

**ANALYSIS 7**  
BRINGING BACK OPS  
MAY BE CATASTROPHIC**MONEY 8**  
INDIA FOR CONSENSUS ON  
REGULATING CRYPTO CURRENCY**SPORTS 11**  
TACKLING SLIDE SPIN WILL BE KEY TO  
OZ'S SUCCESS IN INDIA, SAYS MCDONALD

VIJAYAWADA, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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'MICHAEL IS A  
SEMI-PSYCHO KIND  
OF A PERSON WITH  
THE RIGHT IDEALS'

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# Adani stock rout rocks Parl, Oppn seek probe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties Thursday sought a debate in Parliament and a probe by a joint committee into the fraud-allegation-triggered rout in Adani group company stocks, forcing adjournment of proceedings in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in the pre-lunch session.

The Congress, Shiv Sena, the Left, Aam Aadmi Party and other opposition parties tried to raise in both Houses of Parliament the issue of allegations levelled by a US short seller against the Adani group and



the subsequent mayhem on company stocks but were disallowed by the chair.

Unhappy with the ruling, they raised slogans, forcing the adjournment of proceedings till 2 pm without transacting any official business.

The rout in Adani group stocks has threatened the value of investments made by the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) and public sector banks. Adani group stocks, where LIC is heavily invested, have lost over USD 100 billion in value since a tiny New York short seller came out with a damning report alleging financial and accounting fraud by the ports-to-energy conglomerate. The Adani group has denied all charges and called the report malicious and full of lies.

## TDP leader shot at, accused arrested

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader and former Mandal Praja Parishad president Venna Balakoti Reddy was shot at by unidentified miscreants in his house at Alavala village in Rompicherla mandal after midnight on Wednesday. The family members of Balakoti Reddy told the media that three people barged into his house and fired two rounds with a revolver and fled the scene. Balakoti Reddy collapsed and he was shifted to the Government General Hospital where he was undergoing treatment. Family members alleged that Gadam Venkata Rao, Pammi Venkateswara Reddy, and Pujala Ramudu were behind the murder attempt.

## Kalatapasvi no more

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Kasinadhuni Viswanath, legendary Indian film director, screenwriter and actor, passed away on Thursday night.

He has been suffering from age-related ailments for a few days. Due to serious health issues, he was taken to Apollo Hospital in the city. He was born on February 19, 1930 at Repalle in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. He is a recipient of five National Film Awards, seven state Nandi Awards, 10 Filmfare Awards South and a Filmfare Award in Hindi.

He received the Andhra Pradesh state Raghupathi Venkaiah Award, and the civilian honour Padma Shri for his contribution to the field of arts. In 2017, he was conferred with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the highest award in



Indian cinema.

Viswanath started his film career as an audiographer and in 60 years, he has directed 53 feature films in a variety of genres, including films

based on performing arts, visual arts, and aesthetics.

He received international recognition for his works, and is known for blending parallel cinema with mainstream commercial cinema. Viswanath has made many films dealing with a wide range of human and social issues: *Saptapadi*, *Sirivennela*, *Sutradharulu*, *Subhalekha*, *Sruthilayalu*, *Subha Sankalpam*, *Aapadbandhavudu*, *Swayam*, *Krushi*, and *Swarnakalamam* have lead characters representing different strata of society, meticulously etched to suit the larger picture. His work *Sankarabharanam* highlights the neglect of traditional Indian music under the increasing influence of Western music.

## DELHI LIQUOR SCAM

### Magunta in ED charge sheet

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The names of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, BRS MLC K Kavitha and YSRC MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy figured in the Enforcement Directorate's (ED's) second charge sheet related to the Delhi liquor scam.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) filed a second charge sheet in the Delhi liquor scam, naming 17 individuals including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, YSRC MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy, and BRS MLC



Kavitha. Others who were named in the chargesheet include Kavogali restaurant, Trident Limited, Peramand Resort, Popular Spirit, Avantika Contractors, KS Jayam Spirit, Buddy Retails, Spirit Distribution, and Armo Mix Eco Systems. BRS MLC Kavitha is among those accused of destroying evidence and changing 10 phones, as mentioned in the charge sheet. The ED also stated that transactions worth Rs 100 crore took place from the South Group and Rs 30 crore was transferred from Abhishek to Vijay Nair.

## Adala is Nellore Rural YSRC incharge

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Y S R C P president and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has appointed MP Adala Prabhakar Reddy as coordinator

to the Nellore rural constituency. The Chief Minister has taken the decision in the wake of the phone tapping allegations by Nellore rural YSRC MP Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy.

### Kotamreddy betrayed party: Perni

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister and YSRC MP Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy has betrayed the YSRC and Jagan Mohan Reddy and he dared him to produce evidence on phone tapping.

Talking to the media on Thursday, Perni Venkatramaiah demanded Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy show evidence on his phone tapping allegations.

Nani said that Kotamreddy's friend Rama Shiva Reddy record-

ed the conversation and he sent the same to the Intelligence chief. He claimed that Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has affection for Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy but the MLA was looking toward the TDP.

"Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy spoke to Chandrababu Naidu on December 25. TDP leaders say that Chandrababu Naidu asked Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy to be in touch with former minister Narayana, who is also a prominent TDP leader in Nellore.

## After BCs, YSRCP focusses on Minority outreach

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA


Continuing with its extensive outreach campaign, the YSRCP on Thursday held an internal meeting of Muslim minority leaders in Tadepalle, days after the success of the Backward Communities (BC) Mahasabha that was held in Vijayawada on December 7, 2022. Over 1,000 Minority leaders, including Andhra Pradesh's first Minority Deputy Chief Minister Amzath Basha, Kurnool MLA Mohammad Abdul Hafeez Khan, Madnapalle MLA Mohammad Nawaz Basha, Guntur-East MLA Noori Fathima, MLC Mohammad Ruhulla, MLC Isaac Basha, MLC Shaik Mohammed Iqbal, and WAQF Board Chairperson Khadar Basha gathered in

Vijayawada to compliment Chief Minister Jagan for the exemplary work done by the YSRCP government for minorities and also deliberated upon ways to further uplift and empower Muslims in the state.



Deputy Chief Minister Amzath Basha said, 'Minorities have finally been given their due recognition and respect. Their voices are being heard and their concerns are being raised. Muslims are included in the overall development agenda of the state, something that has not been done before. Unlike the TDP that only uses the Muslim card for vote-bank politics, Jagan Mohan Reddy has gone ahead and fulfilled all the promises he made to us.'

With an avowed aim of providing necessary financial assistance to SC/ST/BC/Minority and EBC students to pursue Higher Education in top 200 Foreign Universities..

# JAGANANNA VIDESHI VIDYA DEEVENA



**Sri. Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy,**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister,  
Government of Andhra Pradesh



**Sri. Y. S Jagan Mohan Reddy,**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister  
to deposit Rs. **19.95 Crores**  
as 1st instalment of financial assistance Today,  
into the accounts of **213** eligible students,  
who secured admission this year in any of the  
top 200 universities as per the latest  
QS World University rankings..

**During Previous Government..**

- Meagre financial assistance that too to very few students.. Discretion in selection process leading to less transparency and corruption..
- Selection of poor quality Foreign universities, thus depriving students of quality education..
- Paltry financial assistance.. Assistance of only Rs.15 Lakhs to SCs/STs and Rs. 10 Lakhs only for others..
- Lot of pendency in payment of fees.. The total dues of Rs. 318 Crores pertaining to 3,326 students were not paid since 2016-17.. Resulting in winding up of the Scheme..
- Facility was extended to fewer number of students as the family income limit was Rs. 6 Lakhs only..

**In Our Jagananna Government..**

- "Jagananna Videshi Vidya Deevana" to all eligible students in Saturation mode and in utmost transparent manner.. Every year, selections will be made twice (for fall season & spring season) as per the admissions schedule for Foreign Universities.. Selection of students is done by a State level Selection Committee headed by the Principal Secretaries of concerned Departments..
- Selection of top 200 Universities as per QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World University Rankings to ensure quality education..
- To encourage merit, 100% fee reimbursement of tuition fee to SC/ST/BC/Minority students up to Rs. 1.25 Crores and up to Rs. 1 Crore to remaining students, who secured ranks in top 100 universities. 100% tuition fee up to Rs. 75 Lakhs to SC/ST/BC/Minority students and Rs. 50 Lakhs or 50% of tuition fee, whichever is less to the other students, who got admitted in the top 100-200 QS ranking Foreign Universities.. Jagananna Government is also reimbursing air fare and visa charges of the students going abroad under this scheme..
- Sanction of Scholarships in four equal instalments to the students as their studies progress in Foreign Universities.. 1st instalment to the students on acquiring immigration card (I-94), second instalment after the results of the 1st Semester, third instalment after the results of 2nd Semester and the fourth instalment to be released after successful completion of 4th Semester and uploading the final semester mark sheet in the concerned online portal.. Thus ensuring all the genuine eligible beneficiaries get the benefit in saturation mode with total transparency..
- Annual income limit of the family increased to Rs. 8 Lakhs, thereby benefitting more number of students..

Call Toll Free number **1902** for assistance and complaints regarding "Jagananna Videshi Vidya Deevana".

**Sri. Merugu Nagarjuna, Hon'ble Minister for Social Welfare**

Sri. Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Hon'ble Chief Minister to deposit financial assistance under "Jagananna Videshi Vidya Deevana" into the bank accounts of beneficiaries at 11:00 AM on 3rd February, 2023 at HCM's Camp Office.. Do watch the programme live on all popular news channels..

Issued By: Communications, Information & Public Relations Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh



# Deliver ‘Vidya Kanuka’ kits: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed the officials to take steps to deliver next year's 'Vidya Kanuka' kits to all schools by the end of the present academic year while expediting works on the second phase of the 'Nadu-Nedu'.

At a review meeting on school education held at the camp office here on Thursday, the Chief Minister said there should be constant review and monitoring of the programmes implemented in the education department for ensuring good quality and standards from Vidya Kanuka kits to the syllabus to basic infrastructure to Gorumudda. The paper used in the textbooks also should be of high quality, he said.

There should be more seriousness in implementing subject-teacher concepts while special steps should be taken to train the students in English to help them face global-level competitive examinations, he said, suggesting teachers also should be trained in English, if necessary, by having tieup with institutions like

Cambridge and TOEFL. It would be better if students are trained in English writing and reading right from Class III onward, he opined. He asked the officials to submit proposals on arranging digital learning methods for Intermediate students also similar to the way IFP display panels are provided to students of the Sixth Class and above and TV screens are made available to students of classes below sixth.

