

**ANALYSIS 7**  
A NEW GREAT GAME  
BEGINS IN AFGHANISTAN**BUDGET SPL 4**  
BUDGET OUTLAY AT  
RS 1,150.38 CRORE**SPORTS 12**  
SENSATIONAL GILL  
SEALS T20I SERIES

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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SAMANTHA TO BEGIN  
SHOOTING FOR  
KUSHI & CITADEL  
SOON

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# Relief to salaried, josh to unemployed

## 'Amrit Kaal Budget'

FM unveils income tax relief, small saving sops a year before elections

### Highlights of Budget 2023-24

Following are the highlights of the Budget 2023-24 tabled in Parliament on Wednesday:

Per capita income has more than doubled to Rs 1.97 lakh in around 9 years

Indian economy has increased in size from being 10th to 5th largest in the world in the past nine years

New Infrastructure Finance Secretariat established to enhance opportunities for pvt investment in infrastructure

The maximum deposit limit for Senior Citizen Savings Scheme to be enhanced from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 30 lakh.

Fiscal Deficit targeted to be below 4.5% by 2025-26.

Investment of Rs 75,000 cr, including Rs 15,000 cr from pvt sources, for 100 critical transport infrastructure projects, for last and first mile connectivity for ports, coal, steel, fertilizer, and food grains sectors.

Outlay for PM Awas Yojana is being enhanced by 66% to over Rs 79,000 crore.

Capital outlay of Rs 2.40 lakh crore has been provided for the Railways, which is the highest ever and about nine times the outlay made in 2013-14.

PAN will be used as the common identifier for all digital systems of specified government agencies to bring in Ease of Doing Business.

30 Skill India International Centres to be set up across different states to skill youth for international opportunities.

Revamped credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs to take effect from 1st April 2023 through infusion of Rs 9,000 crore in the corpus. This scheme would enable additional collateral-free guaranteed credit of Rs 2 lakh crore and also reduce the cost of the credit by about 1 per cent.

The budget adopts following seven priorities -- 'Saptarishi': Development, reaching the last mile, infrastructure and investment, unleashing the potential, green growth, youth power and financial sector

— NIRMALA SITHARAMAN, Finance minister

The first budget of the "Amrit Kaal" provides foundation to fulfil the resolve for a developed India while giving priority to deprived sections of the society as well

— NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday raised the personal income tax rebate limit, doled out sops on small savings and announced one of the biggest hikes in capital spending in the past decade as she did a tight rope walk in the Budget between staying fiscally prudent and meeting public expectations in the year before general elections.

The personal income tax rebate limit has been increased to Rs 7 lakh from the fiscal year starting April 1 under the new tax regime from the previous Rs 5 lakh. Tax slabs has been cut to five from seven earlier. Also, the maximum income tax rate has been reduced to about 39% from 42.7% after a reduction in the highest surcharge to 25% from 37%.

### WHAT'S CHEAPER WHAT'S COSTLIER?

- Articles made from gold bars
- Cigarettes
- Silver
- Imported bicycles and toys
- Electronic vehicle imports
- Parts for mobile phones
- Parts for TV panels
- Machinery for lithium ion batteries
- Raw materials for EV industry

### NEW INCOME TAX TABLE

Rebate limit increased from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 7 lakh a year

Income	Old Tax	New Tax
Rs 0-3L	No tax	No tax
Rs 3-6L	Taxed at 5%	Taxed at 5%
Rs 6-9L	Taxed at 10%	Taxed at 10%
Rs 9-12L	Taxed at 15%	Taxed at 15%
Rs 12-15L	Taxed at 20%	Taxed at 20%
Above Rs 15L	Taxed at 30%	Taxed at 30%

## Union Budget drives digital agenda

**NEW DELHI:** Three centres of excellence for artificial intelligence in top educational institutions and 100 labs in engineering institutions for developing applications using 5G services will be set up, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced on Wednesday. The finance minister made the announcement in her budget speech in Lok Sabha. "Three centres of excellence for artificial intelligence will be set up in top educational institutions. Leading

industry players will partner in conducting interdisciplinary research, developing cutting edge applications and scalable problem solutions in the areas of agriculture, health, sustainable cities," she said. Sitharaman said that a

total of 100 labs will be set up in engineering institutions in collaboration with various authorities, regulators, banks and other business for developing applications using 5G services.

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### Resources transferred to States and UTs



## IIMR in Hyd becomes 'Centre of Excellence'

**HYDERABAD:** The Indian Institute of Millet Research here will soon get a facelift as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday announced that it will be supported as 'Centre of Excellence' for sharing best practices, research and technologies at the international level. In her Union Budget speech, she noted that India is the largest producer and second largest exporter of Shree Anna (millets) in the world, which has numerous health benefits and also an integral part of food for centuries. "Now to make India a global hub for 'Shree Anna', the Indian Institute of Millet Research, Hyderabad will be supported as the Centre of Excellence for sharing best practices, research and technologies at the international level," she said. Reacting to the proposal, Krishna Ella, Founder and Executive Chairman, Bharat Biotech International Ltd in a statement said the upgradation of the Millet Research Institute is a clear indication of the government's commitment to rural development and food security.

### Sensex jumps over 1,200 points

**MUMBAI:** Benchmark BSE Sensex zoomed over 1,200 points in the afternoon trade on Wednesday as market investors cheered the Union budget proposals presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Lok Sabha. The 30-share BSE barometer zoomed 1,223.54 points or 2 per cent to its intra-day high of 60,773.44.

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### Over Rs 946 crore allocated to CBI

**NEW DELHI:** The Centre has allocated Rs 946 crore to the Central Bureau of Investigation in the Union Budget 2023-24 announced on Wednesday, a slight increase of over 4.4 per cent from FY 2023. The country's premier probe agency is over-stretched in terms of human resources to tackle emerging crime scenes.

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**Rs 15,000 crore for implementation of Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission under the next three years under the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes.**

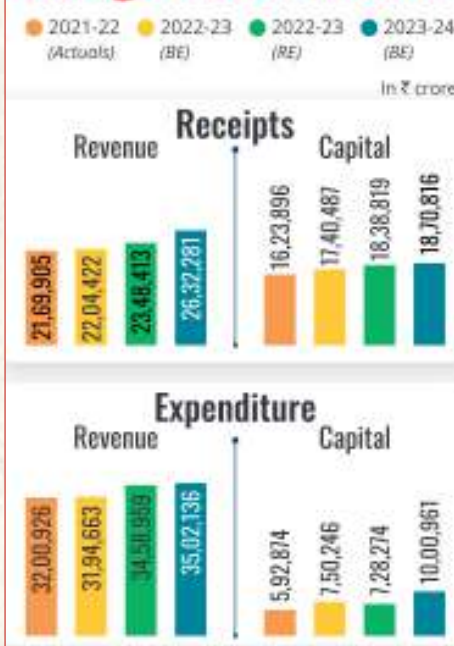
**Rs 10 lakh crore capital investment, a steep increase of 33 per cent for third year in a row, to enhance growth potential and job creation; crowd-in private investments, and provide a cushion against global headwinds.**

## Adani group calls off FPO, money to be returned to investors

**BENGALURU:** As its stocks plunged with flagship Adani Enterprises dropped by 28%, Adani Group late Wednesday night decided to call off its 20,000 crore Follow on Public Offer (FPO) in a rare move amidst the growing impact of the Hindenburg report raising allegations of "stock manipulation and accounting fraud." The company in a statement issued said that it will return money to its investors. It said that the decision to cancel the offer was taken in the interests of its subscribers. Gautam Adani, Chairman, Adani Enterprises said that the decision was taken amid the fluctuations the group's stocks saw during the day's trading. Billionaire Gautam Adani lost his title as Asia's richest person on Wednesday as his conglomerate plunged again in the wake of a US short-seller report.

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## Budget at a Glance



## Taxes comprise 58 paise of every rupee

**NEW DELHI:** For every rupee in the government coffer, 58 paise will come from direct and indirect taxes, 34 paise from borrowings and other liabilities, 6 paise from non-tax revenue like disinvestment and 2 paise from non-debt capital receipts, according to the Budget documents for 2023-24. Goods and Services Tax (GST) will contribute 17 paise in every rupee of revenue, while corporation tax will account for 15 paise. The government is also looking to earn 7 paise out of every rupee from excise duty and 4 paise from customs duty. Income tax will yield 15 paise. The collection from 'borrowings and other liabilities' will be 34 paise, according to the Budget 2023-24.

## Fully imported cars, EVs, to cost more

**NEW DELHI:** Fully imported cars, including electric vehicles will cost more with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announcing hike in customs duty. Customs duty on vehicles in completely built units (CBUs) costing less than USD 40,000 or with engine capacity less than 3,000 cc for petrol-run vehicles and less than 2,500 cc for diesel-run vehicles has been raised from 60 per cent to 70%. Similarly, customs duty on electrically operated vehicles in CBU form, other than with cost, insurance and freight (CIF) value of more than USD 40,000, has also been raised to 70% from 60%. The Budget also outlined that customs duty on vehicles, including electric vehicles, in semi-knocked down (SKD) form will rise to 35% from 30% earlier. Already, cars imported as CBUs with CIF more than USD 40,000 or with engine capacity more than 3,000 cc for petrol-run vehicles and more than 2,500 cc for diesel-run vehicles attract 100% customs duty.



