19 vaccination, according to a study. The finding, published in the journal Clinical & Translational Immunology, builds on the team's existing research on how COVID-19 affects people who are overweight. "We have previously shown that being overweight not just being obese increases the sever-

ity of SARS-CoV-2," said Marcus Tong, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Queensland in Australia. "But this work shows that being overweight creates an impaired antibody response to SARS-CoV-2 infection but not to vaccination," Tong said. The team collected blood samples from people who had recovered from COVID-19 and not been reinfected during the study period, approximately three months and 13 months post-infection. "At three months post-infec-



tion, an elevated BMI was associated with reduced antibody levels," Tong said. "And at 13 months post-

infection, an elevated BMI was associated with both reduced antibody activity and a reduced percentage of the relevant B cells, a type of cell that helps build these COVID-fighting antibodies," he added. The body mass index (BMI) is defined as the body mass divided by the square of the body height. In contrast, an elevated BMI had no effect on the antibody response to COVID-19 vaccination at approximately six months after the second vaccine was administered, the

researchers said. According to Kirsty Short, Associate Professor at the University of Queensland, the results should help shape health policy moving forward. "If infection is associated with an increased risk of severe disease and an impaired immune response for the overweight, this group has a potentially increased risk of reinfection," Short said. "It makes it more important than ever for this group to ensure they're vaccinated," she added.



## Battle lines drawn

Stormy debates set the tone for the winter session of Parliament as key Bills await passage

The BJP, buoyed by recent triumphs in Assembly elections, is up against a resolute Congress in the hallowed Houses of Parliament with the commencement of the winter session. The session's importance, especially for the Congress, is that it finds its dominance even within the Opposition's INDIA bloc challenged following the electoral setback and needs to restore its image. And since it is the penultimate Parliament session before the general elections, the Government wants to push as many Bills through as possible. The last session would be the budget session, with focus mainly on the Lok Sabha elections and the budget. This session has set the stage for crucial discussions and debates that will shape the nation's legislative landscape ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. Concluding on December 22, the session is poised to be eventful, with a comprehensive agenda comprising 21 Bills and a charged political atmosphere. Adding to the expected drama, the Lok Sabha Ethics



Committee has recommended the expulsion of TMC MP Mahua Moitra over a 'cash-for-query' complaint and the report is scheduled to be tabled in this session. But the report was surprisingly not tabled at least till lunch time Monday though it was item number five on the day's agenda, leading to speculation from the Opposition benches. This led the Congress to raise concerns about the functioning of parliamentary committees, urging a review of rules and processes. It would be interesting to observe what happens next.

One of the focal points of the session is the introduction of three Bills seeking to replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act. This move signifies a overhaul of the legal framework and is likely to spark intense debates in both Houses. Another contentious move includes the Bill regarding the appointment of the CEC and Election Commissioners. The Opposition parties are expected to staunchly oppose this Bill. The list comprises 19 legislative business and two financial business Bills. The latter segment will involve the presentation, discussion and voting on the first batch of supplementary demands for grants for 2023-24. Simultaneously, attention will be given to demands for excess grants for 2020-21, accompanied by the introduction, consideration and passing of the related appropriation Bill. With a host of Bills on the agenda and political dynamics at play, the session is likely to be a litmus test for the NDA Government's legislative agenda and the Opposition's resilience. The nation will keenly observe the proceedings as the lawmakers navigate through a range of issues that will shape the nation's legal and political landscape. But the biggest question is, will Parliament function smoothly or be marred by walkouts and pandemonium? If its functioning is disrupted, it could be a big loss to the nation in general and our democracy in particular.

### PICTALK



Tourists visit the Marina Beach as high tidal waves lash the shore owing to Cyclone Michaung, in Chennai PTI

## No rationale for giving subsidies to Tesla

Concession given to import of Tesla cars would could hamper the efforts being made by other car companies operating in India

Once again the issue of reducing import duty for importing their cars is in discussion for American electric car company Tesla. Till now, a 60 per cent import duty has been imposed on any car whose price is less than \$ 40,000 and a 100 per cent import duty is imposed on cars costing more than \$ 40,000. This is done to protect the Indian automobile industry from unfair foreign competition. India's automobile industry has made remarkable progress in the last few decades. The share of the automobile sector in the total manufacturing output of the country is about 49 per cent and it constitutes 7.1 per cent of the total GDP. Most of the vehicles plying in the country are manufactured in India and very few vehicles are imported. Not only this, India's automobile exports were worth \$21.2 billion. Tesla company has put up the condition of duty cut on the import of its cars to 18 per cent, for setting up a plant of car manufacturing in the country. The company says it is ready to invest \$2 billion in the country, provided the



import duty on its cars is reduced. Its request is under consideration. Today almost all the automobile companies in India have started producing electric and hybrid cars. In such a situation, customers already have options to buy electric cars. In India, nearly one lakh electric cars are sold monthly and the number is expected to rise rapidly. Keeping in mind the growing market of Electric Vehicles (EVs) in the country, Tesla company has come up with a proposal to set up its plant in India, about which there is no opposition per se. To encourage the production of electric cars in the country, the import duty on components has already been reduced significantly. Today, spare parts for electric cars are being imported at only 10 to 15 per cent import duty. These are much lower than the import duty on conventional automobile parts. Due to low import

duty on electric car components, established automobile companies and startups in the country have started adding value to a large extent in the country. Given the incentives being given to electric cars by the Government of India, it seems that soon India will start meeting its requirement of electric vehicles. Till now, the key to the development of the automobile industry in the country has been the protection given to this industry by the government. Concession given to import of Tesla cars would not be right, as it could hamper the efforts being made by the companies already operating in the country. But more importantly, Tesla company manufactures luxury cars. In 2019-20, only 40637 luxury cars were sold in the country, which was reduced to only 19700 in 2020-21 during the Covid-19 period. The reason for this is that only a very small section of the country can buy luxury cars more expensive than 16 to 17 lakh rupees i.e. \$20000 US and even a small-section can buy a car worth \$40000 i.e. 32-33 lakh rupees. In such a situation, if Tesla company is given an

exemption in import duty, then rich people who can buy expensive cars will naturally buy imported Tesla cars. This will affect the manufacturing of luxury electric cars in the country. Not only this, many other companies, including Volkswagen, who are also in the queue, will also demand lower import duty. We also have to understand that domestic companies are already putting a lot of effort into research and development in manufacturing electric cars. An Indian company 'Ola', with the help of investors, has made significant progress in manufacturing electric scooters in the country. Similar efforts can be made in cars, but the concession in import duty will hamper these efforts. We have to understand that Tesla's business model is such that it does not encourage domestic manufacturers of components, and only uses internal manufacturing technology. The expectation that the downstream value chain will develop with the arrival of Tesla company is not correct. (The writer is a Professor, at PGDAV College, DU, views are personal)



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

## Searching for the right CM candidate

After the state assembly poll results, speculation about who the new chief ministers will be, is rife

The exit polls had predicted a neck-to-neck battle in these states, with a tied result of 2-2 for both Congress and the BJP. However, despite a close fight in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, the Party could only win Telangana. Despite the stringent anti-defection laws, MLAs are tempted with large sums of money to change sides, often resulting in the winning Party's government's collapse has strengthened itself in the North, but it has yet to find a foothold in the South. The BJP's successful poll strategy united its supporters and minimised internal conflicts. Fielding Parliament members as candidates helped the Party reduce internal sabotage.

Congress gained an advantage in Telangana due to its strong local leadership. The Party also benefited greatly from the defections of many leaders who began to see it as a viable contender, especially after its success in Karnataka. Voters shifted towards the Congress once it became evident that it posed a severe challenge to the ruling BRS, BJP and Congress did not announce chief ministerial candidates before the polls. Both parties must decide whether to continue with established leaders or search for new leadership. Congress must decide whether to appoint Revanth Reddy or a new face. The Party has many potential candidates, so the main question is how to implement the new rules. The BJP favours phasing out old guards like Vasundhara Raje, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and Raman Singh, who have had their innings. Another crucial factor when selecting new candidates is their caste. A diverse mix of castes is essential, not limiting it to Rajputs or forward castes. Additionally, their performance will also be taken into consideration. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants a suitable candidate to deliver the States in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. This is his top priority for performing a hat trick. Let's take a look at Madhya Pradesh as an example. Shivraj Singh Chouhan, one of the



longest-serving Chief Ministers, is ready to continue. During an event in Madhya Pradesh, Chouhan even asked the public for their opinion on whether he should run for Chief Minister again if elected. There are many potential candidates for the top post in Madhya Pradesh. They include three Union Ministers, Narendra Singh Tomar, Fagga Singh Kulaste, and Prahlad Patel, who provide a range of options. Kailash Vijayvargiya, the Party's General Secretary and Jyotiraditya Scindia, the Union Minister who helped bring down the Kamal Nath government, are also on the list of potential candidates. The prominent candidate in the State of Rajasthan would be the former chief minister Vasundhara Raje. Union ministers Bhupendra Yadav and Ashwini Vaishnav, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Minister Arjun Meghwal, and Mahant Balakrishna are also in the race. Rajyavardhan Rathore is a Rajput and a multiple-time cabinet minister. Satish Poonia served as the Rajasthan BJP president when the Party was out of power. In early 2023, C P Joshi, a Brahmin and two-

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DESPITE THE STRINGENT ANTI-DEFECTION LAWS, MLAS ARE TEMPTED WITH LARGE SUMS OF MONEY TO CHANGE SIDES, OFTEN RESULTING IN THE WINNING PARTY'S GOVERNMENT'S COLLAPSE

time MP, replaced Poonia as the state BJP president. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, the Union Minister for Jal Shakti, a new-generation BJP leader, is also a potential candidate for the CM of Rajasthan. In Chhattisgarh, too, former chief minister Raman Singh is a front-runner. Raman Singh, the BAMS doctor who ruled Chhattisgarh for 15 years till 2018, is the most recognisable face of the Party in the State. He was a union minister before he became the chief minister of Chhattisgarh in 2003. However, he has been sidelined in the past five years. Vishnu Dev Sao is also a contender for CM. He has a clean image, comes from an RSS family and has risen. Union Minister Renuka Singh, a prominent tribal leader, from the Bharatpur-Sonhat constituency is yet another option. Congress, on its part, must choose a leader to keep the Party united in Telangana. The leader of BRS., K Chandrashekhara Rao is known for his talent in turning away members from other parties. Historically, Congress has lost its ability to protect its flock. This was visible in

Goa, Karnataka, and other states. Revanth Reddy is the most likely candidate in Telangana. He belongs to the robust Reddy and had the full support of Congress leadership despite criticisms from within the Party for his style of functioning. Starting with ABVP as a student, he has ended up at the top. Reddy faces various challenges, including winning more seats in the Lok Sabha polls in 2024. However, it's more crucial for him to keep his Party united. Of late, the instability kicks off with horse trading, commencing immediately after the government's formation. Despite the stringent anti-defection laws, MLAs are tempted with large sums of money to change sides, often resulting in the winning Party's government's collapse. Political parties use tricks to buy the required M.L.A.s to snatch the government. The BJP is upbeat about its success and is already strategising for the 2024 polls. The opposition group INDIA's future is still being determined after the huge BJP win. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### HOAX EMAILS

Sir—Around 48 schools in Bengaluru received such hoax e-mails about the Bombay threat that had troubled the entire state machinery in Karnataka. The point of contention is that hoax mail had been targeting the school children. To understand the peculiarity of the matter, the school authorities immediately alerted the police as well as the parents of the children and ensured the immediate vacant school premises. The probe is being conducted by the police authorities, meanwhile, the question is who could be the actor doing so? The mail raised eyebrows among parents, about how such a cyber loop arises in the metro city of Bengaluru.