Students should take education seriously once they enter Class VI and officials should guide them in this regard, he said, adding that IFP panels should be arranged as per the given schedule in all schools which have completed Nadu-Nedu first phase besides distributing Byju's content-loaded tabs to 8th class students before the next academic year commences.

When officials said that students of YSR Kadapa, Vizianagaram, and Chittoor districts have stood first, second and third in the use of tabs respectively, the Chief Minister told them to give feedback to the parents on the use of tabs by students.



Officials explained they would complete handing over 'Vidya Kanuka' Kits to all schools by the end of April and distribute them to students by the time schools are opened.

The officials further explained that eleven types of facilities were provided to 15,715 schools under the first phase of Nadu-Nedu for which auditing has been completed. 23,221, and 16,968 schools would get a facelift in the second and third phases respectively, they said.

Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana, Chief Secretary Dr. K.S. Jawahar Reddy, Advisor to Government (Education) A. Sambasiva Reddy, Principal Secretary (School Education) Praveen Prakash, School Education Commissioner S. Suresh Kumar, Commissioner (School Education- Infrastructure) Katamanneni Bhaskar, Commissioner (Intermediate Education) M.V. Seshagiri Babu, Mid-day Meals Director Nidhi Meena, APEWIDC MD CS Diwan Reddy, Nadu-Nedu Director (Technical) Manohar Reddy were among those present.

## Drone jet found on high seas creates a flutter

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A used drone jet found by fishermen in the sea off Moolalapeta village in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh created a flutter, police said on Thursday.

The fishermen brought the drone to the shore and informed the marine police whose

circle inspector K Demullu said such drones were used by the defence as per information he received from higher officials.

The drone in red and yellow measured 9 feet long and weighed 111 kg. The word 'Banshee' was written on the right wing and 'Target' on the left.

"We've informed the Navy officials in Visakhapatnam and also the Ministry of Home, New Delhi. Further action will be taken after getting directions from the two departments," the circle inspector told reporters.



## TDP's policy is equal justice for all: Lokesh

PNS ■ PALAMANER

During the seventh day of the ongoing 'padayatra' on Thursday, Nara Lokesh met leaders of the Arya Vysya community and said that the TDP, during its rule, had never harassed the community but Jagan Mohan Reddy after becoming the CM the people of the Arya Vysya community are suffering a lot. Lokesh said, the TDP, while in power, had given maximum priority to the community leaders, including a berth in the Cabinet and in the Rajya Sabha.

Lokesh asked why the temple of Goddess Kanyaka Parameswari was damaged and why there is no representation

from the Arya Vysya community in the Cabinet now. "A lone representative of the community in the Cabinet was removed from the post and no funds for the corporation," he stated.

Several local leaders from Palamaner joined the TDP in the presence of Lokesh. The majority of them are youth and leaders from the Muslim community belonging to MC Palem and Rangapuram villages in the segment.

The representatives of the MSME met Lokesh near Charan Dhaba where they complained that the YSRCP Government revised the land cost and is charging Rs 383 more per square meter from them than the earlier TDP government.

## Towards exemption free IT regime

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the Budget announcement of a revamped personal income tax regime, Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra on Thursday said the government would eventually like to move to a simple and exemption-free tax structure with lower rates.

According to an analysis by the Revenue Department, an individual earning Rs 15 lakh in a year will have to claim deductions of at least Rs 3.75 lakh under the old tax regime, otherwise the new revamped tax regime with lower rates proposed in 2023-24 will be more beneficial.

In an interview to PTI, Malhotra said the government does not have any specific timeline to make the new regime mandatory for taxpayers.

"We would like to move towards a lower tax rate, which is simple and without tax exemptions," Malhotra said.

The Budget has proposed changes to the new optional tax regime which provides that no tax would be levied on people with annual income of up to Rs 7 lakh. It also allowed taxpayers to claim standard deduction of Rs 50,000 under the new regime -- a move seen as a push for the salaried class to switch to the new tax regime where no exemptions on investments are provided.

Malhotra said under the new regime, salary earners with income of up to Rs 7.5 lakh will not have to pay any income tax, after taking into account the standard deduction.

This deduction was earlier available only to taxpayers in the old regime.

The Budget has not given any relief to taxpayers under the old regime and said that the new tax regime will now be the "default option", meaning that taxpayers will now have to opt for the old regime while filing their tax returns. In addition to extending

the standard deduction, the Budget has also raised the exemption limit and tweaked the tax rates to make the new regime, which was originally introduced in 2020-21, attractive to taxpayers.

Under the revamped new tax regime, no tax would be levied for income up to Rs 3 lakh. Income between Rs 3-6 lakh would be taxed at 5 per cent; Rs 6-9 lakh at 10 per cent; Rs 9-12 lakh at 15 per cent; Rs 12-15 lakh at 20 per cent and income of Rs 15 lakh and above will be taxed at 30 per cent.

The new tax regime will be more beneficial for a person who does not have enough investments to claim I-T deductions.

As per the analysis by the Revenue Department, individuals with income of Rs 10 lakh will have to make investments eligible for claiming I-T deductions of at least Rs 2,62,500 to reduce his tax liability to the level of a person who is in the new tax regime.

## Union Budget pro-corporate: CPM

PNS ■ NALGONDA

The Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman for the year 2023-24 was pro-corporate, said Communist Party of India-Marxist central committee member Cherupalli Sitaramulu.

Expressing his displeasure over the budget at a media conference held at Doddi Komuriah Bhavan here on Thursday, he said that the budget meted out grave injustice to Telangana.

## BJP won't sail with TDP: Veerraju

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Andhra Pradesh unit president Somu Veerraju on Thursday made it clear that the party would not have any alliance with the Telugu Desam Party in the next Assembly elections. "There is no question of having any alliance with the TDP in the next Assembly elections. For that matter, it will not have any understanding even with the YSRCP. Both are dynastic parties and under any circumstances, the BJP will not sail with them," said the BJP president.

He said if there is any alliance with any other party, it will only be Jana Sena Party, led by actor Pawan Kalyan, provided it has the backing of the people. With this, Veerraju indicated that it would go it alone in the next Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh. The BJP leadership has decided to give up its tentativeness with regard to alliances because the ambiguity in this regard has been causing confusion among the party cadre and also the people.

After the recent developments, especially following



Pawan Kalyan's announcement that he might go with the TDP if there is a respectable seat-sharing agreement, the BJP leadership has been in a state of dilemma. Though the party leaders have

been saying that they still have an alliance with the Jana Sena, there is no reciprocation from Pawan Kalyan, who has stuck to his stand that he wouldn't allow any split in the anti-incumbency vote in the state.

Under these circumstances, the BJP leadership seems to have thought of putting an end to this ambiguity. So, they have made it clear that if there is an alliance it will only be with Jana Sena and there is no question of allowing the TDP into it. Now, it will be interesting to see what decision Pawan Kalyan will take.



## After BCs, YSRCP focusses on Minority outreach

Continued from page 1

During the meeting, YSRCP leaders charted the future plan of action and undertook four resolutions 1) To take Jagananna's Sandesham (YSRCP government's initiatives to empower Muslims) to every minority household in the State. 2) To make an inclusive effort to meet all stakeholders including Ulemas, Imams, Mouzans, Masjid committee members, Madrasa stakeholders, and WAQF board stakeholders to communicate as well as understand their aspirations. 3) Top leadership to personally meet and interact with influential stakeholders of the community and seek support for YSRCP and 4) To hold a massive Minority Mahasabha inviting all stakeholders/leaders to take CM Jagan's message to the grassroots while pledging unwavering support to CM Jagan.

After a resounding response to the action plan, Kurnool MLA Mohammad Abdul

Hafeez Khan elaborated, "Hum Musalmaan hai, izzat milegi toh jaan denge. Jagananna ne humko izzat diya hai aur zaroorat padti hai toh YSRCP ke liye jaan deneko tayyar hai" (We are Muslims, we can give up our life for anyone who respects us. CM Jagan has given utmost respect to us, so if the need arises, we are ready to give up our lives for YSRCP).

To empower the Muslim community in the state CM Jagan government disbursed Rs 10,309 crore through DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) and Rs 10,053.04 crore through non-DBT schemes. TDP-led Chandrababu Naidu government had only spent Rs 2,665 crore on the welfare of minorities during 2014-19.

The YSRCP government covered 3.89 lakh poor Muslim families under the State government's housing schemes and 8.1 lakh Muslim families were provided assistance of Rs 81 crore by the YSRCP government.

## Kotamreddy betrayed party: Perni

Continued from page 1

Kotamreddy also maintains contact with Nara Lokesh. Without knowing the betrayal and conspiracy, Jagan Mohan Reddy trusted him," Perni Nani claimed, adding that Kotamreddy has fallen into the trap of TDP.

Responding to the accusations of Kotamreddy against Jagan Mohan Reddy, Perni Venkatraaiah said that he is leaving it to the discretion of Kotamreddy.

Without any political background, Kotamreddy was elected to the Assembly twice because of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, he said, adding that there is no need to give importance to those who migrate to other parties seasonally.

"If we are sincere and honest, what will happen if the phone is tapped? Those who committed mistakes should fear phone tapping," he opined.

Continued from page 1

Talking to the media here on Thursday, SP Ravishankar Reddy said that financial disputes are the reason for the murder attempt on Balakoti Reddy.

He said that Venkateswara Reddy and Anji Reddy and the deceased Balakoti Reddy became friends when they were in Narasaraopet prison. The SP denied a political motive for the murder attempt. One of the accused in the murder attempt Anji Reddy purchased a revolver for Rs 60,000 in Rajasthan. The victim Balakoti Reddy and the accused Venkateswara Reddy were TDP leaders, the SP said.

The police arrested four persons in connection with the murder attempt on Balakoti Reddy and cases under section 307 registered, the SP said. The SP also made it clear that the husband of Rompicherla MPP is not involved in the murder attempt case.

regular business to discuss the Adani group stock route and its impact on millions of small investors as well as the hard-earned savings of crores of Indians being endangered in loss of value of investments of LIC.

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar rejected all the notices, saying they were not in order. This infuriated the opposition MPs who rose in their places to protest.

Dhankhar called for order in the House but the MPs continued to raise their demands, which also included the constitution of a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) to probe the entire fiasco.

With the MPs not relenting, he adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm. No business was transacted.

Outside the House, Kharge said the opposition parties want

day-to-day reporting of the Joint Parliament Committee (JPC) or the SC-monitored probe into the issue which concerns public money.