## New twist to phone tapping row

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM  
■ VIJAYAWADA

The issue over alleged tapping of phones of certain legislators by the state government took an interesting turn on Wednesday with ruling party MLA Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy adducing 'evidence' of his phone tapping, while dragging Intelligence Additional DGP P Sitaramanjanayulu also into the issue. The allegations relating to phone-tapping have triggered a debate among

police officials, creating ripples in the administration. It has also become a hot top topic of discussion in political circles across the state. Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy, who created a sensation on Tuesday by claiming that his phone was being tapped, spoke to media persons on Wednesday. He said he had phoned his close friend and spoken to him. Subsequently, Intelligence Chief and Additional DGP P Sitaramanjanayulu sent him an audio clip of that telephonic conversation with his friend and questioned him as to why he was speaking against the government. "The Intelligence chief spoke in a threatening manner", the MLA

alleged. Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy maintained that the audio clips of his conversation with his friend that the Intelligence chief had sent him through phone 98499 66000 clearly proved that his phone was tapped. "If my phone were not tapped, how could the Intelligence Chief send voice clips to me?", he questioned. It may be mentioned here that another ruling party MLA, Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, had also alleged that his phone was being tapped.

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## PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Miglani, spokesperson of the HLM Group of Institutions, setting up a National Digital Library is a great policy measure to make learning resources available in various subjects for children and adolescents on a consolidated digital platform.

Telangana will draw money from the combined allocations. This includes Rs 6,835 crore for 22 All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), including the ones in Mangalagiri of Andhra Pradesh and Bibi Nagar of Telangana. A sum of Rs 37 crore has been allocated for Tribal Universities and Rs 357 crore for all museums, including the Salar Jung Museum. Andhra Pradesh is estimated to have got Rs 41,338 crore, including the combined allocations. This includes Rs 47 crore for AP Central University; Rs 168 crore for Petroleum University, and Rs 683 crore for the Vizag Steel Plant.

## PNS ■ HYDERABAD

laugh as the slip, deliberate or not, appeared to be aimed at the opposition Congress, India's oldest political party which has been replaced by the BJP as the country's most powerful party. Smiling, she quickly followed up with a sorry and continued, "Replacing old polluting vehicles, may be applicable, right... Replacing old polluting vehicles is an important part of greening our economy. In furtherance of the vehicle scrapping policy mentioned in the Budget 22-23, I have allocated adequate funds to scrap old vehicles of the central government."



New Delhi, Feb 1 (PTI) The government on Wednesday said there won't be any capital gain tax if physical gold is converted to an Electronic Gold Receipt (EGR) and vice versa.

Announcing this in her Budget speech for the 2023-fiscal, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said: "The conversion of physical gold to Electronic Gold Receipt and vice versa is proposed not to be treated as a transfer to attract any capital gains."

The move aims to promote investments in electronic equivalent of gold, which are currently traded on the stock exchanges.

Investors buy the gold in dematerialised form and are given an Electronic Gold Receipt. The BSE was the first stock exchange to introduce EGRs.

The Union Budget for 2023-24 will dole out Rs 30,000 crore to state-owned fuel retailers to make up for the massive losses they ran because of holding petrol and diesel prices despite rise in cost in a bid to help the government contain inflation.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has allocated the money under the head "capital support to oil marketing companies". It offered no explanation why the blue chip, cash rich oil PSUs should need capital support.

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) haven't changed petrol and diesel prices since April 6, 2022, despite input crude oil prices rising from USD 102.97 per barrel that month to USD 116.01 per barrel in June and falling to USD 80.92 per barrel this month.

**Key Numbers**

In ₹ crore	2021-22 (Actuals)	2022-23 (Budget Estimates)	2022-23 (Revised Estimates)	2023-24 (Budget Estimates)
Revenue Receipts	21,69,905	22,04,422	23,48,413	26,32,281
Capital Receipts	16,23,896	17,40,487	18,38,819	1,87,016
Total Receipts	37,93,801	39,44,909	41,87,232	45,03,097
Total Expenditure	37,93,801	39,44,909	41,87,232	45,03,097
Revenue Deficit	10,31,021	9,90,241	11,10,546	8,69,855
Effective Revenue Deficit	7,88,375	6,72,598	7,84,958	4,99,867
Fiscal Deficit	15,84,521	16,61,196	17,55,319	17,86,816
Primary Deficit	7,79,022	7,20,545	8,14,668	7,06,845

**UNION BUDGET 2023-24**






**PNS** ■ LUCKNOW

PNS ■ BOLPUR

**PNS** ■ NEW DELHI

**PNS** ■ NEW DELHI



**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

In her budget speech,  
Finance Minister Nirmala

The government also provided an opportunity to sugar cooperatives to claim payments made to cane growers for the period prior to the assessment year 2016-17 as expenditure. This is expected to provide them with a relief of almost Rs 10,000 crore.

To realise the vision of 'Sahakar Se Samridhhi', Sitharaman said the government has already initiated computerisation of 63,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) with an investment of Rs 2,516 crore. In consultation with all stakeholders and states, model bye-laws for PACS were formulated enabling them to become multipurpose PACS. A national cooperative database is

The government will also facilitate setting up of a large number of multipurpose cooperative societies, primary fishery societies and dairies in uncovered panchayats and villages in the next five years, she said.



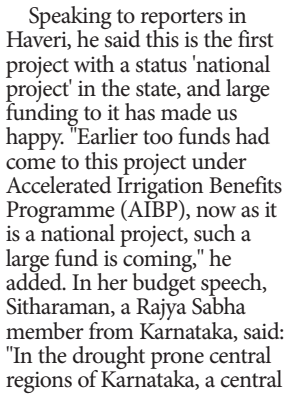
## PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the 2019 general elections, in the Modi 2.0 Government, Sitharaman

It was under Sinha that the time for presentation of the Budget was changed to 11am from 5 pm. During Narasimha Rao Government, Manmohan Singh was given charge of the Finance portfolio and he presented budgets from 1991-92 to 1995-96. Singh's 1991-92 Budget with a host of economic reforms to liberalise the economy, gave a new direction to India.

## PNS ■ HAVERI

Several BJP leaders, including National General Secretary C T Ravi and state party chief Nalin Kumar Kateel praised the budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Lok Sabha, calling it "farsighted and pro poor". "Rs 5,300 crore has been announced for the Upper Bhadra Project, which is a major irrigation project from Karnataka and has a status of national project. I welcome this, as the project is important, aimed at providing irrigation and drinking water to vast areas of drought affected central districts of the state," Bommai said.



Welcoming the announcement, Health Minister K. Sudhakar said: "This will immensely benefit the people of Chikkamagaluru, Chitradurga, Tumkur and Davangere districts by providing irrigation facility to farmers and recharging the groundwater table to provide drinking water in drought-prone taluks of these districts".

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

In her 2023-24 budget speech, Sitharaman said the highest tax rate in the country is 42.74 per cent.

**PNS** ■ NEW DELHI

The government will take up the eradication of sickle cell anaemia in a mission mode and conduct massive screening in

"Going forward, the government will also issue cards after screening to tribal persons below 40 years affected by the disease mentioning their sickle cell

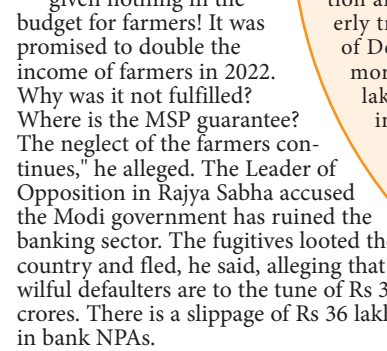
The Union health ministry in collaboration with the tribal ministry and states has prepared a roadmap to screen around 7 cro

Another major highlight of the Budget on the health front, Mandaviya said, is that 157 new nursing colleges will be established in co-location with the existing 157 medical colleges established since 2014.

**PNS** ■ NEW DELHI

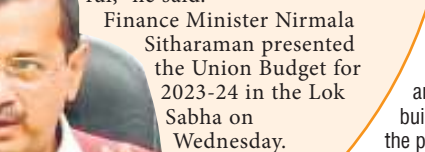
"This budget will be called 'Naam Bade Aur Darshan Chhote Budget' (big on announcements and short on delivery)," Kharge said after the presentation of the Union Budget.

The Congress president alleged that the budget has been made with elections and not the country in mind. "No effort has been made in this budget to find a solution to massive unemployment. Inflation is hurting every household and the common man is in trouble. There is nothing in the budget that would reduce prices of items of daily use," he said. Kharge claimed that there is nothing



**PNS** ■ NEW DELHI

...the Centre of meting out step-motherly treatment to the national capital, he said the budget has offered no respite from the twin problems of inflation and unemployment. "Step-motherly treatment again with the people of Delhi. The people of Delhi paid more than Rs 1.75 lakh crore income tax last year. Out of that only



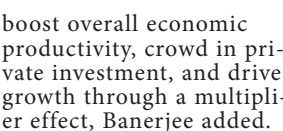
PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday said the Union Budget for 2023-24 has given "nirasha" (despair) instead of "asha" (hope) to people of the country. He also claimed that the budget further increases inflation and unemployment. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 in Lok Sabha on Wednesday and said it hopes to build on the foundation of the previous budget and blue print for India@100. 'The BJP is completing a decade of its budgets, but when it did not do anything to the public earlier, at will it give now?' Yadav tweeted from Hindi.

**PNS** ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body CII  
Director General

The continued thrust on capital expenditure will



Most importantly, he said a "historic outlay" for public capex is a continuation of the heavy-lifting since the time of the pandemic and will have a multiplier effect across

"A push to investment and consumption was required to keep the growth cycle in motion. We are happy to note that the government has continued the thrust on capital expenditure with a 33 per cent increase in the capital outlay to Rs 10 lakh crore representing 3.3 per cent of GDP," Panda said, adding it was a step

Another industry chamber ASSOCHAM said the Budget for 2023-24 is a road map for nation building with continued focus on massive public expenditure on infrastructure, sustainable economic growth, encouraging consumption demand while staying on course of strict fiscal prudence.