The matter is of urgent importance, as it is concerned with the safety and security of children. The police and the cyber cell must reach the top of the matter and must unearth all the facts and intentions of all those who are planning such acts of unrest, fear and chaos in society. Until and unless the situation is normal, it is the right time for the government too, to think about an appropriate plan of action and measures via which the security of school children can be ensured.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

### PROTECTION FOR JOURNALIST

Sir—The Supreme Court on Friday extended the interim protection from arrest it had granted to four journalists against whom the Gujarat Police had issued summonses in connection with an article published on the Adani Group. The top court was hearing the pleas filed by Ravi Nair, Anand Mangnale, Benjamin Nicholas Brooke Parkin and Chloe Nina Cornish against the summonses. Nair and Mangnale have challenged the summonses issued by the Ahmedabad crime branch asking them to appear for questioning with respect to the preliminary enquiry (PE) into their article published on the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) website. Nair and Mangnale received notices from the

### Saffron surge



The BJP's surge in the northern states with a 3-1 victory against the 'INDIA' bloc, again proved Modi is the heartland's hero. The saffron party stormed and accomplished the much-needed victory just a few months before the national elections. The BJP's star campaigner PM Modi led the party's campaign single-handedly in the elections proved himself as a popular vote-catcher and remained a towering figure in the national political arena. The Telangana's victory of Congress in the bi-

terly fought contest is the only solace to the oldest party which miserably failed to retain Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh while facing a humiliating debacle in MP, which it hoped for a comfortable win. While the Telangana Congress could demolish the KCR's BR's fort, which was seen as a corrupt and familial outfit, the credit for the party's handsome victory in the state mainly goes to its firebrand and flamboyant state Congress Chief A Revanth Reddy. The Telangana's victory also implies that A Revanth Reddy is emerging as Telangana's YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the AP CM.

But, these results are a rude shock and fodder for thought for the Opposition's 'INDIA' bloc, yearning to trounce the BJP. Should this be a pointer to the next Parliament elections, the faultless among INDIA Constituents such as DMK's antagonist comments on Sanatana Dharma and Rahul Gandhi's distasteful remarks on Modi are proving costly and merit corrective steps.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

crime branch in October directing them to appear in person in connection with the PE launched on the complaint by an investor Yogeshbhai Mafatlal Bhansali. The other pleas have been filed by Parkin and Cornish, who were summoned by the Gujarat Police for a preliminary enquiry on a complaint filed by an investor in the Adani group companies.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### ED OFFICERS INDULGING IN CORRUPTION

Sir—Remember, during the two years before 2014, what did those in power complain about today's opposition? How were the Central Bureau of Investigation agencies accused of misuse? The Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation were called caged parrots. When the same allegations are being levelled against the ruling party, those allegations are being rejected outright. The world is watching how one by one the opposition, critics, leaders, writers, journalists and

activists who have raised their voices against government policies are being raided by the CBI, ED or Income Tax Department every day. The question here arises is whether only opposition leaders are thieves and indulge in illegal affairs. Are the ruling parties saints? There is no corruption happening during today's rule? They never answer this. Now the people of the Enforcement Directorate appointed by them are themselves infiltrating and getting arrested red-handed. A few days ago, it was reported that the Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau had arrested two Enforcement Directorate officers, Naval Kishore Meena and his associate Babul Meena, for allegedly taking a bribe of ₹ 15 lakh to settle a case related to the chit fund case. The central government officers are turning out to be a robber!

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

BECOME AN OBSERVER

After having done what we could, we must leave it to God, and become an observer



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

How is this word defined in English? An observer is a person who watches or notices something. But in Sanskrit, it has wider meaning. To understand it, let us refer to the verse # 2.47 of the Bhagavad-Geeta. What does this very famous verse teach us? “You have a right only in action, not ever in predetermining its fruits (results). You should not try to speculate about the fruit of action.” What do we normally do? We are habituated to speculate, predetermine, get attached to results, etc. Unfortunately, we have not been given this right. So, what happens? We suffer. This article is to dissuade us from acting in this fashion, because of ‘gahana karmano faith’ (the intricacy of action is very difficult to understand).

The following example will clarify. We apply for a job, as do so many. We have certain qualifications. Do they match with what the job requirements are in the eyes of those deciding? They ask certain questions, for which we are not well prepared, but someone else is. How do they formulate these questions? As we go deeper into it, complications compound. Because what will ultimately happen is what was destined. This is the eternal truth. We all get what is destined, no more or no less.



Another example will shed more light on the subject. A golf player reaches the top of the world standing, but then his form dives. What happened? Good karmaphalas took him to the top, but when bad karmaphalas manifested, his fortune suffered greatly. This we do not accept and keep on struggling. What should we do? Do we have an option to overturn our luck? We do and we don't. First, we cannot do anything about it, even if God doesn't intervene. Why? Because the creation functions based on the 'Karmaphala Principle', which is: "What we sow we reap." Every act by body, mind and words results in a fruit good or bad. These must come to fruition. Then, are we stuck? No, we are not. God is very kind; we are never condemned. We have to approach God for help. Why? Because God can help us come out of our bad karmaphalas. It is not easy, though we have to start doing what yogis do, which is, "karmayogis, giving up attachment, perform acts by body, mind, intelligence and by senses also for self-purification only." God is very generous; He begins to help us as we get started. Let us go into further details about what happens and can happen, if we approach God. There is just not one type of help available. In verse #7.16, Lord Krishna has commended four kinds of people, out of which two are distressed and seekers of wealth. In the last verse of the Geeta, Sanjay has spoken about being blessed with opulence, victory, wealth and morality, if one makes a connection with God. (18.78) These are the other types of our desires. But what we will ultimately get will be decided by God only. Therefore, after having done what we could we must leave it to God, i.e. become an observer. If we wish to further secure ourselves, then, we must become devotees of God.

In the second part of this verse, Lord Krishna mentions that His devotees become special. What happens? God takes charge of their lives. What does it mean? (11.33) Some famous examples besides of Arjuna are Adi Shankaracharya, who established four 'mathas' in Badrinath, Dwarka, Puri and Sringeri. God used Swami Vivekananda to spread Sanatana dharma across the world. These are very famous examples, but, those placed in the lower levels of devotion, are used for doing good to people around them. We, souls, expected to do two roles? One is to do our duties, and the other is to constantly evaluate what we are doing. This is what being an observer is. In the case of non-devotees, God is an observer, and in the case of devotees, they become observers. Because God takes the role of 'Karta' (doer) in their lives. They have reached the third level while doing karma (duties) and having taken 'sharan' (shelter). They can well and truly become observers fully assured about their future. How else?

*(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)*

# Balochistan: An undeclared war zone- II

## Human rights violations are rampant in Balochistan. The Pakistan is waging an undeclared war on Baloch people, writes Mir Khan Baloch



Anwarul Haq Kakar was a senator in the Balochistan assembly before resuming office as Prime Minister of Pakistan. ISI has given him special instructions to pursue the narrative of Islamabad to counter the ongoing Balochistan freedom movement. His NGO, 'Voice of Balochistan' publishes content on social media and YouTube. He is head of well-known state-sponsored death squads whose prime objectives are to facilitate Pakistan ISI, MI (Military Intelligence) and the army to locate the Baloch activists and freedom-loving patriots and later kill them in fake encounters. He often can be seen with Sarfaraz Bugti who is another cabinet member of the current government but he runs dozens of death squads in Sui, Dera Bugti, Pirkoh, Loti, Sibi and adjoining areas of Dera Bugti. His most active death squad militia is the Bugti Aman Force which openly confesses to killing patriot Baloch fighting against Pakistani illegal occupation of Balochistan. Sarfaraz Bugti had countless meetings with another notorious radical death squad Shafiq Mengal involved in the abductions, and killings of Baloch in district Khuzdar, Wadh, Sorab, and Kalat areas. His proxy militia is also involved in sectarian violence such as targeting Shia communities living in Balochistan, he enjoys the full support of the Pakistan army. Pakistan army distributed ministries to all of its proxy assets, one of them is Jamal Raisani 20 years 20-year-old boy, who is the son of Siraj Raisani who openly advocated assassinations of pro-independent seeking leadership and activists. He was killed in a suicide attack in Mastung along with his 100+ party members. Islamabad had given them ministries as compensation to acknowledge their contribution to facilitating the army and the ISI. Pakistan is repeating the Bangladesh style of Baloch genocide and hiring death squads like Al Shams and Al Badr who were used against Mukti Bahini the freedom fighters of Bangladesh in 1971. It is very sad that on 27 March 1948, Jinnah

BALUCH PEOPLE ARE DEMANDING A PEACEFUL FUTURE FREE OF FEAR; THEY WANT COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE AND GOOD RELATIONS WITH INDIA

ordered its army to invade Balochistan in a similar fashion Russia invaded Ukraine. They attacked the Palace of Balochistan's King, they fired artillery shells and opened indiscriminate firing. The mosque of the King of Kalat still bears the marks of bombing. Hence the instrument of annexation was signed by force with the Prince of Balochistan. The people of Balochistan did not join Pakistan willingly and they reserve the right to regain their independence. After the invasion of Pakistan, they kept resisting on various occasions but unfortunately, none gave any heed to their suffering and problems. China is exploiting the resources of Balochistan For many decades China made entry into Balochistan and extracted minerals of Balochistan such as Gold, Copper, Silver, and Uranium from Balochistan's Rekodet, Saindak and other areas. Pakistan is brutally suppressing the voices of ordinary Baloch people. Baloch people are demanding a peaceful future free of fear, they want complete independence and good relations with India and the rest of the world. Reports are emerging that Pakistan and China are abducting Baloch civilians, among them are women being raped, children being terrorized, and students being made victims of enforced disappearances. Pakistan under the nose of the United Nations and civilized world, is repeating the atrocities its army perpetrated against Bengalis in 1971. Baloch people are being butchered and bombed which must be a matter of worry for the civilized world. How can we sleep when humanity in Balochistan is under constant threat and Baloch people

are facing heinous crimes by the Pakistan army? To quell their liberation movement, the Pakistan establishment is using air force to bomb ordinary unarmed Baloch people which is against the international laws. About 30,000 Baloch prisoners are being kept in secret detention centers and 2 lakh Baloch have been killed since 1948. This is a huge ratio of ethnic cleansing and it must be recognized genocide of Baloch people. Pakistan is repeating the same cruelty that its army did in Bangladesh in 1971. Today Baloch people are being butchered, their land is being occupied and their resources are being exploited. If Balochistan becomes independent I believe there will be peace because they are not radicals, they are not against India, they are not against peace, and they are not pursuing any sort of policy to invade any country. I urge the government of India to speak about the massive scale of the Baloch genocide taking place and how people over there are deprived of fundamental rights to independence. There is no harm in inviting pro-independent Baloch leadership to India because Balochistan historically is not part of Pakistan and they don't accept Pakistan's occupation. We must listen to them and accept the genuine stance of the Baloch people rather than relying on Pakistan's fabricated lies and illegal rule of Balochistan. Our leadership of both countries must sit together and help their cause so we can have a friendly country of Balochistan to end Pakistan's day-to-day border infiltration, terrorism, proxy wars, and use of other anti-India elements. Balochistan is not an internal issue of Pakistan and we have the right to talk about

Balochistan in the open, in parliament, in the media and globally. India is a strong country it has the guts to take a strong position to help Balochistan get its liberation. Liberating Balochistan is tantamount to solving many problems internally and internationally at a time. The situation in occupied Balochistan is pathetic and deserves international attention. The aspiration of 1.4 billion Indians echoes the current government to make appropriate decisions by giving a helping hand to support the aspirations of millions of Baloch people. Who Leads the Balochistan Movement? In the world liberation movements are led by one leader who has the vision, and background of not compromising on a national cause and people trust him/her. Balochistan liberation movement is led by Baloch nationalist leader Hyrbayir Marri who from his childhood is attached to Balochistan cause. He is the son of Baloch veteran leader late Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri. He enjoys the full support of his people from Balochistan and the overseas population. He had never accepted the slavery of Pakistan. His determination and commitment to his people are adorable. Marri is an international calibre leader and the world community has always given him immense respect and space. He urged the Baloch community to join hands and work for the independence of United Balochistan.