"Keeping public interest in mind, we want a thorough probe into the Adani issue either by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) or a Supreme Court-monitored panel. There should also be day-to-day reporting of the investigation on the issue," he told reporters.

Earlier in the day, leaders of several opposition parties met to evolve a joint strategy to take on the government during the Budget Session. At that meeting, they decided to press for a JPC on the issue as well as a discussion in both houses.

Leaders of like-minded parties met in the chamber of Kharge.

Leaders of the Congress,

DMK, TMC, SP, JD(U), Shiv Sena, CPI(M), CPI, NCP, IUML, NC, AAP and the Kerala Congress were present at the meeting.

Thursday is the first full sitting day of the Budget session of Parliament that started on January 31. President Droupadi Murmu delivered her address to the joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on the opening day and the Union Budget for the 2023-24 fiscal starting April 1 was presented on Wednesday.

Adani Group stocks have taken a beating on the bourses after Hindenburg Research made a litany of allegations in its report, including fraudulent transactions and share price manipulation at the Gautam Adani-led group.

The Adani Group has dismissed the charges as lies, say-

ing it complies with all laws and disclosure requirements. It termed the Hindenburg report baseless and threatened to sue the short seller.

LIC has a sizable holding in almost all the 10 listed companies of the Adani Group. The holdings include 9 per cent in Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, 3.7 per cent in Adani Transmission, 1.3 per cent in Adani Green Energy and 6 per cent in Adani Total Gas Ltd.

LIC, India's largest life insurer, invested about Rs 300 crore in buying 9,15,748 more shares as an anchor investor in a Rs 20,000-crore new share sale by Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL).

AEL late on Wednesday cancelled the share sale due to market volatility and decided to return the money to investors.

## New District Collector conducts special puja

PNS ■ WARANGAL

District Collector of Hanamkonda Sikta Patnaik and additional collector Sandhya Rani on Thursday visited Bhadrakali temple and offered special puja to the deity.

Earlier, the temple executive officer Seshu Bharati along with the main priest Seshacharyulu extended traditional welcome to the officers and conducted special pujas. The temple priests presented silk clothes of the deity and prasadam of the deity and blessed the officials.

## Adala is Nellore Rural YSRC incharge

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Informing this at a press conference at the Tadepalli party office on Thursday, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said that Adala Prabhakar Reddy would contest from the Nellore rural constituency in the next election. Speaking on the occasion, Adala Prabhakar Reddy said that he would strive hard for the victory of YSRCP in the next election. Former minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy alleged that Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy met TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and got assurance of TDP ticket to contest to the Assembly on the TDP ticket.







AMBEDKAR SMRITI VANAM

## Spl CS inspects works

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Municipal Department Special CS Y Srilakshmi inspected the construction work of Ambedkar Smritivanam on Thursday as per the instructions of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy. Ambedkar Smritivanam in swaraj maidan, the 125 feet bronze statue of Dr Ambedkar is being taken up by the state government and built very ambitiously has picked up the pace.

On the occasion, she said that in order to speed up the construction work of 125 feet bronze statue of Ambedkar, the work of Ambedkar Smritivanam was inspected on Thursday as per the orders of CM Jagan Mohan Reddy on the quality of work. She said that instructions have been given to contractors on quality and standards. The construction cost of Ambedkar Smriti Vanam is Rs 268 crores and this memorial has an auditorium with a capacity of 2000 people.

Srilakshmi said that the construction of an open theater and meditation hall with a capacity of 500 people is underway. She said that from the Dr. YSR statue near the control room to Ambedkar Smritivanam on Bandar Road, the footpaths on either side of the road will be beautified with attractive tiles. She said that the 125-foot bronze statue of Ambedkar will be unveiled by CM Jagan Mohan Reddy on April 14, 2023, the birth anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, added Srilakshmi.

APIIC, VC & MD, Srijana, Vijayawada City Municipal Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar, APIIC officials, and engineers were present.

# Provide security to Anam: Pawan to DGP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan has demanded that Director General of Police KV Rajendranath Reddy take the responsibility of protecting YSRCP MLA Anam Ramanarayana Reddy and provide him protection.

In a statement here on Thursday, Pawan Kalyan said that security should be provided to Ramanarayana Reddy in the wake of his statement fearing a life threat. "If the DGP does not respond, I will write a letter to the Union Home Ministry explaining the prevailing situation in AP," he stated.

Pawan Kalyan deplored that the ruling party MLAs are in



fear for their lives. Also, there is no situation to speak freely. Spying on their own MLAs and tapping their phone conversations show the insecurity of the rulers, he slammed. "Ruling party MLA Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy made allegations of phone tapping by the Chief Minister's

office. Neither the DGP nor the Home Minister has responded so far to the phone tapping. The DGP should give an explanation to the people of the state on the phone tapping allegations," Pawan Kalyan said.

Pawan Kalyan regretted that such a situation prevailed in the state that the ruling MLA feared life threats. MLA Ramanarayana Reddy expressed fear about life threats which is indicating that vindictive politics have reached their peak. Anam Ramanarayana Reddy is a senior politician with vast political experience but he says he is facing a life threat, Pawan Kalyan said and asked about the safety of other leaders.

## Sucharitha not to leave YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former home minister and YSRC MLA Mekathoti Sucharitha strongly condemned the rumours that she would be quitting the party. The former minister made it clear that she would not leave the party as long as she was in politics. Addressing the media persons on Thursday, she clarified the speculation on social media platforms regarding leaving the party.

Defending the ruling YSRC government over the phone-tapping controversy, she said that there would be an intelligence report if anyone was involved in wrongdoing. She stated that the Intelligence department does not need to tap anyone's phone.

Sucharitha further said that the YSRC and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy were providing good governance and welfare schemes to people of all



sectors. She stated the education system in the State was reformed by CM YS Jagan with an aim to provide education to all. She said that she would contest in the next elections from any seat where Jagan would field her.

She said that she would be loyal to the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRC and would not change loyalties just to play politics. She said, "Jagan gave me

**She said that she would be loyal to the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRC and would not change loyalties just to play politics.**

the opportunity to be the first woman Home Minister of Andhra Pradesh. I will forever be thankful and will not change my party. Chandrababu Naidu once asked why anyone would want to be born a Dalit. I am proud that I am a Dalit. All these rumours on social media are baseless. If anyone still has doubts, they should contact me. Jagan treated me like family and I will not betray him."

## APGEA, other TUs approve resolutions against govt

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Government Employees' Association (APGEA) president KR Suryanarayana and general secretary G Askara Rao held a meeting with various recognised government employees associations on Thursday on various issues of employees, teachers, workers, pensioners and outsourcing

employees including pending issues like GPF, APGLI and others.

During the meeting, the APGEA along with other employee association leaders discussed various issues and approved a few resolutions unanimously. These resolutions approved are, under GO 223 employees should get their salary on the 1st of every month. All eligible benefits should be released

to the employees and pensioners pending in the 11th PRC. Rs 480 crore GPF amount that was drawn by the government should be reverted. Release all superannuation benefits of retired employees.

The other resolutions taken by the employees' unions are surrender leave encashment, LTC hometown provision, TA, DA, FTA, and other pending

issues. time-bound releasing of stationary and contingency funds. Inform when the government will pay salaries to contract and outsourcing employees. To enact a law on payment of salaries and pensions on the 1st of every month.

As many as 50 leaders of government employees associations took part in the meeting and passed resolutions.

## JVVD 1<sup>st</sup> instalment for students studying abroad

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to deposit Rs 19.95 crore as 1st Instalment of financial assistance under Jagananna Videshi Vidya Deevana into the accounts of 213 eligible Students, who secured admissions this year in any of the top 200 universities as per the latest QS World University rankings. CM Jagan will release the assistance today (Friday) by pressing a button in the CM Camp Office at Tadepalli.

The officials stated that with an avowed aim of providing necessary financial assistance to SC/ST/BC/Minority and EBC Students to pursue Higher Education in the top 200 Foreign Universities, CM Jagan offered JVVD. They recalled that earlier meagre financial assistance that too to very few students due to discretion in the selection process leading to less transparency and corruption was offered but CM Jagan totally changed the system in a transparent manner. In the past, the selection of poor-quality Foreign universities deprived students of quality education and further paltry financial assistance of only Rs.15 Lakhs to SCs/STs and Rs. 10 Lakhs only for others hit the students to study in foreign universities. There was a lot of pendency in the payment of fees as the total dues of Rs. 318 Crores pertaining to 3,326 students were not paid since 2016-17 resulting in the winding up of the Scheme.

Now "Jagananna Videshi Vidya Deevana" is for all eligible students in Saturation mode and in the utmost transparent manner. Every year selections will be made twice (for the fall season & spring season) as per the admissions



schedule for Foreign Universities. The selection of students is done by a State level Selection Committee headed by the Principal Secretaries of concerned Departments. Selection of top 200 Universities as per QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World University Rankings to ensure quality education.

To encourage merit, 100% fee reimbursement of tuition fees to SC/ST/BC/Minority Students up to Rs. 1.25 Crores and up to Rs. 1 Crore to remaining students, who secured ranks in the top 100 universities. 100% tuition fee up to Rs. 75 Lakhs to SC/ST/BC/Minority Students and Rs. 50 lakhs or 50% of tuition fee, whichever is less to the other students, who got admitted in the top 100-200 QS ranking Foreign Universities. The Jagan Government is also reimbursing airfare and visa charges of the students going abroad under this scheme.

## Gram panchayats' pending bills to be cleared by March-end

### Deputy CM Muatyla Naidu promises to bring Sachivalayam and Volunteer systems under control of sarpanches

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development B Mutyala Naidu has assured the gram sarpanches that the State government is trying to release pending bills regarding various building constructions and developmental works to the gram panchayats and those would be cleared by the end of March.

Also, the government is striving to connect the Sachivalaya and Volunteer system with gram sarpanches and will take steps for these two systems should work under sarpanches to serve the people effectively, he assured.

Gram sarpanches, who were elected with the support of the ruling YSRCP, formed a new committee named 'Andhra Pradesh Sarpanchula Ikya Vedika' for resolving the gram panchayat's problems with the support of the State government. A meeting of the new committee was conducted at



the YSRCP Central Office at Tadepalli near Vijayawada on Wednesday.

In this connection, AP Sarpanchula Ikya Vedika leaders submitted a representation to Deputy Chief Minister B Mutyala Naidu regarding various issues which are being faced by the gram panchayats and as well as sarpanches.

Later, Deputy CM Mutyala Naidu said that all pending bills of gram panchayats would be cleared by the end of March.