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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Good Budget

Budget 2023-24 has something for everyone, and yet there has been no fiscal profligacy

There is a term often used for pre-poll budgets, mostly by the Opposition to disparage the government of the day — ‘political budget.’ Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman’s Budget 2023-24 certainly doesn’t fall under this category. One of the biggest political budgets was the one that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government made in 2008. It announced a Rs 60,000-crore farm loan waiver, which went up to almost Rs 72,000 crore. The waiver helped the UPA’s return to power next year. There was a strong correlation between the amount spent in states and the UPA’s electoral fortunes in it. Thankfully, Sitharaman has steered clear of the reprehensible populism the UPA exhibited 15 years ago. Yes, she can be accused of trying to placate income-tax payers by giving them relief, but the fact is that it was long overdue. The point to be stressed here is that the biggest beneficiaries are those who are in the lowest brackets. This means more money in the pockets of common people which they will either invest or spend — and thus boost demand and savings, both of which are desirable. Micro, small and medium enterprises have also been extended income-tax benefits. What is conspicuous about personal income-tax cuts is the fact that the people in the highest tax slab have also been given relief. The highest tax rate in our country is 42.74 per cent, which is among the highest in the world. She has proposed to bring this down to 39 per cent.

This is a very courageous step in a country where it is fashionable to slam the rich — and especially when her party is gearing up for the general elections in 2024.

In line with the Narendra Modi Government’s emphasis on infrastructure, the Finance Minister has steeply increased, third time in a row, the capital investment outlay by 33 per cent to Rs 10 lakh crore. This is around 3.3 per cent of the gross domestic product or GDP. This will be almost three times the outlay in 2019-20. She went on to point out that the direct capital investment by the Centre is complemented by the provision made for creation of capital assets through grants-in-aid to states, thus making the ‘effective capital expenditure’ to Rs 13.7 lakh crore. She rightly emphasised upon her Government’s focus on capital expenditure to enhance growth potential, generate jobs, crowd in private investment, and provide a cushion against global headwinds. A good thing about the Budget is that, even though it has something for everyone — from the middle classes to the rich, from MSMEs to big corporations — fiscal prudence has been maintained. While pegging the fiscal deficit for 2023-24 at 5.9 per cent of GDP, she pledged to tread “the path of fiscal consolidation, reaching a fiscal deficit below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26.” The fiscal deficit already came down from 6.7 per cent in 2021-22 to 6.4 per cent in 2022-23 (revised estimates). In a nutshell, Budget 2023-24 is good.

### PICTALK



Preparations are underway for the G20 meeting, in Agra

PTI

## Not in good humour

Rajinikanth’s public notice stopping mimicry artists from mimicking him is rather harsh and uncalled for

Mimicry and stand-up comedy are ‘national’ pastimes of people in the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Specialists in mimicry eke out a living caricaturing their favourite film stars and politicians and these programs are the most wanted ones in star-studded stage shows in India and abroad. Earlier there were only one or two comedy artists to mimic film stars and their mannerisms. In South India where film stars are adored like demiGods, their fans go berserk when the comedy artists dish out the mannerisms and style of their superstars. In yesteryears, there were fashion stores and hairdressing saloons named after M G Ramachandran, Shivaji Ganesan, and Jaishankar, the Tamil matinee icons. Not long ago, we had Khushbu Wines in Chennai named after the diva of Tamil films. Many restaurants in Tamil Nadu serve the delicious Khushbu Idly, known for its softness and distinct taste. At no point in time MGR, Shivaji, or Khushbu have questioned the propriety of the persons who ‘misused’ their names and style to entertain people. Last week, the reigning superstar of Tamil films Rajinikanth came out with a public notice he issued through his lawyer declaring that whoever mimics his style and mannerism and makes use of his name for commercial purposes stand to face civil and criminal cases.

The public notice portrays him as an actor with a humongous reputation and he enjoys a celebrity status and has the ‘personality/publicity/celebrity/rights over all facets of his personality’. No one can blame Rajinikanth for questioning the propriety of businessmen and entrepreneurs exploiting his name in commercial ventures. But his decision to say no to poor mimicry artists would rob them of a chance to earn a livelihood and this is certain to cast a shadow over the goodwill enjoyed by the superstar. There was a lot of heart burning when superstar Amitabh Bachchan, music maestro Thyagaraja, and playback singer K J Yesudas demanded that they be paid royalty by performers who make use of their acting and singing talents. The Indian Copyright Act has indeed put restrictions on the wanton misuse of such works by vested interests. But the truth remains that a true artist should not be greedy and ask the wannabe artists for royalties because it would be like robbing from begging bowls. The mimicry artists should show restraint and stay away from spoofing the maestros and superstars. One should not set the house on fire to kill a rat.

# Economic reality check on China

China though making strides in the economic field is on a slippery slope. Its economic model exploits countries and is hegemonistic in approach



ATUL SEHGAL

China has been hogging the bright lime-light for the last two decades, almost since the beginning of the current century for a growing economic powerhouse status and a country destined to overtake the US in economic and geopolitical might. The way it was developing its infrastructure and creating a most cost-competitive global manufacturing base was, to say the least, mind-boggling. But what was being projected and envisaged in 2003 is not being reiterated today, twenty years later. What is the reason?

The last two years have shaken the economic pillars of China. The real estate sector which accounts for nearly 30 percent of the Chinese economy has slipped into deep recessionary doldrums. Evidenced by the collapse of the Evergrande, the real estate business entity stricken by high debts and its serviceability crisis, the overall picture of the country’s economy and its short and medium-term outlook is anything but bright. The writer happened to visit China in 2014 and is privy to scores of high-rise multistoried residential buildings on the outskirts of its IT hub city Cheng Du and all the buildings are vacant-looking like deserted ghost houses.

The situation is, regrettably the same, nay worse, nine years later in 2023. The flats remain unsold in large numbers with the allottee- buyers unable to pay their housing loan installments due to shrinking or unsteady incomes. The writer also saw that at that time, the average cost of goods and services in China was 3 times that of India, which today is more than 4 times. Let me cite a few figures in regard to China’s economy vis- a-vis India. Central Govt. debt (percentage of GDP) is 76.89 for China and 83.4 for India. While the GDP growth rate for China is three percent, for India, it is 6.84. The Debt per capita (in USD) in China is 7164 and for India, it is 1724. The inflation rate (percent) for China is 2 per cent and for India, it is 6.89.

The above is 2022 figures extracted from www.statista.com. What do the above figures con-



vey? Let me put point-wise analytical inferences.

The economic soundness indices of China and India are quite comparable, with important parameters tilted heavily in India’s favor. The reason? China has grown too fast too much and its growth is unsustainable. The figures speak for themselves. China’s model of economic growth is undemocratic, with capitalist processes foisted on a communist, totalitarian base. This provides an unstable, unsustainable model of economic growth. China has kept the inflation rate low by artificially tight fiscal means through restricted resort to printing more currency, even during the Covid-19 period when GDP and income growth sharply declined. This, seen along with the Communist regime’s restriction on citizens’ savings and withdrawals from their bank accounts, is already causing grave social distress leading to protests and uprisings. With the growth rate declining to 3 percent and the country now in the grip of a most serious Covid-19 pandemic, the short-term economic outlook of the country looks extremely grim.

China’s past growth has been fuelled by exports rather than domestic consumption but with the recent global economic downturn caused by Covid-19 and now the pro-

CHINA HAS KEPT THE INFLATION RATE LOW BY ARTIFICIALLY TIGHT FISCAL MEANS THROUGH RESTRICTED RESORT TO PRINTING MORE CURRENCY, EVEN DURING THE COVID-19 PERIOD WHEN GDP AND INCOME GROWTH SHARPLY DECLINED

tracted Russia-Ukraine war, global demand has heavily declined and China’s huge factories are idling to the extent of 40-50 percent on an average. This is exacerbating the already burgeoning domestic debt crisis, with many banks going bust.

It is relevant to observe that China is also present in the midst of an energy crisis with its huge thermal power electricity generating plants starving of coal whose imports from Australia have declined in the recent past due to the worsening of its political relations with that country. The shortage of electricity has put that much additional strain on its manufacturing industry.

The worst thing that could have happened to China is its much-touted BRI running into a quandary. Thanks to China’s opaque policies and systems and unabashedly hegemonic designs, its BRI investments in many countries have run into logjams and the BRI project is turning out to be an unqualified failure. Taking over ports and establishing military bases in the BRI host countries has sullied China’s image and shown it as a business-unfriendly hegemonic power with predatory designs.

It is also important to note India’s advantageous position over China under the present economic circumstances. India’s cost of production is less

than one-fourth of China’s and with a much younger labor workforce; it sits on a much better pedestal for manufacturing sector growth. It can easily wrest from China the position of the global manufacturing hub. The most important factor in India’s favor is its present geopolitical goodwill and China’s worsening relations with major countries owing to its dubious role in the Covid-19 pandemic. In the present situation of political, economic, and social turmoil all over the world in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war with overt or covert military involvement of many other countries, India is poised well to take the big economic leap forward ahead of China.

China’s economic model has shown now beyond a semblance of doubt that the economic progress of a country is long-term sustainable only with a fair model delivering equitable benefits to collaborating countries. It can never provide long-term, stable economic progress with an exploitative model and undemocratic systems behind it, which are not compatible with the natural development patterns of humans on this planet.

(The writer is a Management Consultant based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### AMBIGUOUS STAND

Sir — When US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Tel Aviv this Monday, it appeared that he might have planned to visit, given the heightened tensions between Palestinians and Israelis. But no, it was decided three months back. But the purpose of his coming, which must have been at that time, completely changed after his arrival. West Bank and went to Ramallah. When he met Benjamin Netanyahu, appealed to him to maintain peace. When he met Mahmud Abbas, he expressed concern over the settlement of Israelis. Also repeated the same old tune that every US representative has been repeating since 1974. That is the matter of adopting a ‘two state’ policy is the only solution to the problem. The United Nations had described this policy as the only solution to the problem.