*(The writer is a Baloch human rights activist covering Balochistan, Central Asia and the Middle East. Views are personal)*  
*This is the second part of the two-part series on Balochistan.*  
**Concluded**

# Climate change: Challenges and COP28

## India's unique and novel initiative– Mission LiFE and Green Credit Program (GCP) can be replicated by other countries

The whole world is concerned about climate change and its ill effects. Climate Change concerns have attained centre stage in all environmental, social and economic deliberations at the National as well as Global levels. In this sequence, again during the 28th session of the COP (Conference of Parties) related to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which started November 30 in Dubai, UAE, more than 190 countries are deliberating on various issues. In this conference, countries around the world are discussing the challenges related to climate change and reviewing the progress made in the decisions taken in previous conferences as well as global brainstorming.



VIVEK SAXENA

India has taken several concrete initiatives at the national and international levels in recent years to address the challenges of climate change. To take this movement forward, the Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change, Government of India has notified the Green Credit Scheme (GCP) and rules in October 2023. Its objective is to encourage every individual and community to promote a healthy and environment-friendly lifestyle. The concept of the Green Credit Scheme will be based on a very simple process to benefit from environmentally favourable conditions. Therefore, common people, community organizations, industries and corporations will be encouraged to adopt

and support environment-positive actions under the Green Credit Program (GCP), proposed at the National Level. The program will also enable India to meet Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), submitted to UNFCCC. The program envisages incentives for voluntary environmental actions of various stakeholders. Presently the guidelines and rules have been notified for tree planting and water conservation-related activities. Sustainable Agriculture, Waste Management, Air Pollution Reduction, Mangrove Conservation and Restoration, Ecomark-based trading by manufacturers, Sustainable Building and Infrastructure are the other sectors that will also be covered under the

Green Credit Program (GCP) for financial incentives. Under this scheme, various stakeholders will be encouraged to voluntarily adopt environment-friendly activities by encouraging competitive market-based trading for availing benefits of green credits. The main objective of this scheme is to encourage environmentally positive actions so that the challenges of environmental protection and climate change can be faced at the individual and community levels. It aims to allocate credit as per the activity and also to encourage the process of measuring and verifying the progress of the activity and also to encourage environment-positive actions to raise awareness at the grassroots level on a large scale and fulfil the vision of Mission LiFE.

This will also support the adoption of environment-friendly lifestyles and meeting sustainable development goals (SDGs), based on values and policies. GCP will also encourage individuals, farmer producer associations, environment-friendly agriculture, industries, urban and rural local bodies, private sector, industries, NGOs and community organizations etc. to adopt environment-friendly positive actions in the form of tradable 'Green Credits', for which market-based system is being envisaged under the program. Green credits, certified as per the notified format of the Green Credit Program will be verified by the Program Administrator as a unit, the benefits of which will be determined as per market-based

assessment. The eligible entity has to register to generate green credit units. There will be a system of third-party certification to certify the activities of the registered units as units of green credit. Under this, any activity by the consumer or community to obtain or spend green credit is subject to market-based verification. The quantum and value of green credit will be determined by the authorized agency and will be determined on the environmental positive benefits associated with the activity. The quantity and value of green credit will be determined by the authorized agency as per the rules and norms approved by the Central Government. The promotion of green credit will have many benefits, such as the

promotion of green industries, and pollution control which will ensure improvement in air and water quality and protection of biodiversity. The pace of community and individual-driven planting of trees will increase. Challenges of climate change will also be addressed. The Green Credit Scheme is a novel and unique initiative to achieve the goals and objectives of Mission LiFE, launched by Prime Minister Modi. This unique initiative can be adopted by other nations at the global level by adjusting environment-friendly lifestyles.

*(The author is Dy Director General in the Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change, Views are personal)*



MONEY MATTERS

## IEX total trade volume jumps 18 % to 9,136 million units

The Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) on Monday posted 17.5 per cent growth in its overall trade volume to 9,136 million units (MU) in November 2023 as compared to the year-ago period. The exchange had recorded total trade volume of 7,764 MU in November 2022, as per IEX data. "IEX achieved 9,136 MU overall volume, including 7.55 lakh Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) (equivalent to 755 MU), marking a 17.5 per cent increase on YoY (year-on-year) basis," an IEX statement said. IEX achieved 8,371 MU total electricity volume in November 2023, registering an increase of 13 per cent on YoY basis. Market clearing price in Day Ahead Market (DAM) during November 2023 was Rs 3.98 per unit, down 13 per cent year-on-year, due to various factors including lower demand owing to festive season, temperature drop and improved sell side liquidity on the exchange, it stated. Price on the exchange has been experiencing a downward trend and the average monthly price is at its lowest level this financial year.



## IN-SPACe launches seed fund scheme for startups

The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) on Monday announced the launch of a seed fund scheme for start-ups operating in the area of urban development and disaster management by using space technology. As part of the scheme, selected start-ups will receive seed funding for transforming an original idea into a prototype using space technology. ISRO facility support including Earth Observation (EO) data for validation of the concept, mentorship support, and access to data algorithm as transfer of technology from Department of Science (DoS), according to a statement. The scheme has the provision of providing financial assistance of up to Rs 1 crore in addition to mentorship support, training and networking opportunities, it said. IN-SPACe is the nodal agency in DoS, responsible for promoting, enabling, authorising as well as supervising space activities of the Non-Government Entities (NGEs).



## Apple battery vendor TDK to set up plant in Haryana

Phone maker Apple's vendor TDK will set up its lithium-ion battery plant in Haryana, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Monday. The Japan-based company is expected to set up a plant with an investment of Rs 6,000-7,000 crore in a phased manner for making lithium-ion cells and employ around 7,000-8,000 people once it is operational at full scale, according to an industry source. "TDK, a leading supplier of cells to Apple, is setting up a 180-acre facility in Manesar, Haryana to build cells for batteries which will be used in the #MadeInIndia iPhones. Several thousand new jobs will be created and an increase in domestic value addition," Chandrasekhar tweeted. The local production of lithium-ion battery cells will enhance local value addition in Apple's products. According to the source, TDK is awaiting environmental clearance to start production. An email query sent to TDK did not elicit any reply.



# No proposal to relax borrowing limits for Kerala, other states

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said there is no proposal to relax the existing terms for borrowing capacity of state governments, including Kerala for 2023-24. Kerala has requested the Centre to allow an additional borrowing equivalent to one per cent of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) over and above the borrowing ceiling fixed for 2023-24 fiscal year. In a reply in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said the Centre applies a common yardstick while fixing the annual borrowing limit of all state govern-



ments under Article 293(3) of the Constitution. In doing so, it is guided by the recommendations of the Finance Commission, she said. To a question on whether the Centre proposes to relax the

existing borrowing terms considering the financial crisis of Kerala, Sitharaman replied in the negative. For current fiscal year, the gross borrowing ceiling of Kerala has been fixed at Rs 47,762.58 crore. Out of this, Rs 29,136.71 crore is Open Market Borrowing (OMB) while the rest is borrowing from other sources. Out of the total OMB, consent has already been given to borrow an amount of Rs 23,852 crore so far, Sitharaman said. Borrowing from other sources is resorted by the state government from time to time as per its requirements. An amount of Rs 36,231 crore has been provided to the Kerala government as Revenue Deficit Grant from 2021-22 to 2023-24 (till November 2023). Additionally, to help states enhance their capital expenditure and managing liquidity stress, the Centre is providing 50-year interest free loan to state governments since 2020-21 under Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure / Investment. "An amount of Rs 2,141 crore has been released under the scheme to the state government of Kerala during FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23," Sitharaman added.

Govt allows export of 9 lakh tonnes broken rice

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National Cooperative Exports Ltd (NCEL) has been allowed to export nearly 9 lakh tonnes of broken rice and about 35,000 tonnes of wheat and wheat products to various countries. According to a recent gazette notification, the government has permitted export of 34,736 tonne of wheat and wheat products and 8,98,804 tonnes of broken rice.



## Fractious politics can slow reforms, derail policymaking: Fitch

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fractious politics can slow reforms and derail policymaking, and contentious elections can encourage the prioritisation of short-term growth objectives over longer-term structural initiatives," it said. Fitch Ratings said on Monday as a large number of nations go to the polls. In its Global Sovereigns Outlook 2024, Fitch highlighted that a large number of elections are scheduled in 2024, including Bangladesh, Croatia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Korea, Mexico, Pakistan, Panama, Romania, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and the US. UK elections must be before the end of January

2025. "Fractious politics can slow reforms and derail policymaking, and contentious elections can encourage the prioritisation of short-term growth objectives over longer-term structural initiatives," it said. Fitch said lower inflation might not help incumbents much, given prices remain well above pre-pandemic levels in most countries. The international environment is marred by two major conflicts entering 2024, neither of which appears to be on the verge of resolving longer-term underlying issues. An escalation in these conflicts would likely trigger a marked increase in oil prices,

which could have credit implications for oil exporters and importers. Larger global fault lines, primarily aligned along US-China spheres of influence, are not conducive to the expansion of global trade and the unfettered deployment of capital across borders, but there may be modest improvements -- or at least a pause in the deterioration -- in 2024. Fitch said real GDP growth and real interest rates are two macroeconomic factors critical for sovereign credit. Fitch Ratings forecasts a decline in global economic growth to nearly 2 per cent in 2024 from about 3 per cent in 2023.

# 1.06 lakh cos voluntarily exited in last five years:Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 1 lakh firms voluntarily exited under the companies law in nearly five years, the government said on Monday. Besides, many companies have sought voluntary liquidation under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). "From FY 2018-19 to FY 2023-24 (up to 30th November, 2023), 1,06,561 companies have exited voluntarily under section 248(2) of the Companies Act, 2013. "From FY 2018-19 to FY 2023-24 (up to 30th September 2023) final reports of 1,168 companies have been submitted by liquidators under section 59 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Code),



of which final dissolution orders have been passed by NCLT in 633 cases during the said period," Union Minister Rao Indrajit Singh told the Lok Sabha. Section 248(2) of the Companies Act pertains to voluntary exit of companies while Section 59 of the IBC relates to voluntary liquidation of companies. In the last five years, Singh said the time taken for voluntary exit under Section 248(2)

of the Companies Act, 2013 has varied between an average of 6-8 months to even 12-18 months in some cases. Under the IBC, the average time taken for dissolution of companies after submission of final report by the liquidator has been in the range of 7-9 months. The average time taken by liquidator to submit final report for Adjudication to NCLT has been about 14 months, Singh, who is Minister of State for Corporate Affairs, said in a written reply. Earlier this year, the government set up the Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit (CPACE) to centralise and expedite voluntary exit of companies under Section 248(2) of the Companies Act, 2013.

## ReNew inks initial pact with Asian Development Bank

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Renewable energy firm ReNew Energy Global Plc has inked an initial pact with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for a funding of USD 5.3 billion. "The MoU was signed at COP28, Dubai by ReNew's Founder, Chairman and CEO, Sumant Sinha and Suzanne Gaboury, Director General, Private Sector Operations Department, ADB," a company statement said. According to the statement, the MoU identified potential investments in renewable energy projects, manufacturing, carbon offset projects, green hydrogen, to jointly support sustainable energy transition. ReNew Energy Global Plc and ADB will also collaborate on climate change mitigation and adaptation projects, it said. The initial pact covers lending of more than USD 5.3 billion between 2023 and 2028, it informed. The MoU, a first of its kind in the Indian Renewable Energy sector, is expected to draw interest from additional international investors to participate in financing long-term debt for significant Renewable Energy infrastructure projects, it stated. In addition, it will help ADB achieve its funding ambition of USD 100 billion in green energy projects by 2030. Sumant Sinha, Founder, Chairman, and CEO of ReNew in a statement said, "Today's agreement marks an exciting time for ReNew. Significant financing is needed to reach global climate targets and this agreement helps secure the capital needed.