For the development of villages, the State government is planning to release special funds for the construction of roads, and drains, he said. He suggested that sarpanches should take initiation steps to make the Sachivalayam staff and Volunteers in their direction. Also, the State government would bring these systems under the control of sarpanches, he assured.

Meanwhile, he promised them to increase the honorar-

ium of sarpanches from Rs.3,000 to Rs.15,000 and it would be taken into consideration by the government. Also, he said that Rs.20 lakh, which was being sanctioned to each sachivalayam, would be spent through gram sarpanches.

He said 75 per cent of sarpanches were from YSRCP, so, to resolve the problems an ad-hoc committee would be appointed. At present, a 15-member ad-hoc committee will be appointed. Later, the ad-hoc committee would appoint committees to districts and finally elect the State committee, he said.

Later, sarpanches urged the minister to waive the electricity interest and surcharge and credit the 15th Finance Commission grants directly into the new bank accounts, which were linked with PMFS. After uploading the bills the State government should take steps for releasing the 15th Finance Commission grants immediately.

## Energy clubs in 12,000 institutions across AP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The State Designated Agencies (SDAs) regional review meeting was held by the BEE hosted by AP State Energy Conservation Mission, SDA of Andhra Pradesh (AP) in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. While reviewing the quarterly progress of the SDAs at Visakhapatnam, the Secretary of BEE RK Rai along with joint director of BEE Abhishek Sharma who visited Visakhapatnam physically for the review meeting said that India's target to achieve net zero emissions by 2070 can be

achieved faster by sensitizing the consumers/stakeholders, particularly in key sectors.

The Secretary BEE emphasized that the Energy Clubs are essential to make the students understand the significance of Energy Conservation and Energy Efficiency as students being the next generation citizens, can, in turn, become representatives for creating more awareness of Energy Conservation & efficiency and promoting the use of Energy Efficient appliances by the society at large scale for achieving energy security.

Secretary BEE who has

received a report of energy efficiency investment projects in Andhra Pradesh from CEO APSECM A Chandra Sekhara Reddy, director APEPDCL Ramesh Prasad and Joint Director BEE Abhishek Sharma, has given a target to Andhra Pradesh to constitute around 12,000 energy clubs i.e 20 percent out of the total 60,000 educational institutions (Public & Private) present in the State. The BEE shall provide technical and necessary financial support for constituting the energy clubs.

Establishing energy clubs

in educational institutions like schools, colleges, Polytechnic industrial training centres, etc. is one of the platforms through which students of the same institution or other Institutions can interact with each other and deliberate on various aspects of Energy Conservation and promote and implement the Energy saving measures. He advised all other states to follow the Andhra Pradesh and Kerala model of Stand Alone SDAs for fast-track implementation of energy efficiency programs in the States.

## 500-bed ESI hospital in Vizag scaled down to 350

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Replying to the question by Rajya Sabha MP GVL Narasimha Rao, Union Minister of State Rameswar Teli stated that the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) initially accorded in-principle approval for the construction of a 500-bed hospital at Visakhapatnam, which was subsequently changed to 350-bedded hospital with additional 50-bedded Super Speciality Wing due to non-availability of additional land for staff quarters.

The sanctioned amount for the hospital was Rs 384.26 crore. The land for the project was mutated in the name of ESIC on October 28, 2022, and the matter has been taken up with the State Government for the change in land use in order to award the work to the construction agency as well as schedule the date of commencement/ completion of the project.

Further, the Minister replied that the 125-bed ESIC hospital at Malkapuram, Visakhapatnam is presently under repair and another

30-bedded hospital at Atchutapuram, just outside Visakhapatnam, has been approved. Of the eight other ESI hospitals sanctioned in Andhra Pradesh, land has not yet been allotted by the State Government in Guntur, Nellore, Penukonda, and Sri City. Castigating the State government, GVL said, "Gross negligence on the part of the State government in identifying suitable land for ESI Hospitals has resulted in denial of healthcare benefits to organised sector workers in Visakhapatnam and other cities."

## Standing panel meetings tomorrow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna Zilla Parishad standing committee meetings will be conducted at the ZP meeting hall at Machilipatnam on Saturday.

All seven standing committees, chairpersons, members and officers should attend these meetings, said Krishna Zilla Parishad Chief Executive Officer (CEO) G Srinivasa Rao in a press release.

He said that Krishna, NTR and Eluru district officials also should attend the meetings.



GOODS TRAIN DERAILS

## Kothavalasa-Araku section hit

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In the early hours of Thursday at 6.26 am a goods train loaded with iron ore coming from Bachel towards Kothavalasa derailed at Sivalingapuram Yard before Tunnel-7 in the Sivalingapuram-Badavara section of the Kottavalasa-Kirandul line. Total 8 loaded wagons derailed. Accident Relief Trains from Koraput and Visakhapatnam proceeded to the site to organise restoration operations.

Soon after the derailment occurred, the Accident Relief Train left for the site from Visakhapatnam and Koraput. Divisional Railway Manager Anup Satpathy rushed to the site to monitor the restoration operations.

DRM was accompanied by ADRM (infra) Sudhir Kumar Gupta, Senior Divisional Signal and Telecom Engineer Diptanshu Sharma, Senior

Divisional Mechanical Engineer SK Patra, Senior Divisional Engineer (Coordination) PK Maharana, Senior Divisional Safety Officer Praveen Kumar Bhati, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Gen) Senior Divisional Engineer (Central), Assistant Commercial Manager and other officers from various departments.

ADRM (Operations) Manoj Kumar Sahoo, Senior Divisional Operations Manager G Suneel Kumar, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager AK Tripathi, and other officers monitored the restoration works from the control board at the DRM office. The forecast for full restoration is expected to be completed by tomorrow.

Due to the derailment of the goods trains, the train services were affected train No. 08551

Visakhapatnam -Kirandul Passenger special train leaving Visakhapatnam on 02.02.2023 is cancelled.

The train No. 08552 Kirandul - Visakhapatnam Passenger special train leaving Kirandul on 02.02.2023 was short-terminated at Koraput and returned back as 08551 from Koraput to Kirandul.

The train No. 18513 Kirandul - Visakhapatnam Night Express train leaving Kirandul on 02.02.2023 is cancelled.

The train No. 18514 Visakhapatnam - Kirandul Night Express train leaving Visakhapatnam on 02.02.2023 is cancelled. The train No. 08551 Visakhapatnam-Kirandul special train leaving Visakhapatnam on 03.02.2023 is cancelled.

The train No. 08552 Kirandul - Visakhapatnam special train leaving Kirandul on 03.02.2023 is cancelled.

## 8,888 cases filed for traffic violations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Krishna district police have registered 8,888 cases against motorists for not wearing helmets and seatbelts during the special drives being conducted for the past month across the district.

Around 3,200 people were booked for riding two-wheelers without wearing helmets. Sixty cases were filed for driving a car without wearing the seatbelt and the rest for drunk driving, over speeding and other violations.

As part of the efforts to control road accidents, the Krishna police have been organising special drives in the district following the directive of SP P Joshua.

During the special drives, the police have imposed a total fine of Rs. 2,10,300.





# Two youths murdered in full public glare

PNS ■ KADAPA

Two youths were brutally murdered in full public glare by unidentified miscreants at Saibaba temple here after the night of Wednesday.

DSP Venkata Shiva Reddy said that the deceased Revant (27) and Abhisekh (29) were close friends and they went to a bar located near Saibaba temple. When they came out of the bar after having liquor, four unidentified persons attacked Revant and stabbed him indiscriminately.

In a bid to save his friend, Abhisekh went to prevent the attackers but they stabbed Abhisekh as well. Revant died instantaneously while Abhisekh succumbed to injuries in the wee hours on Thursday.

Police said that one of the deceased Revant was involved in several criminal cases and cases registered against him in



various police stations in the city. Revant was a resident of Raja Reddy Street. Meanwhile, another deceased Abhilash was a close friend of Revant. Abhilash got a job on the compassion ground as his father died recently. An old rivalry is suspected to be the reason for the double murders.

The brutal murder in full public glare at the busy Saibaba temple locality sent panicky waves across the city. Peace and

tranquillity have prevailed for the last few years in the city and with the twin murders the faction-related murders had surfaced in the city again.

Allegations levelled against the police that though Revant was involved in several criminal cases and cases registered against him at various police stations, the police failed to keep a vigil on his movements. Special teams were formed to apprehend the culprits, the police said.

## ‘3.66 lakh MT of paddy purchased’

PNS ■ ELURU

Joint Collector P Arun Baby said that 3.66 lakh metric tonnes of paddy has been purchased from the farmers in the Eluru district.

The Joint Collector said that Rs 628 crore had been credited into the bank accounts of farmers for the purchased paddy produce.

The Joint Collector said that the purchases of paddy from the farmers for the Kharif would end on February 5.

He said that the process of procurement of paddy from the farmers for the Kharif began on November 6, 2022. Till now 3.66 lakh metric tons of paddy has been purchased in the district and the money Rs 628 crore pertaining to the purchase of paddy, has been deposited to the accounts of the farmers.

The Joint Collector said that through the 284 RBKs, the paddy procurement continued for 92 days from November 6, 2022, to February 5.

# Special wing set up for employees, pensioners at Vijayawada GGH

Collector inaugurates special wing set up under EHS scheme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao inaugurated the special outpatient (OP) wing for government employees and pensioners under the Employees' Health Scheme (EHS) in the super speciality block on the premises of the Government General Hospital in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Dilli Rao said that the special wing was set up to provide better health treatment for the family members of government employees and pensioners. Around 1.40 lakh people have been getting health treatment under the EHS scheme, which include 25,000 government employees, teachers and RTC workers, and 23,000 government pensioners' family



members, he said.

He further said the State government directed all government hospital officials to set up a special outpatient wing for

the EHS scheme. The government hospital in Vijayawada was the first to do it, he said. A specialist doctor, two assistant doctors and four nursing

staff will be there, he added.

He informed the members of the EHS scheme that gastroenterology service was available on every Monday, general medicine and mental diseases on Tuesday, heart and kidney on Wednesday, ortho and neurology on Thursday, skin diseases and general medicine on Friday, and lungs and general medical treatments on Saturday. The timing is from 10 am to 1 pm.

APNGO Association NTR district president A Vidyasagar, Dr YSR Aarogyasri Health Care Trust district coordinator Dr J Suman, Hospital Superintendent Dr Sowbhagya Lakshmi, RMOs Manga Devi, Shobha Rani, Siddhartha Medical College Principal Dr Vithal Rao, hospital doctors Venkata Ramaiah, Nageswara Rao, and others were present.