But Israel rejected it outright. Because to obey it would mean that the Israelis would have to free the Arab lands captured in the brief Arab-Israeli war of June 1967. In the present situation, Israel would like to shift the entire Palestinian population to Antarctica and hand over the entire land to the Jews. On September 13, 1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization negotiator Mahmoud Abbas signed a Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, commonly referred to as the “Oslo Accords”, at the White House. When Netanyahu took power for the first time in 1996, he immediately threw that agreement in the wastebasket. Well, now the world’s most fanatical religious government is in power in Israel, in such a situation only blood will be shed there. The solution has now gone further than even a dream.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

### CANDLEMAS DAY

Sir — February 2, is the Feast of the Presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple, which is also the fourth Joyful Mystery of the Holy Rosary. The

## Unstoppable Novak



By winning a record-extending tenth title, Novak Djokovic has renewed his affinity with the Australian Open. The Serb’s straight sets win over Greece’s Stefanos Tsitsipas has tied him with Rafael Nadal for the all-time Grand Slam men’s record of 22 titles.

Djokovic even sported a jacket with “22”, emblazoned on the front while celebrating his victory. With the Australian Open win, Djokovic also jumps back to world No.1.

He already holds the record for the most weeks atop the world rankings at 374, and this number will continue to swell. The win at Melbourne Park serves as yet another feather in Djokovic’s cap and is solid proof that the Serbian great still has in him what it takes to win a Major. With an astonishing 64 collective Grand Slam titles, the triumvirate of Djokovic, Nadal, and Federer have created incredible metrics that in many ways redefined tennis greatness.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Presentation is when the Blessed Mother Mary and Joseph brought the Child Jesus to the Temple to be dedicated to God.

On Candlemas Day, followers of Jesus Christ celebrate His Presentation at the Temple and the Virgin Mary being purified, with many of the faithful bringing candles to their churches to be blessed. Thereafter, where they’re lit and placed on window sills to ward off evil. The candles represent Jesus and the day of His induction into Judaism, and they go toward explaining the name of the holy day, Candlemas.

This act of humility can inspire each of us to strive to be more obedient to God’s will in our lives. When Mary and Joseph met Simeon in the Temple, Simeon thanked God for revealing the Messiah to him. He called the Child “a light to the revelation of the Gentiles” (Luke 2:25-32). These words are the basis for the custom of blessing candles representing the light of Christ.

Jubel D’Cruz | Mumbai

### A GOOD SCHEME

Sir — The PLI is an innovative scheme that provides incentives in terms of cash to various companies for enhancing their domestic manufacturing apart from

focusing on reducing import bills and improving the cost competitiveness of local goods.

PLI scheme offers incentives on incremental sales for products manufactured in India. PLI Scheme, as the Production Linked Incentive Scheme is commonly abbreviated, is an initiative started by the Government of India to not only encourage foreign companies to find a workforce in the country and thereby generate employment but also encourage domestic local production to create micro-jobs.

The PLI scheme for large-scale electronics manufacturing has attracted investments of Rs 4,784 crore as of September 2022, and led to a total production of Rs 2,03,952 crore, including exports of Rs 80,769 crore. It may be noted that the PLI scheme has seen significant participation from the private sector. It would be great if the scheme succeeds as in India today we need jobs than anything else. A jobless growth would be meaningless. PLI rightly address this very major issue.

Prachi Bagoriya | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

Hindenburg posed 88 questions to the Adani Group which responded with a 413-page rant. Why hide behind ‘an attack on me is an attack on India’ nonsense? It isn’t!

Senior Congress leader — Jairam Ramesh

Worshippers weren’t killed during prayers even in India or Israel but it happened in Pakistan.

Pakistan Defence Minister — Khwaja Asif

We are just grateful to be working, and living our dreams on a daily basis. We belong to our audience and they can say whatever as long as we are entertaining them.

Actor — Alia Bhatt

The T20 series started in Ranchi so maybe that calm attitude came from there. But I guess a lot of domestic cricket which I played before making the international debut has helped me a lot.

Indian batter — Suryakumar Yadav

The downside risk is higher because currently industrial production, credit growth, private sector investment, and private consumption -- all of them are growing at a reasonable rate and the trend will continue.

Chief Economic Advisor — V Anantha Nageswaran



FIRST COLUMN

YES BANK AT1 BONDS AFTER THE HC VERDICT

Investors have lost their life savings in bonds of Yes Bank



S KALYANASUNDARAM

Four institutional and three individual investors challenged the decision of Yes Bank Limited to write off AT1 bonds from their books in the Bombay High Court. The decision to write off was quashed. Apparently, Yes Bank Limited had sold these bonds to individual investors (apart from institutional investors), terming it as Super Fixed Deposits. Commenting on the judgment of Bombay High Court, Yes Bank MD & CEO Prashant Kumar said that there was no compulsion on the bank to pay interest on or redeem its additional tier-1 (AT1) bonds, which are the subject of litigation with investors. While commenting on the possible impact on the balance sheet of the bank, he said that “the worst case scenario for the bank was that the common equity tier-1 capital – consisting of pure equity without any subordinate debt – would come down. However the capital adequacy would be maintained as the AT1 capital increases.”

He has also claimed that it is the discretion of the bank to pay coupon (interest) on the bonds and there is no cumulative nature of coupon payment and in a financial year when the bank is in losses, the bank cannot pay the coupon.



It is true that the information memorandum submitted to SEBI at the time of AT1 bond issue contains the following terms and conditions: (Section 3.f) “Non-Payment due to Bank’s weak capital position: Potential investors should be aware that in case the Bank’s capital falls below the regulatory requirements, it may not make the payment of the coupon due on the Debentures. The Bank can exercise the said right at an early stage of risk detection.”

The following was also there under Clause 54 of the Information memorandum: “Coupon Discretion (i) The Bank shall have full discretion at all times to cancel Coupon either in part or full. On cancellation of payment of Coupon, these payments shall be extinguished and the Bank shall have no obligation to make any distribution/Coupon payment in cash or kind. (ii) The Bonds do not carry a ‘dividend pusher’ feature i.e. if the Bank makes any payment (coupon/dividend) on any other capital instrument or share, the Bank shall not be obligated to make Coupon payment on the Bonds.....”

Hence, the above statement from the bank’s spokesperson is perfectly right. But there is another dimension to the cancellation of write-off. At the time of writing off AT1 bond from the books, the bank could have taken the amount to its Profit and Loss Account. Now when the court has disallowed the write off, the reversal entry will be to debit the Profit and Loss Account and bring back the AT1 bond outstanding under Liability.

Hence, the bottom line in the balance sheet will take a hit. The spokesman from the bank has not clarified how the bank will account for it now and what will be its impact.


It is clear from the terms of the AT1 bonds that the bank can decide not to pay any coupon (interest) on the bonds for any number of years. It can also decide to write off the bonds, of course subject to conditions of wiping out equity capital also. Which individual investor could have subscribed for the bond, if she knew that the bank might not pay any interest or even might not pay the principal at all?

It is understood that the bank will approach the Supreme Court against the High Court verdict. It may take any number of years to get the final verdict. Both the regulators, SEBI and RBI, may at least direct the bank for payment of coupon on the debentures to individual investors. Most of these individuals are senior citizens above the age of 70 years and they had given their entire life savings because they were mis-sold these bonds.

(The author is a retired banker)

# Disruptive innovation often shakes up an industry

For disruption to happen, a company has to target an overlooked customer base, provide a right fit of product or service



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Innovation, which is advancement over an existing product or idea, is a prerequisite for continuous improvement. But a disruptive innovation shakes up an industry once in a while. Disruptive innovation in business is not a new concept. It took birth in 1995 when it was proposed by one of the world’s leading thinkers on innovation Christensen along with his co-authors.

However, over the years, this concept has been misunderstood. It has generally been misapplied to a situation where the industry norms are shaken up and existing players stirred. And here’s where the catch is. Originally, Christensen ideated the concept of disruption, more like a David and Goliath situa-

tion – a smaller company with fewer resources successfully challenging an established business.

Established businesses in their effort to retain their existing majority target customer base, focus mainly on improving their present products or services and largely ignore other market segments. New entrants that sense this gap provide products or services lucrative to the overlooked segments.

While the established businesses do not pay heed to these new entrants, they slowly make inroads into upmarket, providing the same products or services to the majority customers whilst retaining their earlier advantage – lower prices. Once these mainstream

the new products or services, in large quantities, one can say disruption has occurred.

According to Christensen, potential for disruptive innovations arise because established businesses ignore both low-end and new markets. In an attempt to be more profitable, established businesses concentrate on providing mainstream customers with high quality products and services and commit resources in upgrading, enhancing and perfecting their existing products and services, all the while ignoring the low-end market. Sensing this opportunity, new entrants foray into this gap by using a low-cost business model. A low-end disruptor snatches the market share in this segment and pushes the established businesses upmar-

ket. Additionally, disruption can occur by creating new markets where none existed, by developing new products for consumers, at a lower price and an acceptable quality. Arrival of personal computers, and later smartphones are perfect examples of new-market disruption.

The first computers, known as mainframes, were huge and very expensive. With costs as high as \$2 million and size as big as to fill an entire room, computing technology was out of bounds for the common man. With the invention of the personal computer, a small and affordable piece of machine, a new market segment of individuals was created.

Over the years, with continuous improvement in its

capabilities, a humble personal computer made the mainframe computers virtually obsolete. The next step in new market disruption is the emergence of smartphones, which are creating disruptions at two levels. One, the ability to use the internet in a phone at a fraction of cost of a personal computer is making usage of personal computers less necessary. Two, smartphone photography taking capabilities are set to disrupt the digital photography industry.

However, over the years, the above concept has been misused by many who have not given a serious thought about the notion itself. Internationally, Uber has been touted as a disruption. It uses mobile applications to connect consumers who need rides

with drivers who are willing to provide them. Founded in 2009, the company has enjoyed fantastic growth and is still expanding. It has reported tremendous financial success, with funding rounds and soaring valuation. No doubt, Uber has transformed the business of transportation.

But has it brought about disruption? For disruption to happen, a company has to target an overlooked customer base, provide a right fit of product or service, usually at a lower cost. Uber connected the end users, i.e., customers used to taking cab services, to service providers. So, Uber did not fulfil any of the two conditions to become a disrupter – firstly, it did not bring the market segment that did not use cab services

into its fold; and secondly, cab and taxi services were definitely not a new market. Finally, there is no threat to the car industry from Uber.