## Investors richer by Rs 5.81 lakh cr

Stock markets surge over 2 pc results

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty soared more than 2 per cent to settle at record high levels on Monday, marking the fifth straight day of gains as the BJP's victory in assembly polls in three states boosted investor sentiment. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,383.93 points, or 2.05 per cent, to close at a lifetime high of 68,865.12. The index touched an intra-day record peak of 68,918.22. The barometer logged its biggest single-day jump since May 20, 2022. The total market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies surged by Rs 5.81 lakh crore to Rs 343.48 lakh crore. The broader Nifty also climbed 418.90 points, or 2.07 per cent, to hit its all-time closing high of 20,686.80. On



the 50-stock benchmark Nifty, 44 closed with gains. Analysts said BJP's clear majority in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh state polls strengthened the positive sentiment built up last week following robust macro-economic numbers and unabated foreign fund inflows. Besides, crude oil prices hovering below USD 80 per barrel fuelled investors' sentiment, they said. Among the Sensex firms, ICICI Bank and SBI led the index with the maximum gains of 4.68 per cent and 3.99 per cent, respectively. Other major gainers were Larsen & Toubro, Kotak Mahindra Bank and HDFC Bank. On the other hand, Wipro and Tata Motors defied the trend and traded in negative. "The benchmark index hits its all-time high following the landslide victory of BJP in elections in three states. It spurred a rally with an anticipation that the country will witness a stable government post the general elections next year," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said. "All the sectors have broadly participated in the rally with an optimism that the FIIs will continue its value buying, indicating positive commentary on the global inflation data and stable domestic macroeconomics," Nair said.

# SAT quashes Sebi's order against Mukesh Ambani, 2 others

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) on Monday set aside the penalty imposed by Sebi on Reliance Industries Ltd's Chairman Mukesh Ambani and two other entities in a case related to alleged manipulative trading in the shares of erstwhile Reliance Petroleum Ltd (RPL) back in November 2007. The ruling has come after all the entities appealed before the tribunal against the order passed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in January 2021. In January 2021, Sebi imposed a Rs 25 crore fine on Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), Rs 15 crore on Ambani, who is the company's Chairman and Managing Director, Rs 20 crore on Navi Mumbai SEZ Pvt Ltd and Rs 10 crore on Mumbai SEZ Ltd in RPL



case. Both -- Navi Mumbai SEZ and Mumbai SEZ -- are promoted by Anand Jain, who once served in the Reliance Group. In its 87-page order on Monday, the tribunal quashed Sebi's order

passed in 2021 against Ambani, Navi Mumbai SEZ and Mumbai SEZ. The tribunal also directed the Sebi to return the fine amount in case it has been deposited by them with the regulator. The case pertains to sale and purchase of RPL shares in the cash and the futures segments in November 2007. This followed RIL's decision in March 2007 to sell around 5 per cent stake in RPL, a listed subsidiary that was later merged with RIL in 2009. The tribunal said that RIL's board had specifically authorised two persons to decide the disinvestment. Further, the tribunal noted that it cannot be suggested that the Managing Director is ipso facto responsible for every alleged contravention of law by the corporate entities. "In view of the stark evidence in

the form of minutes of the two board meetings of RIL which conclusively proves that the impugned trades were carried out by two senior officials without the knowledge of the appellant, no liability can be fastened upon noticee no. 2 (Ambani)," the tribunal said. Sebi failed to prove that Ambani was involved in the execution of the trades carried out by two senior executives, it added. With regard to RIL, a bench consisting of Justice Tarun Agarwala and Presiding Officer Meera Swarup dismissed the company's appeal saying "we do not find any reason to interfere with the impugned order in so far as it relates to the company RIL". The impugned order refers to the order passed by Sebi in March 2017 wherein it had directed RIL and certain other entities to disgorge over Rs

447 crore in the RPL case. In November 2020, the tribunal dismissed the company's appeal against the order. Meanwhile, in its order passed in January 2021, Sebi had stated that RIL appointed 12 agents to undertake transactions in the November 2007 RPL Futures. These 12 agents took short positions in the Futures and Options (F&O) segment on behalf of the company while the company undertook transactions in RPL shares in the cash segment. Sebi, in its order, had also alleged that RIL violated PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) rules by entering into a well-planned operation with its appointed agents to earn undue profits from the sale of RPL shares in both the cash and the F&O segment.

## Spotify axes 17% of workforce in third round of layoffs this year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Spotify says it's axing 17 per cent of its global workforce, the music streaming service's third round of layoffs this year as it moves to slash costs while focusing on becoming profitable. In a message to employees posted on the company's blog on Monday, CEO Daniel Ek said the jobs were being cut as part of a "strategic reorientation." The post didn't specify how many employees would lose their jobs, but a spokesperson confirmed that it amounts to about 1,500 people. Spotify had used cheap financing to expand the busi-



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ness and "invested significantly" in employees, content and marketing in 2020 and 2021, the blog post said. But Ek indicated that the company was caught out as central banks started hiking interest rates last year.

## Gold surges Rs 450 to hit record high



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices on Monday increased Rs 450 to hit a fresh record high of Rs 64,300 per 10 grams in the national capital amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had settled at Rs 63,850 per 10 grams. However, silver remained flat at Rs 80,200 per kilogram. "Gold prices extended gains

on Monday, trading at a record high of Rs 64,300/10 gram, up by Rs 450 following a bullish trend in the overseas markets," HDFC Securities' Senior Analyst of Commodities Saumil Gandhi said. In the international markets, gold was trading higher at USD 2,077 per ounce while silver was down at USD 25.40 per ounce. Spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,077 per ounce, up USD 6 from its previous close.

# Corporate bond market likely to double by 2030: Crisil

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Indian corporate bond market is poised for rapid growth despite clocking a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of nine per cent over the past five years. Crisil Ratings expects the outstanding size of the market to more than double from around Rs 43 lakh crore as of last fiscal to Rs 100-120 lakh crore by fiscal year 2030, a statement said on Monday. "The growth will be driven by a confluence of factors. Large capital expenditure (capex) in the infrastructure and corporate sectors, growing attractiveness of the infrastructure sector for bond investors, and strong retail credit growth

are expected to boost bond supply, while the rising financialisation of household savings should drive demand. Regulatory interventions are also helpful," Crisil senior director, Somasekhar Vemuri said. Capex in the infrastructure and corporate sectors is anticipated to be propelled by decade-high capacity utilisation, healthy corporate balance sheets, and a favourable economic outlook, he said. Crisil envisions a capex of around Rs 110 lakh crore in these sectors between fiscals 2023 and 2027, approximately 1.7 times higher than that of the past five fiscals. The rating major expects this pace of capex to continue beyond fiscal 2027. The corporate bond



market is projected to finance about a sixth of the anticipated capex. Infrastructure assets are emerging as strong contenders for investment owing to their improving credit risk profile, promising recovery prospects,

and long-term nature. Currently, infrastructure accounts for only about 15 per cent of the annual corporate bond issuance by volume, the note said. However, structural improvements facilitated by a

raft of policy measures are expected to make infrastructure bond issuances more attractive to patient-capital investors, particularly insurers and pension funds, who constitute the key investor segment in the bond market. Crisil estimates assets in the managed investment segment to double to around Rs 315 lakh crore by fiscal 2027, and the trend is expected to continue well past fiscal 2027. These investments will be in both equity and debt and a good portion of it may flow to the corporate bond market. The agency stated that retail credit growth is expected to maintain its momentum, fueled by private consumption growth and the formalisation of last-

mile credit flow. The bond market, being a crucial funding source for larger NBFCs and accounting for a third of the funding mix, will play a pivotal role in financing retail credit flow. Managed investments are expected to continue to outpace bank deposits in terms of growth. Factors such as increased digitisation, rising investor sophistication in retirement planning, higher awareness and utilisation of insurance, investment objectives aimed at surpassing inflation, and a burgeoning middle-income population are contributing to the growth of managed investments. Karunakaran said.



## International sensational singer Abdu Rozik to set the stage on fire in *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa*

Get ready for a musical whirlwind as the renowned international sensation, Abdu Rozik, is all set to grace the stage of the iconic dance reality show, *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa*. Brace yourselves for a spectacular fusion of rhythm and melody as the charismatic singer promises to add a dash of spice to the show's already sizzling lineup.

Known for his electrifying performances and soulful voice that transcends borders, Abdu Rozik has captivated audiences worldwide. Now, he's ready to conquer the dance floor with his infectious energy and dynamic moves. *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa* is about to witness a musical revolution like never before!

"Abdu quotes, I am thrilled to be part of *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa*, I embark on this joyous adventure with immense excitement. India, a place I deeply love, has overwhelmed me with its warmth throughout



my career. I aim to reciprocate that love even now. Your support means a lot to me, and I'm ready to have a blast, creating unforgettable moments filled with music and dance. Let's make this journey together, and to all my fans, keep pouring the love—it fuels my passion. Love you all.

As anticipation builds, viewers can look forward to witnessing not only Abdu's vocal prowess but also his dance prowess. This unexpected twist promises to keep the audience on the edge of their seats, eagerly awaiting each performance.

With the spotlight firmly on Abdu Rozik, *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa* is gearing up for a season filled with surprises, jaw-dropping choreography, and, of course, the magnetic charm of the international sensation himself. Stay tuned as Abdu Rozik takes the stage by storm, leaving an indelible mark on the world of dance and music.

## 'I don't have someone that's going to guarantee give me another big movie,' says Alaya F

In a recent interview, Alaya F, recognised as a versatile performer from her generation, candidly discussed the prevalent topic of nepotism in the entertainment industry. The talented actress emphasized her commitment to securing roles through merit and hard work, highlighting the effort she invests to attain the projects that resonate with her artistic vision.

Alaya F's perspective adds a nuanced voice to the ongoing conversation surrounding opportunities and talent in the film industry. She says, "Not all nepotism is the same either. You know, there are so many layers and levels to it. I don't have someone who's calling the shots for me. I don't have someone that's going to guarantee give me another big movie, even if, you know, I do an awful job in one, and then you see so many people that have sort of really grown up, you know, in this world, and you see them have a certain ease at a party because they've grown up around all the people that are there. They know everyone so deeply; their par-

ents are the parties, which is wonderful. I wish my parents were also there; you know, there's a certain ease to it. There's a certain fear that's not there, and I still feel like I hold that fear very strongly with me. I'm not free of that fear."

She further added, "It's such a fight to get the movies that I want. You know that I really feel like these are the ones I want. It's a fight to get meetings that I want sometimes; you know, it's a journey. And sometimes you feel like, well, why is this happening to me? You know why I need to fight so much harder sometimes? Why do I need to consistently keep proving myself, even when I feel that I have proved myself in so many ways? So, that's a little weird sometimes. So to still constantly remind yourself that you are good at what you do and that you are here to do something, you just have to persist with it. I think that's the hardest bit for me."

Meanwhile, on the work front, she will next be seen in *Sri Lanka* alongside Rajkumar Rao.



## 'WEARING THE COP UNIFORM COMMANDED RESPECT,' SAYS ACTOR KUBBRA SAIT

Prime Video recently released the Hindi original series, *Shehar Lakhot*, which has been receiving widespread acclaim, praise, and love for its gripping narrative and nuanced performances by the ensemble cast. Actor Kubbra Sait, who is known for playing interesting characters, portrays the role of a police officer, S.I. Pallavi Raj, for the first time in her career in the noir crime drama. She has aced the role with finesse and conviction.