## Raw deal to AP in Union budget: Rayapati Jagadish

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Rayapati Jagadish, who is contesting from the Graduate Constituency for the Legislative Council, has alleged that a raw deal was meted out to Andhra Pradesh in the Union budget.

Talking to the media here on Thursday, he said that the Rs 45 lakh crore budget was presented by the Union Finance Minister in the Parliament on February 1 but no major allocations were made to AP for the year 2023-24.

He alleged that the railway zone issue was not mentioned in the budget. Funds were not

allocated to the central institutions and universities. Though a raw deal was meted out to AP in the budget, the 25 MPs remained a mute spectator in the Parliament by not raising their voice against the raw deal, he criticised.

The MPs of AP have no intention of developing the state industrially, he slammed. He said that the students under the aegis of Students JAC would carry out agitation in protest against the injustice to AP in the Union budget. Students JAC district president Karit, Karunakar, and Nagarjuna University JAC Ganesh were among those who were present.

## Body of the infant found at Ruia

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The body of a newborn baby girl was found near Ruia hospital here on Thursday. It was not known whether somebody had left the newborn alive at the hospital or dumped it after the newborn baby died. A medical prescription was found on the body. The body was sent to the Ruia hospital for postmortem to ascertain the exact reason for the death of the newborn.

# CII WELCOMES BUDGET, TERMS IT INVESTMENT-ORIENTED

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) welcomed the budget, which 'addresses the growth imperatives without compromising on the fiscal prudence path'.

Through a slew of measures in forward-looking areas encompassing green growth, digital infra, urban rejuvenation among others, we are happy to note that the budget lays the roadmap for preparing India for the Amrit Kaal, the next 25 years upto India@100.

"It is a promising budget by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to take forward India's growth story and development goals, reinstating confidence post the pandemic, empowering multiple engines of sustainability, inclusiveness, equal opportunities given to education, Skilling, infrastructure, Innovation, R&D, tourism, green technologies, agriculture, healthcare, digital technologies amongst many

preparing India to be Global Economic Leader in 2047. A healthy balance of strong fundamentals for the future for India to raise, perform and deliver domestically and globally."

Neeraj Sarda, Chairman, CII Andhra Pradesh and Deputy Managing Director, Sarda Metals & Alloys, Ltd said the Budget 2023-24 was industry-friendly, comprehensive and pragmatic aimed at sustainable and inclusive growth. Fiscal prudence and business ease has been the theme of the budget. A 35 per cent increase in capital expenditure will drive infrastructure growth and create job opportunities for the youth.

He said, in the electric mobility space, the measures undertaken by the government to promote clean and green mobility and introducing the battery-swapping policy would be instrumental in supporting an efficient EV ecosystem. Make AI in India

and Make AI work for India will bring a transformation by promoting the principle of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. The budget includes measures to provide job opportunities for youth and development of green cluster cities and achieving sustainable and zero-carbon footprints goals.

Dr M Lakshmi Prasad, Vice Chairman, CII Andhra Pradesh, stated, the seven key priorities outlined in the budget namely inclusive development, reaching the last mile, infrastructure and investment, unleashing the potential, youth power, financial sector and green growth are in resonance with our journey towards Amrit kaal and the vision of India@100, which the Indian industry has articulated. Apart from steps for boosting the economy, the finance minister has also announced a host of measures to further the inclusion drive. Besides, the focus on diversification of agriculture towards animal husbandry,

fishery, dairy, emphasis on production of millets, creating an efficient information network, increasing the target for agriculture credit, creation of digital public infrastructure is encouraging initiatives which would have a salutary impact on raising agriculture productivity and boosting farmer income.

D Ramakrishna, Past Chairman, CII Andhra Pradesh stated, the budget rightly recognized the importance of sustainability and climate as an integral component of our development journey which was intrinsically linked to survival challenges. CII particularly welcomes the enhanced outlay on education, healthcare, and skill development with a view to increasing opportunities for the youth and realizing the demographic dividend.

Neelima Challagulla, Chairperson, CII Vijayawada, and Dr A Venkata Ramana, Vice-Chairman, were also present.

# 2,618 cases registered for overspeeding: SP

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Stating that all steps were taken to curb road accidents in the district, SP Siddhartha Koushal said that 2,618 cases had been registered for overspeeding.

The SP here on Thursday released the details of the special drive taken up for one month in the district as part of containing road accidents.

The SP said that during the one-month special drive, the district police registered 1,016 cases of driving vehicles without licence, 7,721 cases of driving bikes without wearing helmets, 157 cases of going on wrong routes, and 253 cases of jumping signals.

The SP said that 12,120 cases were registered against those who were driving vehicles without records of the vehicles. He said that 552 cases were registered for not



tying seat belts. The SP said that 5.38 lakh e-challans had been pending and Rs 72.87 lakh collected from 34,589 challans during the month of January.

The SP said that there should be warning boards from a distance of 100 meters to indicate the black spots and speed breakers. Efforts should be made to control speed by using speed guns on national highways. The SP directed the police officials to focus mainly on drunk driving and minors driving vehicles.

## Centre undermining MGNREGS: BRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

MLC K. Kavitha lashed out at the attempts of the BJP government at the Centre to weaken and eventually wind up MGNREGS, pushing the rural poor into poverty. She said the massive cut in the funds allocated for the scheme in the latest Union Budget indicates the Centre's plans to end it.

After meeting with representatives of the MGNREGS Association here on Thursday, Kavitha said the Union Government allocated only Rs 60,000 crore for MGNREGS, which was the lowest allocation for the scheme in the last five years.

The BJP government has been reducing the funds for the scheme, that is, Rs 1.1 lakh crore in 2020-21, Rs 98,000 crore in 2021-22, and Rs 89,400 crore in 2022-23.

At least Rs 2.72 lakh crore is required for the effective implementation of MGNREGS this year. But the Centre allocated only Rs 60,000 crore which indicates the BJP government's intentions," the legislator said.

She pointed out that the Centre did not create any new employment opportunities in rural areas in the last nine years and was not implementing existing schemes like MGNREGS.

While the State government is trying to provide employment opportunities to people as much as possible, the Central government is not cooperating with the States, she said.

# R-Day NCC contingent makes TS & Andhra Pradesh proud

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Republic Day contingent of NCC Directorate Telangana and Andhra Pradesh comprising one Officer, 121 cadets and 10 other support staff have returned to Secunderabad after the successful completion of 30 days Republic Day camp at New Delhi. The cadets from all 28 states of the country participated and competed in various national-level competitions held during the camp.

Sergeant G Prem Krithika of Secunderabad Group HQ made the directorate proud by being adjudged the Best Cadet in the Senior Wing Army category and was awarded the Best cadet trophy by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the PM Rally conducted on Jan 28 at Cariappa Parade Ground, New Delhi. Cadet Amoghvardaraj Naidu stood third in the Best Cadet Senior Division Naval wing category while Cadet V Siva Ganesh and Cadet CH Neethin Sai were awarded the DG NCC Medallion for standing fourth in Best Cadet Junior Division Army and Junior Division Navy category respectively.

The NCC RDC camp began at Cariappa Parade Ground, New Delhi on Jan 1 with participation of 2,155 cadets from across the nation. The camp was inaugurated by the Vice-President of India and was visited by various important dignitaries like Home Minister, Defence Secretary, Chiefs of the three services of Armed Forces, Chief Minister of Delhi and culminated with the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is a matter of pride that nine senior division cadets and nine senior wing cadets of NCC Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Directorate formed part of the NCC Boys and Girls Contingent



that participated in the march past at Kartavya Path on the eve of Republic Day. The training of these cadets begins at sub unit and unit level in the month of September and after intensive training and selections at various levels, finally 121 cadets from all three NCC wings of the two states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were selected to represent the NCC Directorate AP and Telangana at a national platform. The Republic Day camp is a life-changing experience for a cadet and each one carries fond memories of it for

the rest of their life. Pic 1 Caption: Air Commodore P Maheshwar, DDG NCC congratulates the Senior Division cadets of the Republic Day contingent at HQ NCC Directorate (AP&T), Secunderabad on 02 Feb 2023. Pic 2 Caption: Sergeant G Prem Krithika of Secunderabad Group with the RDC Best Cadet trophy (Senior Wing Army) at HQ NCC Directorate (AP&T), Secunderabad on 02 Feb 2023. The trophy was awarded by the Prime Minister during the NCC PM's Rally in New Delhi.

## IITH's student qualifies for global finale of Falling Walls Lab

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad's Pratik Kumar has qualified for the global finale of Falling Walls Lab in Berlin. Earlier, when IIT Hyderabad hosted its first Falling Walls Lab last year qualifying the winner was Pratik Kumar. Now he is selected for the global finale in Berlin. Imagine rubbing shoulders

with Nobel laureates. But before that, imagine condensing four or five years of your research journey and explaining it in a compact three minute-period with no more than two slides. Pratik is the Falling Walls Lab, Hyderabad winner who qualified for the global finale in Berlin in early November 2022 with his breakthrough pitch on analog VS accelerated technology. He won a

chance to interact and network with the world's movers and shakers of Science, Business and policy-making. The idea of Falling Walls Lab is to pitch an innovative idea that can have a positive impact on Science and society. Renowned academic institutions across the world host the Falling Walls Lab to showcase the quality, diversity, and passion of their region's most innovative minds.

## KCR can make India 15 trillion dollar economy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's Minister of Industries, Commerce and Information Technology, KT Rama Rao, urged politicians to focus on economics rather than politics.

"If only the rest of India can perform like Telangana and if only the rest of India can be led by a leader like KCR, USD 5 trillion will be a joke. We can reach Rs 15 trillion dollars," he said.

He said it was unfortunate that politicians in India focused on politics and not on the economy.

India is in permanent election mode and politicians are always focused on winning elections than in creating



wealth, he said while addressing the NHRD's 'Decode The Future - The National Conference' on Thursday. "We are the world's largest democracy and elections are held throughout the year and leaders are always bothered about politics," he said.

KT Rama Rao also underlined the need for ensuring an

equitable distribution of wealth. India is the most populous country in the world but most of the nation's wealth is owned by a few individuals, he said.

He said it is the primary responsibility of every government to ensure a fair distribution of wealth.

"We need to think whether the leadership of our nation is giving us hopes of becoming a USD 25 trillion economy, and how the wealth can be distributed equally," KTR said.

"We are a nation with the maximum number of poor on the planet. I am not preaching Communism but unless wealth is distributed equitably and unless the government takes care of the most vulnerable we will have civil strife," he warned.