A well-known quote prevalent in Silicon Valley “disrupt or be disrupted” says it all. All businesses are continuously looking for opportunities to become disruptors with new innovative ideas, products or business models. But only a few are able to become disruptors. Disruptive innovation transforms complex and expensive products or services into simple and reasonable options. Although very time-consuming and enormously risky, creating disruption shakes up the existing established products and services by pushing the boundaries of any industry.



A new Great Game begins in Afghanistan



NISHTHA KAUSHIKI

NIKHIL SHARMA

Pakistan might be tempted to test Indo-US strategic ties by launching terror strikes in Kashmir through proxies

After the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the relations between the US and Pakistan have strategically declined. However, Pakistan’s fight with TTP, apart from the China-induced economic crisis and the denial of a loan package by the IMF, has renewed American interests in Pakistan.

Reasons for the American interests are varied and have deep connections with the history of South and Central Asia. Despite Islamabad’s active support to the Taliban, the American interests will bring the much-required finance and military support, as it has done in the past. The development increases opportunities for Washington to adopt a leapfrog approach again in the two regions to enhance its strategic outreach.

Pakistan lies at the cusp of the two regions. To be more specific, its location to the south of Russia and its ‘strategic backyard,’ i.e. Central Asia makes it relatively important. Historically, the US and Pakistan were joined by China, and their efforts were based on shared interests against the Soviet Union apart from limiting India’s political and geostrategic influence in the South Asian region.

From Pakistan’s perspective, the US interest allowed it to put forward its ‘geostrategic marketability’ and extract military leverage against India. In 1954, the US government announced a military aid package of \$500 million instead of its mutual defence assistance agreement. Further, from 1967-1980 the US provided military and technical assistance of around \$6 billion.

Pakistan used this aid against Indian interests. Thus, it adopted the approach of buck passing, which was relatively cheaper than internal and external balancing and bandwagoning. Before any conflict, Pakistan expected the US to guarantee its security. In the first case, before the 1965 war, Ayub Khan had demanded that the United States should accept securing Pakistan against India’s “aggression” as an essential component of guarantees provided through an alliance with the US. Although defeated, one cannot deny the US military supplies to Pakistan that made it believe that it could fight India. But Islamabad, too, realized that Washington was not prepared to issue a “blank check” against India. The tables were turned again against India in the 1971 war. Even though Pakistan launched a pre-emptive war against India in 1971, the US’ seventh fleet ensured that India did not consider retaking PoK while liberating East Pakistan.

Later, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan gained financial support \$3.2 billion from 1980 to 1990, aiding the Mujahideen to fight against the Soviet Union. Additionally, the US supplied Pakistan with F-16.

After the nuclear tests, Pakistan adopted a similar approach and always used its



IT IS PERTINENT TO MENTION THAT THE US NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY (2022) HAS EMPHASISED THE ISSUE OF TERRORISM BUT HAS DELIBERATELY OMITTED TO NAME THE TERROR MODULES IN PAKISTAN AS A SOURCE OF TERROR BUT MENTIONS THE TALIBAN AS A CHALLENGE

(Nishtha Kaushiki is Associate Professor in Central University of Punjab, Bathinda; Nikhil Sharma is a research scholar)



Islamic state status quo of possessing nuclear weapons, thereby extracting substantial advantages through its nuclear blackmailing. Despite India’s readiness to take a limited military action against Pakistan after the Kargil crisis and the attacks on Parliament, it was the US that intervened on the grounds of restoring “normalcy” and substantially limited India’s response.

The 9/11 again brought the US and Pakistan in a more tactical embrace with each other. Pakistan became a major non-NATO ally, and as per the SIPRI data, during 2002-14, it got military aid worth \$5.81 billion, of which the arms sales component was \$3.2 billion. After the killing of Osama bin Abbottabad, as per the C.R.S. report, in 2014-15, the total financial and military aid decreased to 40 per cent from 2011-2015. In the years preceding the US exit from Afghanistan, Washington had become diplomatically and strategically dependent on Islamabad to help it handle the coerced talks with the Taliban and smartly ensure its safe exit from the region.

In the process, it made the Taliban and itself essential stakeholders in the region. Pakistan’s case study proves that the weak states thrive on the great power insecurities and mismanagement of international politics. In the contemporary situation, the renewed interest of the US in Pakistan has historical interlinkages between Russia and Pakistan apart from the triangular dynamics between Russia, China and Pakistan. Russia has been making positive overtures to Pakistan much before the outbreak of the Ukraine War. Starting from the Iran-Pakistan pipeline in the news in mid-2010, one has witnessed rapid convergences between Russia,

China, Pakistan and Iran.

In 2015, Russia lifted its arms embargo on Pakistan. Since then, the two have broadened the horizon of their strategic relations, which included a defence agreement, supply of Mi-35M Hind-E helicopter and joint military exercises apart from signing a ‘Rare Military Cooperation Pact’ in 2018. Interestingly, Pakistan’s military arsenal includes Russia’s Klimov RD-93 engine used to make JF-17 Thunder aircraft.

Russia has reignited its interest in the pipeline politics of Iran and Pakistan and has expressed a willingness to supply crude oil to Pakistan. The deal is to be materialized in the “currency of friendly countries”, which might slightly dent the Western sanctions on Russia. Further, the Kazakhstan-Pakistan pipeline also has the potential to turn the tables and form new energy architectures. From another perspective, Russia and Pakistan agreement on “practical engagement” on the Afghan Taliban issues have serious undertones for the two regions.

It is pertinent to mention that the US National Security Strategy (2022) has emphasized the issue of terrorism but has deliberately omitted to name the terror modules in Pakistan as a source of terror but mentions the Taliban as a challenge. The document speaks of increasing its “cooperation and support to trusted partners” and “shifting from a strategy that is ‘US-led, partner-enabled’ to one that is ‘partner-led, US-enabled’”. The document further hints that the US might be interested in exploiting the emerging faultlines of Russia-China relations which have emerged as the fallout of the Ukraine war.

Additionally, the US will make

its presence felt in Central Asia in the coming few days through the C5+1 diplomatic platform (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and the United States).

Now, one needs to brainstorm what position Pakistan will occupy in this “partner-led, US-enabled” strategy to finish terror? The most pertinent question is how Pakistan would exploit the insecurities and fear of Russia, the US, and China vis-à-vis each other? What military and financial packages will Pakistan get hold of in this new emerging great power game? Will the Afghan Taliban, Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and other Islamic groups be finally crushed? Will there be another military onslaught in Afghanistan as it was in 1979-80?

From an Indian perspective, while coordinating with the US to crush the TTP, Pakistan might be tempted to test the Indo-US strategic relations by launching simultaneous terror strikes in Kashmir through its proxies. If so, would the US be neutral again and insist on “normalcy”? Pakistan thus has a well-designed strategy to play the US and Russia off of one another to enhance its security against the possible Indian response to its misadventures in India, gain military and financial packages and finally, slow down the US-China hostility.

All these factors may constrain India’s options to enhance its posturing on crucial future developments. The emerging faultlines remind us of an American mathematician John Allen Paules who stated: “Uncertainty is the only certainty there is, and knowing how to live with this insecurity is the only security”.

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— FORMER FINANCE MINISTER P CHIDAMBARAM



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# Kriti Sanon: I want to shift gear constantly and not stay in a particular zone

Bollywood actress Kriti Sanon, who is gearing up for her upcoming film *Shehzada*, likes to walk the fine line between high-content and high-entertainment films and the films in her pipeline for this year prove the same.

Talking about what audiences can expect from her in 2023, Kriti said: "The audience can probably look forward to far more versions of me. It starts with a very glamorous one which is a family entertainer, followed by probably my biggest film, *Adipurush*, which I am extremely proud of. Then there is a lot of action coming in with *Ganapath*, something I have done for the first time. You will see me ride a dirt bike, throw kicks and punches and also use a weapon."

She added: "I am also doing a quirky love story with Shahid Kapoor. We are teaming up on screen for the first time, so you will see fresh chemistry. Then there is *The Crew*, which has three women (Tabu, Kareena Kapoor Khan and me) coming together, having a lot of fun and creating something amazing."

She also spoke about how she picks up various characters and roles.

The actress further mentioned: "Till *Bareilly Ki Barfi*, I was getting small-town roles one after the other. So, I did the war epic drama *Panipat*. Then I took up a strong and meaty role in *Mimi* and moved on to the next level. I want to shift the gear constantly and not stay in one particular zone. You have to move on and think what's next, otherwise you will stagnate."

The actress, who is at the top of her game, hopes to surprise audiences with some exciting projects that showcase different sides of her persona and talent in 2023 with *Shehzada*, *Adipurush* and *Ganapath*.



# Will Smith, Martin Lawrence announce fourth *Bad Boys* movie

The *Bad Boys* are officially returning, with Will Smith and Martin Lawrence announcing that they'll reunite for a fourth film in the franchise.

Sony Pictures confirmed that the untitled sequel is in early pre-production with Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah returning to direct, reports Variety.

The filmmakers, who also helmed Warner Bros' scrapped *Batgirl* movie, directed 2020's *Bad Boys for Life*, which reunited Smith and Lawrence as Miami-Dade detectives Mike Lowrey and Marcus Burnett, 25 years after the first *Bad Boys* film was released.

Shortly after the threequel hit theatres, Sony announced that a fourth *Bad Boys* film was in development, and *Bad Boys for Life* went on to earn \$426.5 million at the worldwide box office as one of the last pre-pandemic era blockbusters.


On Tuesday morning, Smith and Lawrence announced that the upcoming movie was officially charging ahead by releasing a reunion video on social media with the caption, "It's about that time!"