Sharing the excitement of playing the role of a cop for the very first time, actor Kubbra Sait said, "As an actor, I thrive more when surrounded by exceptional individuals who inspire and challenge me to grow both personally and professionally. Pulling off a police uniform for my role in *Shehar Lakhot* was an exciting opportunity. Wearing the police uniform commanded



respect and instilled a sense of responsibility. In this story, the uniform symbolizes the challenges faced by our real-life heroes, reminding us of our flawed yet ever-evolving system."

Talking about the director, she added, "Navdeep's patience and support allowed us to truly shine as actors. With the crafting of a well-written script, I was able to delve into my memory and invoke the precise emotions needed."

*Shehar Lakhot* is an Offroad Films production with Navdeep Singh and Khalil Bachooali serving as executive producers. It was directed by Singh and written and created by Singh and Devika Bhagat.

The series boasts a highly talented cast, with Priyanshu Painyuli, Chandan Roy Sanyal, and Kubbra Sait in the lead, supported by an ensemble cast featuring Manu Rishi Chadha, Shruthi Menon, Kashyap Shangari, Chandan Roy, Manjiri Pupala, Shruti Jolly, Gyan Prakash, and Abhilash Thapliyal. The series is streaming now exclusively on Prime Video in India and across more than 240 countries and territories worldwide.

## 'Robert Downey Jr not reprising Iron Man role in MCU,' says Kevin Feige

Hollywood star Robert Downey Jr will not be coming back as Iron Man in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, says Kevin Feige. "We are going to keep that moment and not touch that moment again," Feige told Vanity Fair in the Downey Jr. profile.

"We all worked very hard for many years to get to that, and we would never want to magically undo it in any way."

Downey Jr. last played the role in 2019's *The Avengers: Endgame* when the superhero died, reports deadline.com.

Fans of the MCU hoping Tony Stark would be resurrected in some form can forget about it.

Director Joe Russo added: "We'd already said tearful goodbyes on the last day of shooting. Everybody had moved on emotionally. We promised him it would be the last time we made him do it—ever."

Co-director Anthony Russo noted that for Downey Jr it was a "difficult thing" for him to say his last line as the superhero.

"When he did come back, we were shooting on a stage directly opposite where he auditioned for Tony Stark. So his last line as Tony Stark was shot liter-

ally a couple hundred feet from his original audition that got him the role," Anthony said.

Downey Jr. has been the center of the MCU but Feige had to fight to cast the actor in the Iron Man role.

"It purely came down to the Marvel board being nervous at putting all of their chips in their future films on somebody who famously had those legal troubles in the past," Feige said.


"I wasn't very good — and I'm still not great — at taking no for an answer. But I also don't pound my chest to try to get my way. I try to figure out ways to make it as clear to other people why we should head in a direction. And that's when the idea of a screen test came up."



### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD




### NANCY




### GINGER MEGGS



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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.

### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- People in jail
- The centre of your eye
- Have a quarrel
- Things to play with
- Flat dishes
- Mistakes
- The part along the side or end of something
- A boat with sails
- Flour is made from this
- Scientific study of the sun, moon, planets and stars

#### DOWN

- Answer
- A fine glossy fabric
- Almost
- Correct

#### SOLUTION 716

RECOVERED	3	6	8	4	9	5	2	1	3	9	7	8	4
YANKEE	1	4	7	6	8	2	5	3	8	3	7	2	4
ROAST	5	9	1	6	7	2	1	4	8	3	6	9	5
ARTIST	4	9	5	6	7	2	8	3	1	3	6	8	9
PICTURE	5	1	4	7	6	8	2	5	3	1	7	9	5
GRAND	2	4	3	6	8	5	1	4	7	2	5	4	3
SHOULDER	6	3	1	7	5	4	9	2	8	6	3	1	7
FEATHER	8	3	7	2	4	5	9	1	6	7	2	1	4



WITH THE HIGHLY ANTICIPATED 28TH EDITION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FILM FESTIVAL UNFOLDING IN NEW DELHI, **THE PIONEER** INTERACTS WITH THE CURATOR OF THE FESTIVAL, VERONICA FLORA, AND ESTONIAN DIRECTOR ANU AUN, BRINGING SOME MORE INSIGHTS ON THE SAME.

TANISHA SAXENA

In its myriad expressions, cinema remains a potent force, weaving connections and fostering unity that transcends geographical boundaries. Serving as a conduit for the exchange of emotions, fears, and aspirations, it offers a glimpse into the inner recesses of our beings. Marking the arrival of the highly anticipated 28th edition, the European Union Film Festival, titled "Window to Europe," which unfolded in New Delhi on December 1.

This cinematic extravaganza showcases exceptional, award-winning European films, delivering compelling narratives directly to the haven of our homes. A celebration of the multifaceted nature and cultural richness of European cinema, the festival extends an invitation to cinephiles to register at no cost, granting them exclusive access to the cinematic tapestry and accompanying events. Crafted under the aegis of the Delegation of the European Union to India, in collaboration with Member States, associate countries, and esteemed Indian and European partners, the festival beckons audiences to embark on a journey of



diverse stories and cultural profundity.

The EUFF 2023 is dedicated to celebrating women in cinema. Indeed, the significance of this theme for the film fraternity and the audience is immense. In an exclusive interaction with **The Pioneer**, Veronica Flora, Curator for the festival, shared, "When it comes to cinema, I am naturally inclined to gravitate towards the works of formidable female directors, a deliberate choice that I perceive as an embodiment of diversity. Given the historical underrepresentation of women in cinema, this intentional selection serves as a proactive step in reshaping the narrative. Notably, the landscape is witnessing a positive shift with an increasing number of women assuming influential roles as producers, thereby wielding economic influence to catalyze this transformative process."

The empowerment of women within the industry is a palpable reality, facilitating a departure from stereotypical portrayals. She further explained, "This phenomenon extends beyond mere symbolism, as women directors often offer a more nuanced and intricate perspective. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that male directors, exemplified by figures such as Antonio Pietrangeli, can also contribute meaningfully to fostering a multifaceted narrative regarding women's experiences." Flora lamented the



## LIGHTS, CAMERA, UNITY

loss of Pietrangeli, an illustrious Italian film director and screenwriter who left behind a legacy of films that delved into the pivotal role of women in postwar Italy. His cinematic exploration during a period marked by societal upheaval and the impending sexual revolution is emblematic of the profound questions he posed about representing the reality of women in that era.

She added, "While I advocate for inclusivity and recognize the potential of any director, irrespective of gender, to evoke genuine emotional responses, I posit that the audience serves as the ultimate arbiter of cinematic authenticity. Viewers possess the discernment to distinguish between

true, evocative storytelling and contrived, insincere narratives. Emphasizing this discernment, I have curated a selection of films based on their capacity to elicit a spectrum of emotions and, most crucially, foster empathy."

*Saint Omer* and *Talking About the Weather* were chosen to kick off this festival. When asked about the peculiarities of screening these films at the inauguration, Veronica mentioned, "These films explore the theme of language, a vital tool in human communication. Language, being a complex reality, serves as both a revealer and a concealer of truths, echoing the cautionary wisdom of a German philosopher who advocates refraining from expressing certain thoughts or posing certain questions, recognizing the dual nature of language in unmasking and obscuring reality."

*Saint Omer* by celebrated director Alice Diop showcased the prejudices and preconceptions surrounding a crime that go beyond all comprehension while subtly weaving the issue of racism. It chronicles the journey of young novelist Rama, who attends the trial of Laurence Coly, a young woman accused of killing her 15-month-old daughter.

Annika Pinske's critically acclaimed *Talking About the Weather*, which was also screened on the inaugural day at the Goethe Institute, deals with a sensitive social study about home and imprinting, post-reunification traumas, and milieus from which one can emancipate oneself but never completely overcome them.

With a thoughtfully curated selection, the festival presents a lineup of 28 films spanning over 25 languages, featuring 18 works directed by women. Showcasing the pinnacle of European cinema from both European Union nations and Ukraine, the event commemorates recent cinematic triumphs at renowned festivals such as Cannes, Tribeca, Tallinn, Venice, Berlin, and San Sebastian.

Notable figures such as French actress Guslagie Malanda, Finnish director Hanna Marjo Västinsalo, Finnish producer Cyril Jacob Abraham, and Estonian director Anu Aun provide audiences with an insider's perspective.

Estonian director Anu Aun told us, "My film took root in a genuine love for poetry. The main character, a captivating figure a few years my

senior, is akin to a fairy and holds the admiration of everyone in Estonia. Crafted meticulously over the course of a decade, the film delves into the complexities of womanhood and the quest for balance in life. It explores the challenge of embodying a free-spirited, artistic nature while fulfilling practical roles as a daughter, mother, and woman. I perceive the film as profoundly beautiful, often characterized by critics as a "conditioner for the soul." Women watching may discern parallels with the protagonist, discovering shared experiences. Interestingly, I've observed that the film also grants men a deeper insight into their wives."

In our everyday conversations, cinema becomes a captivating storyteller, painting pictures that resonate with everyone. It's more than just movies; it's a shared experience that brings us together, sparking conversations and revealing different aspects of life. In the quiet moments of a movie, we find a common ground to explore emotions, laugh, and sometimes shed a tear. Cinema, in its simplicity, becomes a universal language, connecting us through the stories it tells and the feelings it evokes.

In the global tapestry of storytelling, international film festivals serve as vital hubs of cultural exchange. They provide a platform for diverse voices and perspectives, transcending borders to bring stories from every corner of the world to a shared stage. As cinematic ambassadors, international film festivals not only celebrate artistic excellence but also foster cross-cultural understanding. They weave a cinematic dialogue that unites audiences in appreciation of our shared humanity, making these festivals crucial in fostering a more interconnected and culturally aware world.

Throughout its existence, the EUFF has evolved into a familiar forum for showcasing the diversity and richness of European cinematography to enthusiastic Indian viewers. The festival serves as a testament to the shared passion for cinema between Europe and India. This year, the festival has an excellent line-up of films that have won accolades at top film festivals worldwide, including Cannes, the Academy Awards, the Venice Film Festival, the Tribeca Film Festival, and IFFI, among others. Rich in genre, the EUFF brings some of the best stories and creators from Europe to the Indian audience. The festival is being held at three distinguished locations: the India Habitat Centre, the Instituto Cervantes (Spanish Cultural Center), and the Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan. The event is scheduled to continue its cinematic showcase until December 10th, 2023.

## 'I WAS QUIET FOR 12 YEARS, ALL MY EMOTIONS CAME OUT IN THE *BIGG BOSS* HOUSE'

TEJAL SINHA

A part from just the squabbles, brawls, and emotional turmoil, another thing that has been constant in every season of *Bigg Boss* is a duo that gives us 'oh-so-precious' bond goals. Just like the previous seasons, the currently ongoing season of Hindi *Bigg Boss* saw two major friendship goals: Arun-Tehelka (Sunny) and Jigna-Rinku. However, eventually, the duos broke down due to the eviction of Jigna Vora and, more recently, Sunny Aryaa.

Today, we have with us Jigna Vora, whose eviction was no less than an emotional moment for many of the housemates, and she begins, "Rinku and I were each other's support system, and maybe because of the age group we belonged, and life struggles what we had gone through in our lives, so there was some sort of respect for each other. I wouldn't want to give that bond any names. Certain relationships do not need a name tag. But yes, my takeaway from *Bigg Boss* for sure is Rinku and Munawar."

No surprise to the fact that with so many intelligent contestants around and with the experience that she carries along, she's been one of the contestants who has motivated her co-contestants individually. But still, she reveals, "After coming out, I see people trolling me left, right, and center, saying, 'Oh, boring aunty'. But that boring aunty has had a very adventurous and interesting life, and you cannot expect me to do what 20-year-old people are doing in the show. I have a certain dignity, and so I have played that way. My life lessons and experiences were very useful in the house."