### BUDGET SESSION FROM TODAY

## All eyes on KCR-Governor

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

All eyes are on the Telangana budget session starting on February 3, that is Friday, amidst the twists and turns for approval of the fiscal 2023-34 annual budget.

Everyone is curiously waiting to see the conduct of Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao and the Governor, Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan, in the Assembly as they have not been on good terms for the last two years.

As per protocol, the Chief Minister, Speaker and others have to receive the Governor when the Governor comes to the Assembly to address the joint session.

Both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council will commence on Friday. The budget session will commence with Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan's address to a joint session at the Assembly Hall at 12.10 pm. The Governor is going to address the joint session after two years. The rift between the Governor and the Telangana government widened when the

Telangana government avoided the Governor's address stating that the House has not been prorogued and that the session is not a new one. This year too, the state government tried to avoid the Governor's address. However, the Governor did not give permission to introduce the budget in the Assembly and Council.

Due to the Governor's attitude, the state government went to the High Court. However, the HC suggested to the counsels of both the State government and the Governor's office to discuss the issue and come to an amicable decision. Following the High Court's decision, both the counsels accepted to run the House as per Constitutional norms. The government agreed to allow the Governor's address.

On the same day, the Government approached the Governor and invited her to address the joint session. The next day the Governor issued a notification for the budget session with the same dates given by the government.

However, it is learnt that the

government has sent the Governor's address copy to Raj Bhavan but the Governor has not yet approved it.

On the other hand, the authorities have been making arrangements on Thursday unlike it had done in the past. Generally, the government completes arrangements a couple of days before the session's commencement date.

The Assembly and the Council will move resolutions on the Motion of Thanks to the Governor's address on February 4 separately in both the Houses.

Finance Minister Harish Rao will present the budget in the Assembly and Assembly Affairs Minister Prashanth Reddy in the Council at 11 am on February 6. February 7th will be given leave to study the budget.

The Assembly will be held for five days from the 8th and with the approval of the appropriation Bill, both the houses will be adjourned indefinitely. The CAG report will be presented in this session. It is informed that the election of the deputy chairman of the council is also possible.



INDIA CORNER

## Maha ATS files chargesheet against five arrested PFI members

The Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad on Thursday filed its chargesheet against five members of the now-banned Popular Front of India who were arrested after raids in September last year for allegedly indulging in anti-national activities and waging war against the nation. The chargesheet was filed before special judge AM Patil. The five have been charged under provisions of the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and Indian Penal Code for various offences, including promoting enmity among different groups and conspiring to commit offences against the State. More than 100 functionaries of the radical Islamist group were arrested in nationwide raids in several states, including Maharashtra, in September last year. Subsequently, the PFI was banned by the Central government through a notification issued on September 27, in which it said the outfit and its affiliates have been involved in subversive activities, thereby disturbing public order and undermining the constitutional set up of the country.



## Centre spent nearly Rs 27,000 lakh on preservation of cultural sites

The central government has spent Rs 26,957.32 lakh on conservation, preservation and maintenance of monuments and sites of national importance in 2021-22. Parliament was informed on Thursday. Union Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy, in a written response to a query, also shared data on the revenue generated through entry fee at monuments and sites at 143 locations in the country during the last three years. There are 3,696 centrally-protected monuments in the country which fall under the purview of the Archaeological Survey of India, including 743 sites in Uttar Pradesh, 506 in Karnataka, and 412 in Tamil Nadu. Reddy also shared details on the expenditure on conservation, preservation and maintenance of monuments and sites of national importance during last three years. In 2019-20, the figures stood at Rs 43,538.76 lakh while the corresponding figures for 2020-21 was Rs 26,083.41 lakh, and Rs 26,957.32 lakh for 2021-22, according to the data shared.



## 7.81 crore rural households provided tap water: Govt

More than 7.81 crore rural households have been provided tap water connections under the Jal Jeevan Mission over last three years, Minister of State for Jal Shakti Prahlad Singh Patel informed the Lok Sabha on Thursday. In a written reply to a question, the minister said as on January 31, 2023, out of 19.36 crore rural households in the country, around 11.06 crore (57.12 per cent) are reported to have tap water supply. At the time of the announcement of JJM, 3.23 crore (17 per cent) rural households were reported to have tap water connections. Goa, Telangana, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Gujarat and Haryana are among the states and Union Territories which have provided tap water to every rural household. The central government, in partnership with the states, is implementing the JJM since August 2019 to make tap water supply available to every rural household in the country.



# EAM: Inclusive, resilient growth focus of India's G20 priorities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's priorities for its G20 Presidency are to ensure inclusive and resilient growth with a focus on challenges being faced by the countries of the Global South, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday.

Replying to a question in Rajya Sabha, Jaishankar also listed technological transformation and public digital infrastructure, reform in the multilateral institutions, women-led development and international peace and harmony as key focus areas for India's presidency of the grouping.

India assumed the presidency of the influential bloc G20 at its annual summit in Bali in November with a promise of striving to ensure that the grouping acts as a global prime mover to envision new ideas and accelerate collective action to deal with pressing challenges.



**India assumed the presidency of the influential bloc G20 at its annual summit in Bali in Nov with a promise of striving to ensure that the grouping acts as a global prime mover to envision new ideas and accelerate collective action to deal with pressing challenges.**

India is hosting a series of events and meetings ahead of the G20 summit later this year.

"India's G20 Presidency priorities are inclusive and pragmatic, with broad areas of substantive deliberations comprising inclusive and resilient growth, progress on SDGs, green development and lifestyle for environment, technological transformation and public digital infrastructure, reforming multilateral institutions, women-led

development, and international peace and harmony," Jaishankar said.

"It is our endeavour that inputs generated from the 'Voice of Global South Summit' receive cognisance globally, including in G20 deliberations," he said.

The SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) are a collection of 17 interlinked objectives designed to serve as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity in the world.

India officially assumed the G20 Presidency on December 1. India's G20 Presidency has the largest-ever representation from Africa with six participants, Jaishankar said.

He said in addition to South Africa, Egypt, Mauritius, Nigeria, Chair of African Union and Chair of AUDA-NEPAD have been invited to participate in G20 meetings and the summit.

South Africa is a member of the G20.

The African Union (AU) is an influential grouping consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African continent.

The AUDA-NEPAD was established in 2010 to integrate the then New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) into African Union (AU) structures and processes.

Jaishankar said India has always been a voice of the Global South, including for the "African friends and partners".

## Colonial sentiments rule in Indian mines: Amitav Ghosh

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

An exploitative economy in all its ruthless facets was the hallmark of colonialism across the globe in the earlier centuries, and the same economics continues to rule in the mineral-rich mines of Jharkhand and Odisha, renowned writer and Jnanpith Award winner Amitav Ghosh said here on Thursday.

Speaking at the opening day of the Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters (MBIFL), Ghosh said resources have become the bane of people as their native land comes into the crosshair of exploitative economy.

"The uranium mines of Jharkhand are now being exploited by mining companies at the cost of all the local people whose lives are essentially doomed because of the resources they once had. Another good example is Niyamgiri in Odisha."

# Panel for 'specific' study on Mussoorie, remedial steps

○ Says NGT in view of Joshimath disaster

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has issued directions to conduct a specific study of the hill station of Mussoorie and formed a nine-member committee to suggest remedial measures for preventing environmental damage.

The tribunal was hearing a matter where it had initiated suo motu proceedings in view of a media report that the recent Joshimath disaster was a warning for Mussoorie where unplanned constructions continued.

A bench comprising Chairperson Justice AK Goel said a holistic study of the carrying capacity of eco-sensitive areas in the Himalayan regions was imperative for protection of the environment.

The bench, also comprising Judicial Member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and Expert Members A Senthil Vel and Afroz Ahmad, said, "Without under-



mining the need for study in all eco-sensitive areas... we direct specific study for Mussoorie..."

"Such study may cover as to how much constructions can be allowed and with what safeguards, what safeguards be used for existing buildings and all other relevant and associated aspects including vehicular traffic, sanitation management, maintaining ecological integrity in terms of soil stability and flora/fauna," the bench said.

The bench also formed a nine-member joint committee headed by the Uttarakhand chief secretary.

Other committee members include the Central Pollution Control Board, ACS Environment, Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Govind Ballabh Pant National Institute of Himalaya and Environment, National Institute of Hydrology, Space Application Centre and National Institute of Rock Mechanics, the bench said.

# BJP to contest all 60 Meghalaya seats, 20 seats in Nagaland

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP will contest on all 60 seats of the Meghalaya Assembly and fight the Nagaland elections in an alliance with the state's ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party, contesting on 20 of 60 seats.

BJP secretary and its north-east co-in-charge Rituraj Sinha told reporters on Thursday that the party will fight the Meghalaya polls under the campaign tagline of "M - Power" (Modi power), asserting that people of the state have trust in Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

They believe Modi is the only person who can ensure a corruption-free government and fast track development, he said, noting that this is the first time the BJP will field candidates on all seats of the Meghalaya Assembly.

Nagaland and Meghalaya BJP chief Temjen Inna Along and Ernest Mawrie, respectively also named party candidates approved by the party's central

election committee.

Sinha claimed that people in the northeastern states are fed up of corruption and slow pace of development, even though central government schemes have reached them. They, though, believe that their implementation could have been better, he said.

Chief Minister Conrad Sangma-led National People's Party in power in Meghalaya. Though the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a part of his government, the relations between the two parties have long been far from smooth.

The BJP had contested on 47 seats in the 2018 assembly polls and had won two.

Sinha expressed confidence that the saffron party will do well in the state polls and noted that Modi has visited the northeast region over 50 times in his term. This is more than the visits of all the previous prime ministers put together, he said, adding that Modi has always been to the region with some development package.



# DELHI MAN ARRESTED FOR MURDER

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old man was arrested and a juvenile apprehended for allegedly killing an acquaintance who could not pay for a sound system he had rented from the accused in north Delhi's Sabzi Mandi area, police said on Thursday.

The accused, Raja, a resident of Mori Gate, and his 16-year-old associate were absconding and had switched off their mobile phones after the alleged crime.

The duo was nabbed by

plainclothes police while they were entering the Tis Hazari Court complex to meet Raja's lawyer on Wednesday, the police said.

The incident took place around 11 pm on January 29.

A passerby told the investigators that he witnessed the victim Munindra Kumar Shahi lying on the road in Mori Gate while a boy from his colony stood over him with a foot on his chest as Raja kept hitting him on the head with a heavy wooden baton.

When the passerby inter-

vened, the accused fled, the police said.