The video follows Smith as he drives to Lawrence's home, saying: "Yo, I've got an announcement. Y'all better stop scrolling." As a little hint, Smith plays the opening bars of "Shake Ya Tailfeather," Nelly, P. Diddy and Murphy Lee's song from the 2003 *Bad Boys II* soundtrack. "I wish I was you, not knowing what I'm about to show me,"

Arriving at Lawrence's door, the duo declare that the fourth film is officially on the way. "It's about that time!" Lawrence yells.

"We shouldn't have called it that though," Smith quips.

As such, the yet to be titled sequel is produced by Jerry Bruckheimer, Smith for Westbrook, Doug Belgrad and Chad Oman; with Lawrence, James Lassiter, Mike Stenson, Barry Waldman and Jon Mone serving as executive producers.



# Shekhar Ravjiani drops first song *Love* under his Indie record label

Composer and singer Shekhar Ravjiani, who is currently riding high on the massive success of the music of *Pathaan*, has dropped his first track titled *Love* under his recently announced indie record label 'Garuudaa Music'.

The first song dropped by Shekhar and Garuudaa Music, *Love* is a pop ballad that celebrates the greatest feeling in the world.

Released a week ahead of Valentine's Day, *Love* is deeply soulful and relatable and with this song Shekhar has explored a whole new sound that sets the bar high for the refreshingly unique brand of music that Garuudaa Music will bring to our world.

Talking about the song, Shekhar said: "*Love* is a heartfelt declaration of the love that a boy feels for a girl. The kind of love that is destined to happen between two people."

"A limitless connection between two souls that must slowly brew into a beautiful bond. The song comes from a very special place in my heart and I am delighted that it is my first release through my record label 'Garuudaa Music' and the first of many more to come!"

The song composed and sung by Shekhar Ravjiani, and penned by Rashmi Virag.



# New DCU unveils 10 projects: *Superman: Legacy*, *Batman & Robin* among many others

It's been three months since James Gunn and Peter Safran officially started running the newly created DC Studios within Warner Bros. Discovery, the co-chiefs have now announced the first 10 film and TV titles within the rebooted DC Universe.

On Monday, Gunn and Safran met with press on the Warner Bros. studio lot to present what they said was the first part of Chapter 1 of the DCU, which they are calling "Gods and Monsters," reports Variety.

There are titles based on marquee DC heroes - including the previously announced Superman feature written by Gunn, now officially titled *Superman: Legacy*, a *Batman and Robin* movie, a *Wonder Woman* prequel series and a *Green Lantern* mystery series - as well as titles featuring lesser known characters, including Booster Gold and Swamp Thing.

The DCU exists as a multi-verse, Safran said, but the titles will exist in one singular universe.

Overall, the slate represents the most robust vision for DC's future in scripted entertainment since Warner Bros' first attempt in 2014 to build a universe to rival that of Marvel Studios.

"DC Studios is unprecedented," Safran said. "It is a standalone production entity and studio. It is the first time ever that everything DC related - film, television, live-action, animation, gaming - is all centralized under one creative vision, that of James and myself."

Given that the DCU is still very much in its earliest stages, the execs were light on some specifics: No directors have been attached to any projects (although they said they're "very close" on signing at least a couple), and no actors are attached, either.

The exception is Viola Davis, who will star in the HBO Max series *Waller* as the amoral, self-imposed superintendent of the DC universe, *Amanda Waller*.

She originated the role in 2016's *Suicide Squad*.

The plan, Safran and Gunn said, was to release roughly two films and two TV series per year into the DCU.

That output will not, however, sacrifice quality to meet deadlines.

Gunn and Safran were adamant that films and series will not go into production until scripts are finished, which is not the norm for pricey tentpoles that need to create awareness by planting flags on the calendar.

All in, the slate that the co-leads announced on Monday will run through 2027. Only *Superman: Legacy* and *The Batman Part II* have set release dates.



# Vikramaditya Motwane and Ananya Panday come together for a cyber-thriller produced by Nikhil Dwivedi

Ananya Panday is all set to headline a cyber-thriller directed by celebrated filmmaker Vikramaditya Motwane and produced by Nikhil Dwivedi of *Veere Di Wedding* fame.

After winning praise for critically acclaimed movies like *Udaan*, *Lootera*, *Bhavesh Joshi Superhero*, and *AK vs. AK*, Vikramaditya Motwane is back in the director's seat for this gripping, edge-of-the-seat thriller. Produced by Nikhil Dwivedi's company - Saffron, the untitled film is a cyber thriller in which the young popular actress takes on a part she has never played before.

Vikramaditya Motwane shares, "This is a thriller with modern-day appeal and very relevant to our times. It's going to be really interesting to see Ananya Panday in this role since it's something she hasn't attempted before."


Meanwhile, Ananya Panday said, "When Vikramaditya Motwane approached me with this story, I just knew I had to be part of it. As a filmmaker, he has been on my wish list for as long as I can remember and I feel really lucky to be working with him this early in my career."

Adds Producer Nikhil Dwivedi, "When Vikram shared the script with me to produce, it was one of the most interesting material I had laid my hands on in recent times and I decided within a few hours to participate in this. Ananya is a commendable artist and someone to watch out for in times to come. I am excited that she is in the film."


The cyber thriller recently went on floors and will be shot in a start-to-finish schedule.




### ARCHIE




### GARFIELD




### NANCY



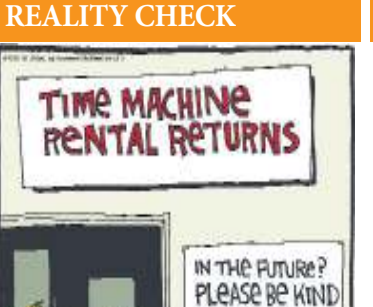
### GINGER MEGGS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### REALITY CHECK



### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

### CROSSWORD

	1	2	3	4	5
6					
7					
8				10	11
				12	
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					

ACROSS

6 A machine in a kitchen

8 Frequently

10 A room just under the roof

13 A country famous for making watches

14 Imagine things while you are asleep

17 Normal

19 A large African animal with a horn on its nose

7 Thinks over

9 More than is needed

11 Speaks

12 Not many

15 A door out of a building

16 This orbits the Earth

17 Second-hand

18 On

DOWN

1 Fog

2 Skinny


3 Molten stuff from a volcano


4 Closed


5 A large reptile with a long body and sharp teeth


SOLUTION


W	O	N	D	S		A	D	D	S			
A	C	R	O	S	S	E						
L	E	A	D			P	L	A	I			
K	N	O				S	N					
C	A	D	D	R	E	S	S	E				
C	A	T	S	D	V							
C	P	R	M	C	P							
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## Sensitising people for responsible pet parenting

It is important for potential pet owners to know that responsible pet parenting means committing to caring for their pets for their entire lives. With a similar aim, we have Phillip Butt, the secretary of the Hyderabad Canine Club, who puts the spotlight on responsible pet parenting and also speaks up on the recent recurring incidents.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

For the Hyderabad Canine Club, it's become an annual tradition. The whole team didn't choose one pet but brought together hundreds of show dogs under one roof. They learn something new about pets every day and have found babies in them.

When we interacted with Phillip Butt, the secretary of the Hyderabad Canine Club, we learned how he ensures so many pets come together to be crowned best in the show, and that's his way of experiencing absolute pleasure.

"Responsible pet parenting is the only way forward to avoid recurring freak incidents like the recent one that took place in the city, where a food delivery boy jumped off a building to escape a dog and subsequently died. Our club's main focus is awareness: pet owners all over the city should enjoy more mutually loving and rewarding relationships than ever before. Attending our pets' gatherings like these puts a stamp on

humanising your pet. Increasingly urban societies attend every year, and we see how they know about veterinary telehealth, first-class dog food, their accessories, and more."

The Hyderabad Canine Club's love for animals is so great that they are letting people know that dogs are not scary to be around, despite a few strange incidents across the country. "Pets own the city now — they have taken on the role of playmates. Whenever I see so many breeds of animals coming together for our shows, it's like peacekeepers coming with elan. This is not our bread and butter; it's our sheer love for them. And we are overjoyed to be organising such shows for pets all over the city."

It's a known fact that the majority of the millions of dogs don't bite. "For the dogs that do attack, it's usually because they are acting out of fear rather than aggression. Pet adoption multiplied during the pandemic. The challenge came when there was no pet education! You can't train out all of a dog's natural instincts because many will protect



their space. This is where our club plays an important role: letting the pet parents know that even a dog like a "pitbull" isn't aggressive; it's a stereotype. They love to chase, but we must not get overexcited. Socialize them by making them meet other breeds! They were isolated by the pandemic, and now they are suddenly out of that space — they are biting by accident

in an overstimulated environment."

On a concluding note, the secretary said that each competition requires plenty of time, energy, and treats. The purebred dogs that you see on the premises are show dogs for a moment, but please remember that they are family pets at the end of the day. They all take home the best in the show in

## 'If you love acting, nothing is challenging'

AMARTYA SMARAN

Riva Arora, who amassed a massive social media following for her charming looks and acting skills, was recently featured in Zee5's *Chhatriwali*, starring Rakul Preet Singh, Sumeet Vyas, Satish Kaushik, and Prachee Shah.

In one of her Instagram posts, the actress wrote, "I can't thank everyone enough for all the support, but really, thank you so much for your love and support." This shows how overwhelmed she is by the response the film has garnered over the last few weeks since its release on January 20. *Chhatriwali* has racked up over 100 million watch minutes within just a few days of its release on the OTT platform. The film tells the story of Sanya Dhingra, who tries her best to break the taboo of sex education while actively seeking a full-time job.

Just one day ahead of her birthday, on the cusp of entering a rather exciting adulthood, Riva Arora interacted with *The Pioneer* via Zoom. The *Uri* actress discussed working on a social drama like *Chhatriwali*, acting alongside Rakul Preet Singh, balancing acting life and creating content for the gram, and her desire to dabble with international film industries.