However, with the contestants giving the 'fake' tag to each other, she feels, "See, most of them are actors, so they know how to act. I wouldn't call them fake, but they know how to act. So they know the tricks of trade, and I, Rinku, and Munawar, to some extent, were real, and we are in the outside world. This was probably a disadvantage for us. For me and Rinku, especially."

Enclosed space, no connection to the real world, no phones, no family, limited food, continuous tasks, nominations, and evictions—many emotions surface in the house, although some people do attempt to control them. So did she also control her emotions, or how was it? "No, I was never controlling my feelings and emotions. As



Former journalist and *Bigg Boss* contestant Jigna Vora, who was recently evicted from the show, gets candid with **The Pioneer** about her bond with Rinku Dhawan, her stint in the show, and more.

everybody saw, I was crying a lot like a 'cry baby', but in real life, I'm not like that. Maybe the 12 years that I was quiet, and because I never expressed myself. All of my emotions were inside me for whatever reasons. And in *Bigg Boss*, the way my emotions came out, the way people respected me, I am very thankful to them. Be it Abhishek, Munawar, or anyone, they respected me a lot, and maybe I got very attached to them. Some people in the house used to call me 'Mother', some used to call me 'Mother-in-law', and I was getting all these tags (she laughs)."

Well, this time the season brought its own twists and turns. And so was it for the kitchen duties, be it from contestants of the same 'Makaan' or from the other ones. Bringing much more pressure, she says, "We did have a lot of pressure because we had to cook in like 40 minutes and that too, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I am an excellent cook outside, and I have done many food businesses in the past 12 years. So for me, it wasn't pressure but fun." By the way, not only she, but every contestant has lost weight in the house, FYI!

Talking of the entire television vs. YouTube chaos, the former journalist shares, "I was playing my individual game. People had their own issues, especially Anurag, Tehelka, and Arun, who were on a different feeling altogether and got offended with the kind of treatment the television celebrities used to get."

Contestants on *Bigg Boss* are sequestered from the outside world and kept in a restricted space with only one another for company.

The cramped setting can elicit a variety of feelings, from tension to camaraderie.

With the many debates, of course, that came out every season on mental health in the house, she says, "As far as I am concerned, trust me, *Bigg Boss* House has helped me a lot mentally. For the past years, I have been into medication and a lot into spirituality too, because I am also a tarot card reader and astrolo-

gist, and I also go to various medication camps. So all this has helped me a lot to be mentally strong. My nature and my behavior were constantly sweet, be it before or after nomination. On the other hand, there were contestants who used to just flip-flop; either it was their game plan or they were really anxious. But yeah, everybody used to cry at one point in time, feeling lonely or anxious; people do have it in the house." One of the most controversial incidents was Jigna washing Arun's underwear. So in any case, was she guilty about making him guilty conscious? Well, not at all, because "I did, and I will tell it in 'Danke ki Chot pe, yes, I washed it. I don't have to give any justification. Even in our houses, our maids come, and they do wash our clothes. So why do you have to have a dual face? I never made him feel guilty; it is just shown out of proportion. His fans are trolling me, and that actually shows their mental framework and not mine. I did it with my heart because he was hurt. Yes, but to say, I volunteered for it; he never forced me."

The bond that she shared with Munawar was evidently very special. In fact, one of the contestants to break down after her eviction was him. Jigna, who is hoping for Munawar to win the trophy, shares, "We had an initial bond that probably started with a Guju connection. And yes, I share a very special bond with him, and I miss him a lot. I just pray that he wins the trophy because he deserves it. He is a very humble and grounded person. I don't really want to say that he's like my son, and, like I said earlier, I don't want to give a tag and there is no name to certain relationships, but yes, he is very special to me. Surprisingly, my son has started feeling insecure about Munawar. He says, 'Mumma, you have started loving Munawar more than me.' Again, talking of her eviction episode, it was definitely one of the most heated episodes, with Khanzaadi wishing to leave the house. In fact, she ended up questioning people in the house and the show, including Salman Khan, making fun of her trauma and physical health."

"Let me make it very clear that no one has made fun of her health. I am being trolled for that also. Salman sir has also said on the national television show 'Weekend Ka Vaar' that no one has made fun of her. We tried to do whatever we could in our best capacity to motivate her to do her duty. I used to wash dishes on her part; Rinku used to wash, and still whenever we used to go and talk to her, she felt we were sugar coating it. It's been she who is going around and talking about her health and trying to get sympathy or whatever. She is 'not' taking medicines, which we all told *Bigg Boss*. She goes to the doctor but does not take medicine. This is a fact. We all supported her very much, but her friends and doctor, everybody outside, are saying that we have done some injustice to her," she signs off, adding, "fans or viewers, that people don't accept real people, and that's really sad. They just want all the mirch-masala, and they need to change their perception of *Bigg Boss* House. *Bigg Boss* is not about toxic relationships but about responding and not reacting."

People are trolling me left & right calling me 'Boring aunty'; but that boring aunty has had a very adventurous and interesting life.

## Exploring the relationship between osteoporosis and autoimmune disorders

Recent findings from a study conducted by the National Institute of Health unveiled that approximately 30.5% of our nation's population grapples with osteoporosis. This condition, characterized by the weakening of bones due to the loss of tissue, often goes unnoticed until a fracture occurs. Termed the "silent disease," it predominantly affects women, especially post-menopause, and the elderly. The high prevalence of osteoporosis raises a significant question: is there a deeper connection between this bone-weakening condition and autoimmune diseases?

At the heart of comprehending osteoporosis is the concept of bone density, which measures the minerals present in bone tissue. As bone density decreases, bones become more porous and brittle, raising the risk of fractures, especially in areas like the hip, spine, and wrist. Even minor falls or everyday activities can result in fractures, causing severe pain, reduced mobility, and a diminished overall quality of life.

Autoimmune disorders manifest when the immune system, originally crafted to protect the body from external threats like bacteria and viruses, experiences a malfunction. Consequently, it mistakenly launches an assault on the body's cells and tissues, triggering inflammation and harm to various organs and systems. These disorders manifest in a wide range of ways, impacting the skin, joints, muscles, and essential organs.

Frequent autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, multiple sclerosis, and celiac disease typically present with a variety of symptoms. These may include joint pain, fatigue, skin rashes, and digestive problems, all of which can have a considerable impact on a person's holistic health and well-being.

The relationship between osteoporosis and autoimmune diseases is characterized by complex processes. Various autoimmune conditions are linked to an increased susceptibility to osteoporosis. The persistent inflammation that marks many autoimmune diseases can hasten bone resorption, a process in which the body absorbs bone tissue more rapidly than it can regenerate. Additionally, autoimmune diseases can disturb hormone levels, including vital ones like estrogen and cortisol, which have significant roles in maintaining bone health. This disruption further contributes to a reduction in bone density.

Moreover, medications frequently prescribed to treat autoimmune diseases, such as corticosteroids and immunosuppressive drugs, can potentially exert unfavorable impacts on bone health.

Despite their essential role in controlling the autoimmune response, these medications can unintentionally accelerate bone loss. Individuals living with autoimmune diseases often experience the challenging task of maintaining a delicate balance between managing their conditions effectively and the potential risk of developing osteoporosis.

Considering the gravity of osteoporosis and autoimmune diseases, timely identification and diagnosis are of utmost importance. The diagno-



sis of autoimmune diseases typically entails a comprehensive evaluation, encompassing clinical symptoms, blood assessments, and specialized imaging studies. In many instances, this process necessitates consultations with specialists such as rheumatologists.

Successfully addressing osteoporosis in individuals with autoimmune diseases requires a holistic strategy. This entails making lifestyle modifications that encompass ensuring an appropriate consumption of calcium and vitamin D, engaging in regular weight-bearing exercises, and embracing healthier practices, including smoking cessation and moderation of alcohol consumption. These steps are vital for the maintenance of bone density.

Managing the coexistence of autoimmune diseases and osteoporosis can present significant challenges. Support networks, which encompass patient advocacy groups, provide valuable resources and emotional assistance. Furthermore, counseling and mental health support can assist individuals in addressing the emotional and psychological dimensions of their journey with these conditions.

Sustained research endeavors hold the potential to enhance comprehension and treatment of osteoporosis in individuals with autoimmune conditions. Ongoing investigations delve into innovative therapies and precision methodologies aimed at addressing bone health within the context of managing autoimmune diseases.

The evolving field of precision medicine fosters optimism in customizing treatments according to an individual's distinct genetic and medical attributes, potentially mitigating the effects of osteoporosis in this susceptible demographic.

As we move forward, it's imperative for individuals contending with autoimmune diseases to proactively engage in the preservation of their bone health and establish a close collaboration with healthcare professionals who possess an in-depth comprehension of the distinctive challenges associated with these conditions. Through these collaborative endeavors, we can collectively strive to reduce the influence of osteoporosis in individuals with autoimmune diseases and improve their holistic well-being.

(The author, Dr. K. Hemanth Kumar, is a Consultant, in Orthopaedic Surgery, at Omni Hospitals.)



# BISHNOI EMERGES AS INDIA’S THIRD SPIN OPTION

PTI ■ BENGALURU

When Ravi Bishnoi was named in India’s T20I squad for the away series against South Africa, it, perhaps, was the clearest indication about his place in the think tank’s long-term plans with the next year’s T20 World Cup in mind. With only six T20Is remaining for India ahead of the showpiece, it can be assumed that the 23-year-old leg-spinner has moved ahead of veteran Yuzvendra Chahal in the pecking order, for now at least. Chahal is not a part of India’s T20I side to face the Proteas. Chahal is 33 and Bishnoi is 23, but the latter getting as much or more game time in T20Is is not just about a natural generational transition. Chahal has played nine T20Is this year, grabbing as many wickets whereas Bishnoi appeared in 11 matches and picked up 18 wickets. The difference is there for everyone to see. In the just-concluded series against Australia, Bishnoi was India’s go-to bowler and he rewarded the faith reposed on him by emerging as the ‘Player of the

Series, taking nine wickets from five matches. It was not just about the wickets but the whole attitude shown by him to bowl under any condition or situation was praiseworthy. In fact, Bishnoi had an eminently forgettable first match at Visakhapatnam, leaking 54 runs in four overs and his fielding too was in a shambles marred by a dropped catch and a few misfields. But he fought back with gusto and his run-rate never exceeded eight thereafter. Out of the 20 overs he bowled against the Aussies, seven were in the Power Play segment (1-6 overs). In this phase, he took five wickets at a fine economy rate of 6.45, besides bowling 20 dot balls. Australian skipper Matthew Wade admitted that facing Bishnoi even on some of the batting-friendly tracks here was not an easy job. “Their spinners bowled well. They got us tied down and we couldn’t really break away in that middle period. So, that was probably the biggest difference in the game. “Bishnoi, obviously, has been great throughout the four games. He has been quite hard to get a hold of. Some of our guys with less



experience will learn a lot from facing him,” said Wade. But if one watches from outside, Bishnoi’s bowling has this pattern wherein he tries to purchase wickets with a series of googlies. He is not a huge turner of the ball either, and hardly ever tries to outfox the batters like Chahal does with wide of the off-stump bowling. But Bishnoi is quick off the surface, making the ball skid to the batters to catch them napping. Legendary Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan underlined this part of Bishnoi’s game. “Bishnoi is different from any other leg spinner out there. He bowls quicker and he slides the ball a lot, and it is tough to face him on helpful wickets,” Muralitharan said on Jio Cinema. The young Indian spinner showed precisely through the dismissal of Travis Head. The Australian opener has been nothing less than a thorn in the flesh for India this year, crushing them at the WTC and World Cup finals with hundreds. The left-hander looked dangerous in Bengaluru as well en route his 18-ball 28 that contained five fours and a six. Indian skipper Suryakumar gave

the ball to Bishnoi in the fifth over. Head had initial success, slog sweeping the spinner for a six over mid-wicket. But in the very next ball, Bishnoi skidded the ball at a fair clip to beat a tentative prod by Head to rattle his timber. Australia’s early momentum was snapped. However, Bishnoi will face harder challenges from within the team itself to find a place in the 11 when senior pros like Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja return to take the mantle of lead spinners. But Bishnoi has made a strong impression for himself in the run-up to the marquee event next year. “Bishnoi has given this Indian side the option of a solid third spinner now. It is not easy to come in for someone like Chahal. But Bishnoi has made it look easy, and I hope he continues that,” a former India spinner told PTI. “The T20 World Cup is going to be played in the West Indies and the USA and the pitches there might offer some assistance to the spinners. Having three quality players in that department will give the team a certain edge,” he added.