The passerby and another person brought the injured victim to HRH Hospital where doctors declared him dead, they said.

Interrogations revealed that Raja ran a business of renting sound systems for small functions. The victim had rented a sound system from him for Rs 1,500 for New Year. However, Shahi was yet to pay Raja, resulting in a heated argument between them, Deputy Commissioner of Police

(North) Sagar Singh Kalsi said.

On the night of January 29, there was another argument between the accused and Shahi over the issue, leading to the murder by Raja and his juvenile associate, he said.

Raja was previously found involved in a case of hurt (Section 319 of the Indian Penal Code) registered at Subzi Mandi police station.

A wooden baton and blood-stained clothes worn by the accused at the time of the murder have been recovered, the police said.

## CBI registers preliminary enquiry against Jalandhar Police Commissioner

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a preliminary enquiry against Jalandhar Police Commissioner Kuldeep Singh Chahal for alleged corruption and misconduct during his tenure as the SSP, Chandigarh, officials said on Thursday.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has launched the enquiry on a reference from Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Banwarilal Purohit, they added.

The 2009-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, who was on deputation in Chandigarh, was sent back to his parent cadre, Punjab, in December last year even though 10 months were left for the completion of his three-year tenure in

the Union Territory.

In a letter to the governor, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had expressed surprise over Chahal's premature repatriation and the handing over of the charge to a Haryana-cadre IPS officer, saying this was going to disturb the balance among the states in running the affairs of the Union Territory of Chandigarh. Purohit had said Mann did not "ascertain facts" before writing to him on Chahal's repatriation.

The governor had said the officer was sent back to his parent cadre after complaints of misconduct were received against him, adding that he had even apprised the Punjab chief secretary on November 28 of his decision to remove Chahal.



## More than 340 mobile phones recovered in 2.5 months from Delhi jails

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Prisons department has recovered over 340 mobile phones from inside jails in the last two-and-a-half months, an official said on Thursday.

Director-General (Prisons) Sanjay Baniwal told reporters that the jail authorities recovered 348 mobile phones in two-and-a-half months.

"On Wednesday, the jail authorities conducted a raid in jail number 3 and seized 18 mobile phones and chargers. In the last over two months, the jail authorities have seized 348 mobile phones.

"The jail superintendents have started conducting raids after developing intelligence inside the prisons. Through this, the criminal world is now getting a strong message," Baniwal said.

## AGUSTAWESTLAND SCAM

# SC to hear bail pleas of Christian Michel on 7<sup>th</sup>

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said it would hear on February 7 the bail pleas of Christian Michel James, an alleged middleman in the AgustaWestland chopper scam in which the CBI and the ED have lodged two separate cases.

The matter came up for hearing before a bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala, which said the pleas would be heard next Tuesday.

The Rs 3,600-crore alleged scam relates to the purchase of 12 VVIP helicopters from AgustaWestland.

In May last year, the apex court had sought the responses of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on the bail pleas of James.

During an earlier hearing, the counsel for the accused had said the case was covered under

section 436A of the CrPC (maximum period for which an under trial prisoner can be detained) and James had served 50 per cent of the sentence for the offence allegedly committed by him.

The accused was extradited from Dubai in December 2018 and has been in custody since then, his counsel had said, adding that the probe against him was yet to be concluded.

The lawyer had said the petitioner's case is that under sections 8 and 9 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, the maximum sentence is five years in jail and he has spent nearly four years in prison.

Appearing in the court on behalf of the probe agencies, Additional Solicitor General SV Raju had earlier said with great difficulty, the agencies got the custody of the accused and section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) would not apply to ED proceedings.



## IF BONDS NOT FURNISHED WITHIN MONTH

# Consider modifying prisoners' bail: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Noting that a number of under-trial prisoners are in jail even after being granted bail, the Supreme Court has asked courts concerned to consider modifying the conditions imposed if the bonds were not furnished within a month.

Issuing a slew of directions, a bench of Justices S K Kaul and Abhay S Oka said one of the reasons that delays the release of an accused or a convict is the insistence upon a local surety and suggested that in such cases, the courts may not impose the condition of local surety.

"In cases where the under-trial or convict requests that he can

furnish bail bonds or sureties once released, then in an appropriate case, the court may consider granting temporary bail for a specified period to the accused so that he can furnish bail bonds or sureties.

"If the bail bonds are not furnished within one month from the date of grant bail, the concerned court may suo motu take up the case and consider whether the conditions of bail require modifications or relaxations," the bench said. The

top court also directed that a court granting bail to an under-trial prisoner or a convict would be required to e-mail a soft copy of the order to the prisoner through the jail superintendent on the same day or the next day. "The jail superintendent would be required to enter the date of grant of bail in the e-prisons software (or any other software being used by the prison department).

"If the accused is not released within a period of

seven days from the date of grant of bail, it would be the duty of the superintendent of jail to inform the secretary, DLSA, who may depute a paralegal volunteer or jail-visiting advocate to interact with the prisoner and assist the prisoner in all ways possible for his release," the bench said.

The apex court also directed the National Informatics Centre to make attempts to create necessary fields in the e-prison software so that the date of grant of bail and the date of release are entered by the prison department and in case the prisoner is not released within seven days, then an automatic e-mail can be sent to the DLSA secretary.



## GLOBALISED CRIME SCENARIO

# Increased international cooperation among police agencies needed: CBI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CBI Director Subodh Jaiswal on Thursday called for an "imperative need" for increased international cooperation among police agencies in the Globalised crime scenario.

Addressing the valedictory session of the Interpol Young Global Police Leaders Programme (YGPLP) attended by 59 young police officers from 44 countries in Mumbai, Jaiswal said young leaders should imbibe leadership qualities with a wider international perspective.

"Faced with increasing



transnational and complex crimes, the partnerships across jurisdiction and disciplines shall become an increasingly crucial tool for policing," the CBI, which hosted the programme, said in a statement.

According to the CBI, identification, analysis, visualization of concepts to help build

or maintain trust within global criminal investigation; importance of international cooperation and the role of Interpol as its proponent and global network building would become of essence, it said.

International coaches and trainers interacted with participants during the programme where topics such as emerging trends in policing, issues of growing challenge for law enforcement, need to build trust with citizens and fighting crime in an increasingly digitalized world were discussed.

The participants got an exposure of the Indian Police

system, its professional capabilities, innovations and best practice, which could be emulated in their respective countries.

The participants visited CBI headquarters, National Forensic Science University (NFSU), Gandhinagar and Mumbai Police control room.

They were briefed about building trust through community policing and management of mass gatherings like Ganapati festival and challenges of terrorism with specific reference of Mumbai terror attacks, the agency said in a statement.



## Time to act

The Government and regulators must ensure the meltdown of Adani stocks doesn't cause more pain

Amid the war in Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message to Russian President Vladimir Putin was: "Today's era must not be of war." With bloodbath on Dalal Street unabated, his Government must send a similar message across the political parties. The facts are horrifying. After the publication of the Hindenburg Research report, the market-cap of seven listed Adani Group companies has declined by about \$100 billion. The Adani Group had to call off its Rs 20,000-crore follow-on public offering (FPO), the largest in the country, to shield its investors from potential losses. Group chairman Gautam Adani said in a statement that "it would not be morally correct" to proceed with the FPO. In fact, the entire stock market, especially banking scrips, has suffered because of the meltdown of Adani shares. Even the excellent Budget, which has been widely hailed as pro-growth, could not lift the investors' spirits. It must be noted here that the free fall of Adani shares should not be seen as something that only its promoters and investors (institutional or retail) should be worried about; this also affects banks which have lent to the group. Furthermore, this also affects the public exchequer, for most banks in our country are in the public sector; and losses to them necessitate recapitalisation, which the taxpayer has to bear. Consider this fact: public sector banks had to be paid Rs 310,997 crore of taxpayer money for their recapitalisation in just four years, between 2016-17 and 2020-21.

Against this backdrop, the response of the political class to the crisis occasioned by the US short-seller Hindenburg's report is anything but responsible; instead of taking on the crisis head on, our politicians are trying to score brownie points. In Parliament, Opposition parties demanded a discussion on the risks Indian investors face because of the unrelenting decline of Adani shares. They also demanded an investigation by a parliamentary committee or one appointed by the Supreme Court. Both Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar rejected these demands, leading to pandemonium in the Houses. The Government's silence over the mayhem in the capital market is not helping anyone. The Adani Group has also failed to convince the investors. Calling Hindenburg as the "Madoffs of Manhattan" which has "no credibility or ethics" doesn't do any good to the conglomerate. Its invocation of nationalism — labeling Hindenburg's allegations as not "merely an unwarranted attack on any specific company but a calculated attack on India" and its growth story — also cut no ice. Not with the investors anyway; the Hindenburg report seems to have woken them up, for it was not secret that Adani stocks were majorly overvalued. Hindenburg's allegations of fraud and market manipulation are new though. Even if the allegations are wrong, one wonders why didn't the regulators never warned and took against overvaluation. It is time for action.

### PICTALK



Sand artist Ajay Rawat creates a sand art for the upcoming Jaisalmer Desert Festival 2023, in Pushkar

## Don't Weaken MNREGA

Allocation for MNREGA has been slashed in the Budget which would hit hard the downtrodden

While the tax slabs hogged the limelight of the Budget 2023 presented by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, one thing that has been overlooked by most is that the budget for the MNREGA has been slashed along with other social security schemes. The impact of weakening MNREGA could be really bad for the rural poor. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) is the lifeline for poor village women workers who work in the vicinity of their homes to earn their subsistence. The Finance Minister has reduced the allocation to MNREGA to Rs 60,000 crore, the lowest in the last four budgets. This year's budget allocation for the scheme has declined by 29000 crores. The scheme was introduced in 2005 by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance and is aimed at ensuring the livelihood security of households in rural areas. The demand-driven scheme guarantees 100 days of unskilled work annually for every rural household and covers all districts in the country. In fact, it has been so popular that even the World Bank took note of it and praised it. MNREGA has been ranked as the world's largest public works program by the World Bank, providing social security net to almost 15 percent of the country's population.

Besides MNREGS, the government has cut down the National Social Assistance Program to Rs 9,636.32 crore from the 2022-23 revised estimate of Rs 9,652 crore. The program provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows, and persons with disabilities in the form of social pensions. The budget for Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2, aimed at welfare of children and women, has been brought down to Rs 20,263 from the 2022-23 revised estimate of Rs 20,554. It is rather sad that the Central Government is reducing the subsidies and also weakening the social security net which is the need of the hour, especially after the pandemic as many people who suffered have not recovered fully. MNREGA is an excellent scheme for it provides work and does not give freebies and that too in the vicinity of the beneficiaries so is convenient for the women. In 2022-23 6.49 crore households demanded work under the Scheme. Out of this, 6.48 crore households were offered employment by the government. The budget allocation to MNREGA as for other social schemes must not be cut, it would hit the poorest of the poor. The Govt must revise its budget allocation to strengthen the social security.