"*Chhatriwali* happened in the most beautiful way. We were at the RSVP office for a meeting. I auditioned from home in 2021 because the pandemic was still on, back then. When they told us about the script, we really loved it. We were just like, We have to do this film because it has such a beautiful story," shared Riva.

Riva has around 9.6 million followers on Instagram, and the number doesn't seem to stop growing. We asked her whether all the praise and adulation ever got to her head. To which she replied, "Acting is what I love, and I will continue doing that. Being both a creator and an actress, I always try to balance both. Whenever I get free time, I make a video or click a picture and tell my fans on Instagram about what's happening. Even when I'm on the set, I always inform my fans online."

Guess what? The *Mom* star doesn't feel acting is as challenging as it seems if one really loves it to the core. "Well! If you love acting, you don't find anything extremely challenging because if you really want to do it, it will come automatically," said Riva.

All said, she shared one particular instance where she found it hard while filming *Chhatriwali*. "The emotional scene that I had to perform with Rakul di was difficult because there was this wedding that was happening near the shooting spot," shared Riva with a chuckle. "We had to shoot that multiple times because all we could hear was the noise from the venue. The acting part was not difficult, but dubbing for it was a challenge. I had to dub in the exact same way. The first take turned out great, and Tejas sir was there to support me throughout the process."

The *Gunjan Saxena* actress

was all praise for her co-star Rakul Preet Singh, "It was amazing working with Rakul di, Rajesh sir, and Prachee ma'am. I got to work with some great actors, and I learned so much from them. There was this positive vibe on the set, and we all started bonding on the very first day. Everybody was so friendly, and I'm grateful to be working with them. I'd say working with them was one of the best experiences. Rakul Di and I already share a good bond, so it was easy to work with her even on the emotional scenes. It was a joy sharing screen space with all of them."

As we've informed you earlier that *Chhatriwali* deals with breaking the shackles of social conventions such as sex education in India, Riva feels it's imperative to talk about such topics in the open and spread awareness among the youth. "Yes! Definitely, for people who don't know much about it and aren't aware of what's going on in the world; I feel it is important to talk about how miscarriages and abortions happen. It's rather important for teenagers to know about it.

And this movie has been getting so much love and support for its content. I'm super happy and grateful for that."

Speaking of the best performance that she's witnessed in recent years, she said, "It was a pleasure working with Vicky Mamu at *Uri*. He's such a talented actor, and he's so down to earth. His acting in the film was one of the finest performances that I've seen in recent times. Also, the entire cast of *Chhatriwali* has outdone themselves in terms of their performances." The *Bharat* actress further added, "I want to do great in Bollywood and I also want to work down South. I'd also love to enter the Hollywood and Korean industries and learn as much as I can from all the industries across the world."

The *Chhatriwali* actress has a couple of projects lined up for 2023. "I can't tell you the names of the projects, but I can assure everyone that 2023 will be one of the best years of my life. I recently worked on a web series with Zee, which will come out soon," signed off Riva Arora.

Young actress Riva Arora has not only been a social media sensation but also a great actor at a very young age. Riva, who was recently seen in *Chhatriwali*, speaks to *The Pioneer* about working on the film, balancing her acting life with the world of content creation, and more.



## Make your fitness effective with smart gym equipment

K. RAMYA SREE

The fitness industry is rapidly transforming all over the world, especially in India. The importance given to health and fitness is at an all-time high. In fact, the total revenue in the health and fitness industry is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2022–2026) of 5.62%, resulting in a projected market volume of US\$55.68m by 2026.

As gym owners and fitness centres began offering their services online, it became easier for Indians to incorporate fitness into their weekly routines. The outcome? During the lockdown, 84% of Indians attempted online fitness classes at least three times a week. According to recent studies, millennials in India spend on average INR 4,000 per month on wellness services and goods.

Equipment plays a key role in fitness. With the right equipment, you can achieve the desired body shape.

Prateek Sood, a trustee of Fit India Trust, has been in the fitness industry since 1992, opening over 2,000 gyms and selling nearly 2 million pieces of gym equipment (including outdoor and home use equipment) in more than 25 states. He speaks to us about the technological advancements in fitness equipment and more.

Speaking about bringing new equipments to the Indian audience, Prateek said, "Technological advancements in fitness equip-

ment have fundamentally changed how people maintain their physical fitness. In the past, people had to manually keep track of their advancement and outcomes. On the other side, modern technology has made tracking progress and setting new marks simpler than ever. Similar to Advagym by Sony, it not only provides clients with fitness content but also allows them to track their workouts to make sure they are improving and pushing over their boundaries. Clients will be able to monitor their development whenever they complete their workouts. The Advagym app will also display clients' exercise histories, enabling them to make the most of each session, enhance their outcomes, and maintain motivation as they work towards new, more challenging goals. The popularity of smart gym equipment is rising as a result of the more customised workouts it offers."

What's interesting about this brand is that they offer personalised best practices for each consumer's needs on a global scale. He said, "The Fitness industry is changing rapidly with new and advanced features, we have been at the forefront of personalized best practices for each consumer's needs on a global scale. Our goal is to build the finest relationships possible with our clients in the following year and to attract a large customer that represents a variety of institutions and businesses. With its recent cooperation with Advagym by Sony, which will take the fitness age to the next level by monitoring, directing, and aiding you in your training programme, we are taking steps to ensure the same legacy in the coming years."



## Maestro Ilaiyaraaja set to mesmerise Hyderabad

Music has the power to evoke emotions and connect with people in a way that's truly special," said the legendary Indian film composer Ilaiyaraaja.

The maestro will be performing LIVE at the Gachibowli Stadium on February 26. The live-in concert will feature an ensemble of 100 musicians on stage and is expected to attract over 20,000 attendees to witness the spectacular event and savour the magic of his music.

"It's a honour to be back on stage and connect with my fans through the power of music. I can't wait to share this night of unforgettable performances and memories with all of you," added the music Maestro Ilaiyaraaja.

Hyderabad Talkies, known for its legacy events including A.R. Rahman in 2017 and Arijit Singh in 2019, has once again raised the bar by bringing the maestro to the city, including film fraternity members, political leaders, celebrities, and business leaders.

"Ilaiyaraaja's music is known for its fusion of Indian classical music with traditional and western

sounds. He has enthralled audiences across the world with his soul-stirring compositions and has been an inspiration to many aspiring musicians. His music has the power to evoke emotions, and the fans are expecting a spellbinding performance from the maestro," says Sainath Goud Malkapuram, founder of Hyderabad Talkies.

The My Music My Country (#m3c) initiative by Hyderabad Talkies aims to re-introduce the ethnicity of Indian Music and treat the music-lovers of the city to the best of the songs of the legendary artists. The platform has already made the city groove to foot-tapping numbers and exquisite music, with a show by youth sensation Sid Sriram in February 2020 attracting a footfall of over 60,000.

So gear up, get ready, to be transported to another world with the soul-stirring sounds of Ilaiyaraaja. A musical extravaganza that promises to be a night to remember for the lifetime. Book your tickets now to bask in the brilliance of Ilaiyaraaja, the maestro of Indian film music!







# 'Original films didn't penetrate the local areas in our states'

PNS| HYDERABAD

**B**utta Bomma, named after the Telugu hit song from *Ala Vaikunthapuramuloo* is a remake of the Malayalam superhit film, *Kappela*. The makers adapted the story line to match up to the taste of the Telugu audience. The film is produced by Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas, which stars Anikha Surendran, Surya Vashista and Arjun Das in prominent characters. *Butta Bomma* which is all set to hit the theatres on February 4 is directed by debutant Sowri Chandrasekhar T Ramesh.

In a candid conversation with the local media ahead of *Butta Bomma's* release, Sowri Chandrasekhar opened up about his passion for cinema, the idea behind the film's script, casting choices, and the best compliment he received in the due process.

The filmmaker always believed that getting a basic education was essential to survive if things go haywire. Therefore, before entering into the tinsel town of Tollywood, Sowri Chandrasekhar pursued an MBA in Marketing. He started his journey with Varma Corporation and further worked under the guidance of director E Nivas for films like *Shool*, *Love ke Liye Kuch Bhi Karega*, *Bardaasht*, and *Dum*. Later, after his father had passed away, he had to move back to Hyderabad. It was at that time, he met filmmaker Sukumar, who recently scored a hit with *Pushpa*, and travelled with the ace film right from *Jagadam* to *Pushpa 2*.

The director shared he was confident since day one that *Kappela* could be remade into Telugu. "I happened to watch *Kappela* during Covid and I really liked the screenplay of the film. Only a few films can be remade into other languages. When it comes to *Kappela*, it is a script based film, so it can be made into any language. That's the reason I chose this particular film and more than anything it excited me as a filmmaker. And I always had the confidence that it would go well with our audience. Later, I got to know that Sithara Entertainment bought the rights for the film and I approached them."

The film is being appreciated for the casting choices and the debutant said, "We were searching for someone who'd look really innocent. In that process, I happened to see Anikha in Gautham Vasudev Menon's web series and I felt she's the right fit for the role. When it comes to Arjun Das, our producer Naga Vamsi was really excited to see him play the part. And after looking at Surya Vashista's audition clips, we locked in on him after discussing with the producers. All the three actors will surely create an impact on the audience. I don't know whether I can say this or not but Anikha, Surya and Arjun will go places after the release of the film."

While dealing with a film that was originally made for a different region, the director should see to it that it doesn't get lost in translation.

tion. Remaking a film isn't as easy as it seems. Right from casting to adapting the story to a region's sensibilities, everything poses a challenge. "Our Telugu culture is a lot different when compared to Kerala. We changed much of the first and made sure not to change the main plot of the film. There's also a major screenplay change in the first half and I think after watching *Butta Bomma*, even the Kappela director might envy that particular change. Apart from that we tried our level best to capture those nuances that the story demanded. I am not worried about comparisons. And I feel the original films didn't penetrate the local areas in our states. So, I thought we could take a chance," informed the *Butta Bomma* creator.