## England won’t deviate from Bazball against India: McCullum



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Bazball’ has changed the dynamics of England’s batting approach in Test cricket and their Kiwi coach Brendon McCullum is very clear that irrespective of outcome, his team won’t deviate from its aggressive tactics against India in the five-Test series, where most tracks will offer substantial turn. The term ‘Bazball’, coined after McCullum’s nickname ‘Baz’ and the attacking philosophy that he endorses, has also found its pride of place in ‘Collins dictionary’. The meaning of ‘Bazball’ is “a style of test cricket in which the batting side attempts to gain the initiative by playing in a highly aggressive manner.” England will face India in five Tests at Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Rajkot, Ranchi and Dharamsala, starting January 25. “We have got a huge challenge against a very good Indian team in five Tests in India,” McCullum said at the Royal Challengers Bangalore Innovation Lab’s Leaders Meet India. “I am excited about it because you want to test yourself against the best side and I genuinely believe that India is the best in their own condition. It is going to be a good challenge for us. If we have success then fabulous, if we don’t, then I know we will go down in the style that we want to go down,” McCullum used the platform, signal his and

his team’s clear attacking intent for the marquee series. In his address, McCullum also expressed his thoughts on the essence of ‘Bazball’ and what it stands for. “We are playing the game, because we love cricket and we want to try and be as good at cricket as we possibly can. During the time that you are in the chair, you want to make sure you enjoy it and you shouldn’t wait till the end of your career to do so. We are very lucky that we have had some immediate success but I don’t think it is the ceiling for us.” The style of cricket has also allowed England to check the real potential of some of its younger players. “I think we have seen some guys who have unlocked their potential in the last 18 months or so and that’s what the job is as a leader; to get the most out of the people that you’re in charge of,” he added. The 42-year-old also recalled his fearless and unbeaten knock of 158 off 73 balls in the very first IPL game. He credited the knock as the inspiration for the Bazball phenomenon. “The reason why I daydream about that moment is because it literally changed my life. I was just a cricketer for New Zealand, where no one really knew what you did where you’re from, or what you’re capable of. But that day provided the platform, the forum, and the opportunity to change my life,” he said.

PTI ■ LONDON

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has instructed Jofra Archer to skip next year’s Indian Premier League (IPL) in order to manage the injury-prone pacer’s workload in the run up to the 2024 T20 World Cup, according to a report. Archer, who was bought by Mumbai Indians ahead of the 2022 IPL for a whopping INR 8 crore, was released by the franchise last week. His name doesn’t figure in the list of players who have registered for the IPL auction, set to be held on December 19 in Dubai. Archer, who has been plagued

## ECB tells Archer to skip 2024 IPL

To manage workload ahead of T20 World Cup



As per the report, he has signed a new two-year contract with the ECB and ahead of the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the United States from June 4 next year; the board has “opted to take as much control over Archer as possible.” Archer had briefly travelled to India for the World Cup but returned to the UK after less than a week due to elbow pain. ECB is hopeful that the pace spearhead will be a part of England’s squad for the T20 World Cup “We take that bet with him that we want him back fit and able to

play for England, because of the upside,” former England opener and current managing director (men’s cricket) Robert Key had said last month. “You start looking at things like the Ashes in two years, the T20 World Cup... Jofra adds so much to that,” he had said back then. As many as 34 England players, including Harry Brook, Adil Rashid and Chris Woakes, have registered for the IPL auction. While the likes of Moeen Ali, Jos Buttler, Jonny Bairstow, Sam Curran, Liam Livingstone, Jason Roy, Mark Wood, Will Jacks and Reece Topley have been retained by their franchise.



## Bavuma, Rabada rested for white-ball series against India

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma and pace ace Kagiso Rabada have been rested for the white-ball leg of this month’s home series against India with the duo set to return for the two Tests. The Proteas host India for a full series, which includes three T20Is, as many ODIs and two Tests, beginning with the short-format on December 10 in Durban. “Captain Temba Bavuma and Kagiso Rabada are amongst a group of players that have been omitted for the white-ball leg of the tour in order to play red-ball cricket as emphasis is placed on the Test series for which both will return,” Cricket South Africa said on Monday. Both India and South Africa are gearing up for the new World Test Championships cycle, starting with the Boxing Day Test in Centurion on December 26. In Bavuma’s absence, Aiden Markram will lead South Africa in the white-ball fixtures. Wicketkeeper batter Tristan Stubbs, who has played 1 ODI and 16 T20Is, has been included in the Test side for the first time while Heinrich Klaasen has been left out of the red ball squad. Pacers Gerald Coetzee, Marco Jansen and Lungi Ngidi have also been left out of the ODIs, which is low priority after the conclusion of the 50-over World Cup. The trio is a part of the squad for the opening two T20Is and subsequently, the two Test matches.

With valuable WTC points at stake and next year’s T20 World Cup looming large, South Africa like India have named several new faces in their ODI squads, including uncapped duo of medium pacer Ottiel Baartman and all-rounder Mithali Mpongwana. Batter David Bedingham (Test) and pacer Nandre Burger (all three) — have also earned maiden national call-ups.

### SQUADS:

**South Africa T20I squad:** Aiden Markram (captain), Ottiel Baartman, Matthew Breetzke, Nandre Burger, Gerald Coetzee (1st and 2nd T20Is), Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen (1st and 2nd T20Is), Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi (1st and 2nd T20Is), Andile Phehlukwayo, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, and Lizaad Williams  
**South Africa ODI squad:** Aiden Markram (captain), Ottiel Baartman, Nandre Burger, Tony de Zorzi, Reeza Hendricks, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Mithali Mpongwana, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Andile Phehlukwayo, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne and Lizaad Williams  
**South Africa Test squad:** Temba Bavuma (captain), David Bedingham, Nandre Burger, Gerald Coetzee, Tony de Zorzi, Dean Elgar, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Keegan Petersen, Kagiso Rabada, Tristan Stubbs and Kyle Verreynne.

## ‘You always have a lot more time than you think’, Hope reveals inspirational chat with Dhoni

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Master chaser MS Dhoni’s advice to “take the game deep” inspired Shai Hope to lead his side to a thrilling victory against England in the opening ODI, the West Indies skipper revealed. Former Indian captain Dhoni is known for his calm demeanour and match-winning abilities, as he always looks to take the chase deep when the target is massive. And after West Indies were reduced to 213/5 in pursuit of 326 here on Sunday, Hope, a wicketkeeper batter just like Dhoni, recalled a chat with one of the best finishers in the game. “A very, very famous person, MS Dhoni — we had a chat a while ago, and he was saying, ‘You always have a lot more time than you think’ Hope said at the post-match presentation. “That’s one thing that has stuck with me throughout the years I’ve been playing ODI cricket,” Hope added. West Indies faced the uphill task of scoring



106 in the last 10 overs. But along side Romario Shephard (48; 28b), Hope smashed an unbeaten 109 off 83 balls, that included four hits to the fence and seven maximums, to take eke out a memorable win here on Sunday.

The 30-year-old struck three sixes in four balls off Sam Curran in the penultimate over of the chase to give West Indies a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. In the process, he also recorded his 16th ODI and fastest century of his career.

## Once I got wicket of Wade, belief came in that we can win match: Singh

PTI ■ BENGALURU

After leaking 37 runs in his first three wayward overs on a languid Chinnaswamy Stadium pitch, Arshdeep Singh’s night was seemingly doomed. But then the left-arm pacer found a chance to redeem himself in the dying moments of the fifth T20I against Australia to seal a 4-1 series win. Arshdeep grabbed it with both hands, defending 10 runs in the final over to give India a six-run win, nailing a bouncer and yorkers that he looked so incapable of bowling during that horror start. So, what was going through his mind when captain Suryakumar Yadav tossed the ball to him ahead of the 20th over. “I did not feel that it was bowling-friendly conditions as I bowled a lot of loose deliveries,” Arshdeep began his post-match press meet, even allowing himself the luxury of a relieved chuckle. The 24-year-old had in front of him an in-touch Matthew Wade and Arshdeep surprised him with a bouncer outside the off-stump and to be fair to the Aussies captain that ball ought to have been called a wide for the height. The second ball was an inch-perfect yorker on the off-stump as Wade could only squirt it back to the bowler. Arshdeep missed a yorker again off the third delivery, but the low



full-toss was enough for him to get the wicket of Wade through a catch in the deep by Shreyas Iyer. Arshdeep thought the match turned in India’s favour at that moment. “I was just thinking that I have nothing to lose as I have already given away a lot of runs. Surya bhai was also saying the same thing that ‘let’s see how it goes.’ “My gut feeling was to bowl a bouncer off the first ball to put some doubt in Wade’s mind and once I got his wicket the belief came (in me) that we can win this match,” said Arshdeep.

The pacer was effusive in his praise for the way Suryakumar led the side during this series. “Surya bhai gives a lot of freedom. We had played in a few batting-friendly pitches earlier in the series but he said wherever there are challenges opportunities too will be there. “He was telling us not to worry about the results but to focus on the process and force the batsmen to score runs off good deliveries. He never put us under pressure,” he said. Arshdeep emphasised his point while giving context to it with the example of the last over here.

“He told me to bowl whatever you want to in the death overs and his full support will be there. Sometimes, he gives a bit of input, you know, this kind of ball will be good at this stage,” he added. Arshdeep was not yet ready to think deeper into India’s tour to South Africa, beginning in a week’s time. “Right now, we are focusing on this series. We are not looking too far ahead (in terms of South Africa tour) and once we go there and see the conditions, will take a call accordingly,” he said.





# ‘I never said no to movies; I was just settling down with my husband’s loss,’ claims Shanthi Priya

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Shanthi Priya became an overnight sensation immediately after she was seen in *Enga Ooru Pattukaran*, the Tamil film that flooded her offers soon after. Because she's all set to make her come back to the South, we had an exclusive interaction with the Rajahmundry lass. After doing some fantastic lead roles, the actress left acting for a while to be the emotional anchor to her married life, totally and completely.

Helicopter mom of all sorts, she recalled, "I was a proper school girl accompanying my elder sister to her shoots. A Tamil director was literally looking out for a fresh girl from school. He saw me with my sister and asked, 'Where do my interests lie?' And like any other mom, she said a blatant 'no'. I convinced her for just 'one' film, and after the success, I made a splash everywhere. I didn't turn around. My debut film was known to be an evergreen film for the now-golden-aged. Whenever I go to Chennai, I am known by that character."

Born to a Telugu-speaking family, the actress elaborates for us: "Recently, when I was shooting in Dharavi, the slum dwellers came up to me and asked whether I was Bhanupriya's sister or that of the South sensation. It's been thirty years, and I am being remembered. What better than this? I want to beat this record now."

Indeed, the younger sister of Bhanupriya, who has won so many Nandi Awards for her filming spree in the south, Shanthi Priya, elucidates, "She has always cared for me when I was so very new to this industry. She wasn't moralistic about what I should or should not

do; instead, she led me on a professional path. That professionalism comes from our roots in the Kuchipudi dance form. I have never seen her throw a tantrum on her set! I was disciplined too. My family never pressured me after an ever-green hit; I was allowed to return to normalcy."

Sharing some more tidbits on the same, we heard her saying, "Both of us never discussed what happened on our respective sets once we were home. Neither did we ever come on the radar of any controversies; we were very straightforward like that. The Tollywood industry was way too quick with their shooting schedules; we sisters hardly used to get time to hang around. Both of us were living in a suitcase. She was a more established actress than me, and her schedule was totally packed. Akka was never interested in doing B-town films; she rather loved the South Indian filmmaking style. When I became a B-town actress, we physically grew apart. I had to go meet her in Chennai."

So why the hiatus? The *Saugandh* fame opens up to our publication exclusively and says, "I wanted to settle down in my married life

with my late husband, Siddharth Ray I got married into a Bengali-Maharashtrian family, so I wanted to enjoy my own space for a while. I was happy to be a homemaker in the joint family. I chose not to come late at night from my movie shoots; I wanted to be fully immersed as a married woman to Siddharth. I never said no to movies! And whenever I returned, it was always a hit movie or show."

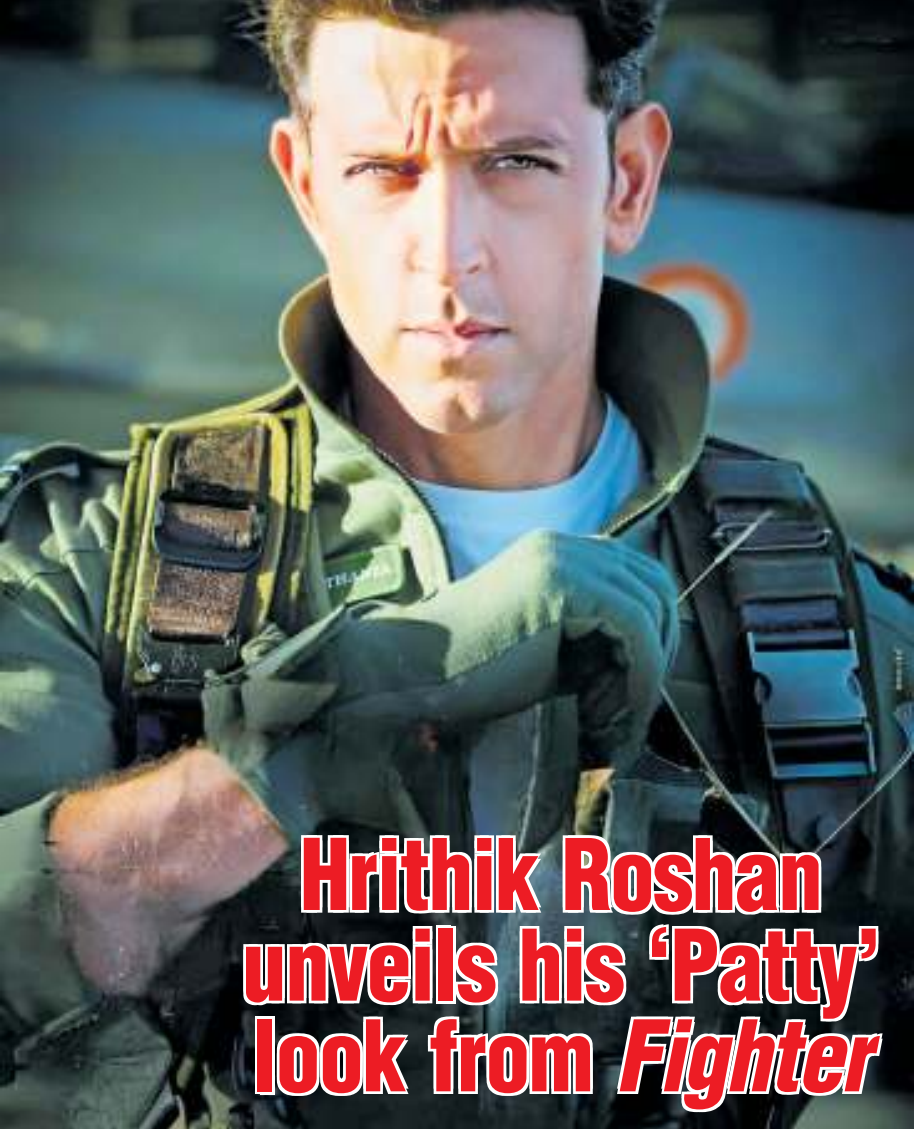
Her children are her life now, and why wouldn't they be? They are so encouraging. The actress described, "I lost my husband to a heart attack. I am a single parent, and my boys were extremely young. They needed me! Gradually, they were growing up, understood the dynamics, and were upset—why am I not acting anymore? They took pride in me that our mother was an eternal actress. They have now grown into beautiful men, and I am going all out as an actress now, just like they wanted me to. I belong in cinema."

Drawing a contrast between her 1988–2022 shooting style and her latest stint in *Dharavi Bank*, she said, "Technicalities have also changed. During the 90s, everything was on the spot! We used to design our own costumes, c'mon. There were no script narrations; examples were given to us as references. Today, the actors are being managed by agencies! They don't know what else is going on behind their backs. They are also being prepared for fight sequences. I was amused. Anyone can act now. I never have the habit of going and checking myself on the monitor, even if the director persuades me to."

Curious to know how the experiences were when she tasted massive stardom down South, she calls to mind, "I miss the crazy stardom. Fans used to wait for hours to see our glimpse! Zeenat Aman tasted real stardom in my eyes. Our fans used to post letters for us, and in return, our secretaries used to post our photographs to our fans. The charm of stardom has vanished. Stars have become next-door neighbors for them! Amitabh Bachchan Ji is a superstar for a reason; you will never spot him so casually on the streets of Mumbai."

Talking about her comeback now, the actress is so elated. She couldn't wait to see herself on the celluloid of the regional industry and uttered, "I don't like to call it my second innings; I deserve to be in the South Cinema and otherwise. It's Vetrimaaran's production house. I hope it works out in my favor, and I am back in the limelight in South now. I was the focus of attention on OTT with Suniel Shetty recently; it's time to change gears again. I was already a pan-Indian actress during the 1990s; I don't have to hop onto these latest trends to gain public attention. Even after massive silver screen hits, I have gone back to television. I can proudly say I am a repeat artist for every director I have worked with."

Veteran actress Shanthi Priya, who is all set to make her comeback down South, gets candid with *The Pioneer* recalling her debut film days, her bond with sister Bhanupriya, still having the same fandom, and more.



## Hrithik Roshan unveils his ‘Patty’ look from *Fighter*

The much-anticipated look of Hrithik Roshan from the film *Fighter* has been revealed, leaving fans in awe. Portraying the role of Squadron Leader Shamsher Pathania, known by his call sign 'Patty', Roshan perfectly steps into the shoes of a Squadron Pilot from the Air Dragons unit, promising a high octane adrenaline-packed journey.

Taking to his social media, Hrithik Roshan shared the first look. *Fighter* traces the journey of Hrithik Roshan as Patty, who became the best fighter pilot of India.

This unveiling heralds the commencement of an exhilarating cinematic ride as *Fighter* gears up to embark on a mission to redefine action, blended flawlessly with patriotic fervor, on the silver screen. The film also showcases the first-time pairing between Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone, intensifying the anticipation for unparalleled on-screen chemistry and their individual prowess and promising a compelling display of acting mastery. Helmed by Siddharth Anand and presented by Viacom18 Studios in collaboration with Marflix Pictures, the movie is set to transcend boundaries with its stellar cast and gripping storyline.

The film's release date is set for January 25th, 2024, on the eve of India's 75th Republic Day. Audiences can brace themselves for a high-flying adventure that promises to soar beyond expectations with India's first aerial action franchise film. Get ready to take off with *Fighter*, where the skies will witness the spectacle of cinematic brilliance!



Ashika Ranganath in & as Varalaxmi in **NAA SAAMI RANGA**

Naa Saami Ranga, the highly anticipated Tollywood film starring Akkineni Nagarjuna and directed by Vijay Binni, has generated buzz with the official announcement of Ashika Ranganath as the lead actress playing Varalaxmi. A captivating character introduction video, where Ashika adorns traditional attire and imitates Nagarjuna, has been unveiled online, leaving a lasting impression. The makers have teased fans with the upcoming release of the first single, *Yetthukelli Povalanipisthunde*.

Produced by Srinivasaa Chitturi for Srinivasaa Silver Screen, the film features a compelling storyline and dialogues crafted by Prasanna Kumar. The musical genius MM Keeravaani further elevates the excitement surrounding the project. Stay tuned for more exciting updates on the much-anticipated *Naa Saami Ranga*.



## YASH 19 TO GET ITS OFFICIAL TITLE ON DECEMBER 8

Celebrated for his blockbuster release *K.G.F. I and II*, rocking star Yash is hailed as one of the most loved movie stars in Pan-India. His involvement beyond acting in the film showcases his multifaceted talent and commitment to the film's success through his involvement in various aspects of its creation. However, after the massive success of *K.G.F.: Chapter 2*, the superstar surprised everyone by staying silent for over a year, busy working on his highly anticipated next. A believer in giving nothing but the best to his millions of fans, rocking star Yash chose quality over quick announcements.

Finally, after a long wait, Yash is now gearing up to make the official big announcement about his next project, which has sent waves of excitement amongst his followers and industry insiders. The actor will be unveiling the official title of his upcoming project, currently referred to as *Yash 19*. Taking to social media, Yash, along with the production house, KVN Productions, informed his followers in a collaborative post that he would be announcing the official title of the film on December 8, 2023, at 9:55 AM.

After getting the ball rolling for the mass action genre, he has been known for his vision, conviction, and making choices that have proven to be pathbreaking.

Interestingly, a day before revealing the date of the announcement, the superstar changed his profile display picture on social media to 'Loading'. Only a change of profile picture by the Rocking Star sent social media into a frenzy, with #Yash19 trending at #1.

With such unprecedented hype, *Yash 19* is one of the most anticipated announcements.



## Deepika Padukone becomes the first Indian actor to be invited to the Academy Museum Gala

The Academy Museum Gala is the second biggest stage in the world after the Oscars, which is organised by the same board. Earlier this year, Deepika created history as she stepped on stage at the Oscars to present the Indian song act.

The actress ends the year 2023, which is her biggest year ever, on a big high. Both her films, *Pathaan* and *Jawan*, broke lifetime records and collected over 2200 crores worldwide. She was among the handful of Indians ever to feature on a TIME magazine cover without being part of any list. She presented an Indian song act on the biggest stage, the Oscars, and now this.

She looked absolutely stunning in a purple velvet gown and minimal jewellery. Fans couldn't contain their excitement as their idol made India proud yet again by representing the country on such a big global stage.



## Sharad Kelkar once again lends his voice for Prabhas

December is undoubtedly a blockbuster month for Bollywood, with some of the biggest films releasing. One of the most anticipated ones is Prabhas starrer *Salaar – Part 1*. The film's trailer was recently released and gained immense popularity. And while everyone is already celebrating the film, Sharad Kelkar has all the more reason to do so. Once again, Sharad has lent his voice for Prabhas in the Prashanth Neel film, and it just fits so perfectly.

Earlier, Sharad lent his voice for Prabhas in *Baahubali* and *Adipurush*. Now with *Salaar* getting added to the list, the actor seems quite elated, as he took to social media and wrote, "Glad to be a part of *Salaar*. Once again, the magic of the face and voice combo. Thank you Prashanth Neel sir and Prabhas for this." Talking about the same Sharad says, "It is a great combination of face and voice we discovered with me and Prabhas films. Right from *Baahubali* I have received great appreciation. Even with *Salaar*, the journey was great, and I am full of gratitude. Finding the right face for the voice is rare and I am glad I got to be associated with such a perfect combo."

On the work front, Sharad will be seen in *Ayalaan*, *Sri*, *Indian Police Force*, *Slum Golf*, *Nayeka*, and many more projects.