Everyone is aware of the close relationship that Sithara Entertainments holds with master director Trivikram Srinivas. When the first timer was asked if Trivikram Srinivas ever suggested any changes to the script, he replied, "He never interfered while we were shooting for the film but after watching the film in its entirety, he suggested a few changes and we immediately made all those changes."

There's this idea that romantic films only garner critical success and don't make astronomical box-office numbers. "I never believed in that philosophy. I feel it all depends on its merit. If you're able to honestly instil emotions with your story and keep the audience hooked to the seats, that film is bound to work. No matter who the star is, if the film doesn't have the potential to get through the audience, it won't perform well. I felt really happy when Chinna Babu garu complimented me after watching the movie. I can't reveal as to why he complimented me because I'd be letting you all in on an important twist," assured the director.

Sowri Chandrasekhar T Ramesh looks super confident about the success of *Butta Bomma* and is keen on making films in the action genre. "I don't have any reservations in terms of who I want to cast in my films. I'm open to casting anyone who goes well with the character and the story. Everything depends on the script," wrapped the filmmaker.

Prior to the release of the upcoming film *Butta Bomma*, director Sowri Chandrasekhar opened up about his passion for cinema, the idea behind the film's script, casting choices, and the best compliment he received in the due process.



## Huge starcast for *Thalapathy 67*; Trisha reunites with Vijay after 14 years

**T**halapathy67 is one of the most touted films from Tamil Cinema. The 67th film of Thalapathy Vijay, was officially launched recently. Many vague details referring to the star cast of the film have been making rounds regularly since director Lokesh approved that he is joining with Thalapathy Vijay.

The makers have now made the official announcement of the entire starcast, and also unveiled the character posters.

While, earlier it was officially confirmed that the senior Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt is making his Tamil debut in Vijay's film, by playing the lead antagonist, Arjun Sarja, who is best known as the 'Action king' of South cinema, is playing a pivotal role in *Thalapathy 67*.

*Thalapathy67* features an ensemble cast including Sanjay Dutt, Priya Anand, Arjun Sarja, Gautham Menon, Mysskin, Mansoor Ali Khan, Mathew Thomas, and Sandy Master.

Now, Trisha Krishnan comes on board as the leading lady opposite Vijay in the movie. This will be the fifth movie for Trisha with Vijay. The magical pair is set to work together after 14 long years.

Rockstar Anirudh Ravichander scores the music for the movie, while Manoj Paramahansa handles the cinematography. Philomin Raj takes care of editing and N. Sathees Kumar is the art director. Ramkumar Balasubramanian is the Executive Producer.



## Nagarjuna & Pooja Hedge join Maaza's new campaign

**M**aaza, Coca-Cola India's homegrown mango drink, has unveiled its new 'Aam Wali Dildaari, Bina Naam Wali Dildaari' campaign.

Maaza has on-boarded the iconic south Indian superstar, Nagarjuna, as the new face of the brand. With this new campaign, Maaza extends its spirit of benevolence and encourages anonymous acts of kindness to spread joy and happiness. The campaign further highlights the fulfilling mango experience that brings out one's selfless personality.

The light-hearted storytelling in the TVC depicts Amitabh Bachchan or Nagarjuna as a passionate Maaza lover while Pooja Hegde is an

inquisitive kind citizen who loves to take part in social service activities. The two ad films portray the spirit of Indian citizens who like to indulge in the act of generosity by contributing to society. It also highlights the message of how true generosity comes with anonymity.

Pooja Hegde, Indian actress & star of the new Maaza campaign, said, "I am proud to be associated with Maaza for over a year now. The brand's philosophy of true generosity and acts of kindness is something I personally relate to. The brand brings nostalgia and takes me back to my childhood days of enjoying fresh mangoes and sharing joyous moments with my loved ones."



## Ruchira Entertainments & N Cinemas bags the Telugu rights of *Kabzaa*

**H**igh octane Kannada action drama *Kabzaa* starring Real Star Nimma Upendra, Kichcha Sudeep and Shriya Saran is due for its release on March 17. It's a known fact that Nimma Upendra shares a great fan base in the Telugu states. Now, here's the good news; N. Sudhakar Reddy's Ruchira Entertainments & N Cinemas bagged the Telugu rights of the film for a huge price.

Actor Nithiin, popular Tollywood star and N. Sudhakar Reddy's son took to his twitter account saying, "Happy to bring you all @nimmaupendra Garu & KichchaSudeep Garu's #Kabzaa in Telugu through our #RuchiraEntertainments and N Cinemas."



# tollywood

## Samantha to begin shooting for *Kushi* & *Citadel* soon

**A**ctress Samantha Ruth Prabhu has been one of the most loved actresses of the Indian film industry. Her *Oo Antava* turned out to be a global hit. With her recently released *Yashoda*, the actress has received immense love from all around the world.

And here comes two of the biggest announcements of the actresses' projects; *Kushi* and *Citadel*.

While there were talks that the *Yashoda* actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu will be starring in the Varun Dhawan starrer *Citadel*, Prime video on Wednesday had officially announced that the actress will be starring alongside Varun in the Indian instalment of the *Citadel* universe, the global-event series from Prime Video and the Russo Brothers' AGBO.

The untitled *Citadel* series based out of India is being helmed by renowned creator duo Raj & DK (Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK), who are the showrunners and directors. The local instalment is written by Sita R. Menon, along with Raj & DK. The streaming service also confirmed that the production is currently underway in Mumbai.

Sharing her excitement on

being part of the project, Samantha said, "When Prime Video and Raj & DK approached me with this project, I decided to take it up in a heartbeat! After working with this team on *The Family Man*, it is homecoming for me. The *Citadel* universe, the interconnected storylines between the productions across the globe, and most importantly, the script of the Indian instalment really excited me. I am thrilled to be a part of this brilliant universe conceptualised by the Russo Brothers' AGBO. I am also looking forward to working with Varun for the first time on this project. He is someone who is full of life and cheer when you're around him."

While, the actress has been trending on all social media platforms ever since it was announced the actress being part of *Citadel*, there have been reports that the makers of her upcoming Telugu film, *Kushi*, are upset with her as she had allotted dates for *Citadel*. However, in a tweet, the actress dropped an update about *Kushi* and revealed that she will soon begin the shooting for *Kushi*, and apologised to the team.

On Wednesday, after the announcement related to *Citadel* was done, a fan of the

actress took to Twitter and asked her about her upcoming film, *Kushi*. Replying to him, the actress wrote, "#Kushi will resume very soon... my apologies to @TheDeverakonda fans @ShivaNirvana @MythriOfficial (sic)."

Meanwhile, Vijay Deverakonda acknowledged her tweet and wrote, "We all await your return in full health and your big smile (sic)."



## Reintroducing Brahmanandam like never before in *Keedaa Cola*

**T**he extremely talented Tharun Bhascker, who delivered consecutive hits with his first two films is presently working on his third directorial venture *Keedaa Cola*, a crime comedy. It's the very first feature-length production of VG Sainma. The film is being produced by Bharath Kumar, Sripad Nandiraj, Upendra Varma, Srinivas Kaushik, Saikrishna Gadwal, Vijay Kumar.

There are 8 main characters in this film and it will not have heroes or heroines. Comedy King Brahmanandam is playing one of the crucial roles in the movie. Director Tharun Bhascker's statement reads: "When I was supposed to cast I had immense pressure. The pressure of working with a star was becoming a burden and I didn't want to fall prey to that. This is a crime comedy and say it with me - who's the star of comedy? The OG meme god? Re-Introducing Mr. Brahmi! Like never before. Watch him in

a new avatar, playing a relatable character from your home - "Thatha". VaradhaRaju is the mean old grandpa who you'll have a love-hate relationship with. Stuck to his wheelchair with a disposable urine attachment, the man's only superpower is sarcasm. "Peru Varadha, posedhi pithukantha." Watch him deliver a fine performance that's subtle yet immensely funny - ee sari mr.B meeku kharchulaki ichesthadu and leave you saying - "He paid no?"

Brahmanandam's first look poster has been unveiled on the occasion of his birthday and it shows Brahmanandam with a puzzled face.

Your world is going to get weirder," reads the poster.

AJ Aaron is taking care of the cinematography, while Upendra Varma is the editor and Ashish Teja Pulala is the art director. Tharun Bhascker penned the script.

*Keedaa Cola* will be released sometime this year.



## Sonu Sood pledges 1 crore in scholarships for cyber security enthusiasts

**S**onu Sood's Sood Charity Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting education and skill development, has announced the launch of the "Mera Bharat, Surakshit Bharat Initiative" in association with EC-Council, the world's largest cybersecurity certification body.

India is currently facing a high number of cyber-attacks, with 18 million attacks daily in the first quarter of 2022. The program provides an opportunity for individuals to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to defend against cyber threats and secure a fulfilling career in the cybersecurity industry.

The scholarship offers full funding for EC-Council's Certified Cybersecurity Technician program, a globally recognized certification that can help individuals build skills in ethical hacking, network defense, digital forensics, and security operations that are required for in-demand job roles in cybersecurity. The program is created by the team behind the renowned Certified Ethical Hacker Program and is sure to impress recruiters and open doors to a successful cybersecurity career for many.

"Our country is facing a significant resource crisis in cybersecurity, and I am proud to be a part of the solution through the 'Mera Bharat, Surakshit Bharat Initiative' scholarship program with EC-Council. By helping students and entry-level professionals gain the necessary skills and knowledge to defend against cyber threats, Sood Charity Foundation aims to build a stronger and more secure India. I urge all those passionate about cybersecurity to apply for the scholarship and take the first step towards a fulfilling career



in this industry," said Sonu Sood.

The scholarship program is open to applicants who are committed to pursuing a career in cybersecurity and have the desire to contribute to keeping their country safe. Deserving applicants will be selected based on their career goals and potential for success in the field.

The application period for the scholarship is now open and interested applicants can apply.