# Budget booster for tech-economy

The Finance Minister has done well to give a fillip to the tech-based skills in the budget to give a leg up to the economy

This 'techade' (decade of technology) will serve as an important period to close the gaps in digitization and accelerate growth in the nation's technology sector. 2023 has been identified as a crucial year for the elimination of the digital divide, as stated in The NITI Aayog 'India @ 75' report, and aggressively strengthening digital literacy, specifically among rural demographics and marginalized communities, is of the essence. The Union Budget 2023-24, steered by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, by placing emphasis on both inclusive development and youth empowerment among its key economic priorities, sets a positive tone for the way forward.

Several progressive initiatives were announced during the Budget presentation, including the expansion of the Skill India Digital platform and its linking with employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 to skill lakhs of youth in modern technologies like AI, robotics, and soft skills would enable future-ready talent, especially from Tier 2 and 3 cities at scale and foster greater employment opportunities. Entrepreneurship has been given a major fillip through the introduction of collectives formed to support entrepreneurs with product design, branding, product marketing, and market expansion. The efforts of mobilizing resources and enabling entrepreneurship opportunities for rural women will be instrumental in facilitating better livelihoods for marginalized communities. As the technology and skilling ecosystem joins the nation in formulating its vision for 'India @ 100', considering current systemic realities and strategizing solutions to bridge crucial gaps is the need of the hour. The NITI Aayog, in its 'India @ 75' report, identifies a few of these challenges that need to be overcome in order to support the empowerment of marginalized demographics: a) limited industry knowledge and immersion among graduates, b)



little to no integration of the informal sector into the skill economy, c) limited provisions to align skilling certifications with international parameters, d) limited avenues for an apprenticeship, e) little to no inclusion of vocational training as a part of the educational curriculum. Achieving inclusive digitization, catalyzing rural women's empowerment, and accelerating the pace of skilling would call for a comprehensive strategy rooted in an understanding of the complex issues facing each priority area.

Social stigma prevalent in sections of rural society prevents women from gaining access to mobile devices, let alone having access to the internet. Research conducted by J-PAL in Niger reveals that families with women members having access to mobile devices and the internet contributed greatly to their agency in family decisions. Empowering women through access to technology and quality entrepreneurship opportunities has a ripple effect on the local community and the economy at large. Lessons from grassroots initiatives also reveal that connecting digitization and skilling initiatives to a strong objective had a higher degree of success among women beneficiaries. Rural women, for instance, had a greater chance of acquainting

SEVERAL PROGRESSIVE INITIATIVES WERE ANNOUNCED DURING THE BUDGET PRESENTATION, INCLUDING THE EXPANSION OF THE SKILL INDIA DIGITAL PLATFORM

themselves with the internet in order to support their children's education. Encouraging the use of mobile technology among women and sustaining a well-knit entrepreneurial ecosystem with provisions for knowledge sharing can help counter social stigma and restrictive gender ideas.

The Budget announcements tailored to increase the knowledge base of the rural youth can be further complemented by incentives for apprenticeship and mentorship programs. The Union Budget for the previous financial year laid the foundation for digital skilling through initiatives such as the DESH Stack e-portal and the launch of several online courses aimed at increasing employability among the youth and equipping them with the tools to build a stable livelihood. Aligning the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) with the evolving requirements of multiple industries was also a priority. Apprenticeship programs can incentivize rural youth to gain employment experience in close proximity to their place of stay and subsequently enrich their community's skill base. Mentorship programs can help them be aware of the career opportunities awaiting them and give them access to hands-on training that will enhance their growth prospects. More

rural youth can be included in the skilled talent pool of India by way of these initiatives.

Acknowledging and understanding the heterogeneity of rural demographics is the first step toward designing, strategizing, and deploying solutions. Placing the user at the center of any intervention and facilitating its seamless integration into their routines are crucial to their success. In a similar vein, programs such as Aspirational Districts and the newly announced Aspirational Blocks Programme can efficiently close the key infrastructure and knowledge gaps in rural regions. Maintaining the momentum of digital skilling drives and expanding its ambit to demographics that have little to no access to the internet or cell phones will remain a key priority for 2023 and the years to come. With the appropriate Budgetary push both at and Union and State levels, many of the challenges that hamper the expansion of upskilling programs can be effectively addressed. All round-stakeholder participation will be required to support the budgetary initiatives and make inclusive digitization a reality.

(The writer is CEO NASSCOM Foundation, a social development sector professional. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### DON'T FORGET THE DOWNTRODDEN

Sir — A much popular veteran Bollywood superstar had tweeted with much pleasure that the "whole country" will go to sleep "peacefully" at night from now (following the attainment of that statistical jugglery named "Century of Centuries" by a certain cricketer "God")! That means the poorest of poor dominating the landscape of India were possessing only one aspiration in life — "When that elusive 100th ton would come"! Now that it has come, we can afford to "enjoy" a "sound sleep" or "sweet dreams" every night! What a naked display of inhuman indifference to the plight of millions of Indians who have to go to bed with deadly pangs of hunger in their stomachs night after night! Or might be in the eyes of class-conscious Indians, the marginalised poor simply don't exist or just do not matter at all! After all the country is the "zamindari" of privileged class only; no wonder why "subsidies" to poor are so frowned upon, but tax breaks concessions free medical/travel facilities for the industrialists corporate honchos and high salaried class are always welcomed with open arms in the name of "incentives"! In this pathetic inhumanitarian perspective, it is natural that the trumpet of "Each and every Indian today stands at the summit of self-confidence" would be blown in regular intervals!

When millions are at their wits' end how to survive the day, procure health care with unaccountable children getting brutally exploited in labour market (not to speak of bonded labours) and adults compelled to leave for civil war-torn Middle East or Africa to toil in slave-like conditions; how heartlessly can an image of an exclusive well-fed much-nourished India being blatantly projected either to sweep the scars of the society under "patriotic" carpet or to simply convey that non-privileged Indians do not matter at all in "national consciousness"! Nothing can be more heartless than such a mindset!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

### India on top of the world



India is on top of the world, won the 3rd T20 versus New Zealand by a big margin of 168 runs. It won the series hands down 2-1. It fell short of just 5 runs to equal the world record

### SAVE TREES, SAVE LIFE

Sir — The Tree is a big creature of nature, it is very beneficial thing for entire world, it purifies the earth from pollution and gives fresh air, most important thing is it gives shade, fruits and food for Animals, its wood have many benefits too, people make different furniture. In India the government forbids people to cut down the tree, but many people do cut down and take their wood for burning and making food, as a result the air has been polluted. If the air is polluted how can we survive?

That is why many of the campaigns to save trees are launched. Your planet needs you, unite to combat, climate change, Pure air is nothing but life. Save forest Save wildlife. Save trees!

Sufyan Nazeer Al Qasmi | Bijnor

### THE MALES DOMINATE THE JOBS

Sir — The overall job scenario both in terms of nature and duration of contracts is strongly tilted in favour of males as females often tend to lose job on account of family compulsions, night shifts and other economic constraints that several surveys and studies have clearly demonstrated. Enrollment must increase in S.T. E.M.Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics for women folk so as to make it more representative and economically viable. The All India

margin of Romania. The highest T20 cricket's victory margin records are: 173 runs margin of Romania (on 29th Aug 2019) and 172 runs margin of Sri Lanka (vs Kenya in Sept 2007). India scored a big score of 234 for 4 in the 3rd T20. Indian bowlers milled NZ to a paltry 66 off 12.1 overs. All cricket fans are waiting for the Australian team's visit to India, for 4 test matches series (9th Feb to 13th Mar 2023) and 3 ODIs series (17th, 19th and 22nd Mar 2023). So long test series of 4 matches, after a long time for India and cricket fans.

PV Srinivas Nivriti | Secunderabad

Survey on Higher Education report (A.I.S.H.E.) 2020 21 report too shows some worrisome trends, like more men opting for sciences and less women folk taking science steam which must change for the better irrespective of the fact that women enrolment has increased manifold from 18.8 million in 2019 .20 to 20.1 million in 2020.21.

However, women are under represented in engineering and management courses i.e. less than 30% and 40% respectively. The U.G.C. has come up with a plan to conduct Social outreach programmes by involving parents special interactive sessions. So, harnessing the true potential of skilled female labour force will not just launch the country on the path of development but also reduce gender disparity apart from making them economically secure. An enabling environment in work places by providing women mentors can be encouraging. The educationalists and policymakers have their task cut out. Let us not forget women are fifty percent of humanity and they deserve a better deal. Give them a better deal and the world would become a better place.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Almora

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUND BITE

Today's budget is against the poor people. It's anti-people. That's why I condemn this budget. There is no light in this budget, it's only darkness. It contains lies, bluff. It's to show people something and misinformation because of upcoming elections.

West Bengal chief minister — Mamata Banerjee

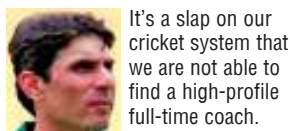


The activists who carried out the demonstrations act as "useful idiots" for foreign powers who want to inflict harm on the Scandinavian country as it seeks to join NATO.

Swedish Prime Minister — Ulf Kristersson

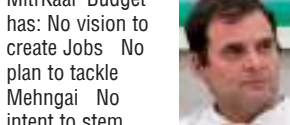
I love my wife. I love my family. I'm in love with life. I think that is what reaches the audience.

Actor — Vicky Kaushal



It's a slap on our cricket system that we are not able to find a high-profile full-time coach.

Former Pakistan captain — Misbah-ul-Haq Misbah



MitrKaal' Budget has: No vision to create Jobs No plan to tackle Mehngai No intent to stem Inequality. This Budget proves Govt has No roadmap to build India's future.

Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



FIRST COLUMN

ECO-POLITICAL SURVEY HAS EYES ON '24 POLLS

It highlights the reforms regime brought in by current Govt



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The Economic Survey is a policy document that gives a diagnostic report regarding the state of the economy and growth prospects. The survey for 2022-23 (based on nearly nine months of economic data for the fiscal) is far more insightful on the tone of the eco-political narrative, which is going to play out in the run up to the mother of all democratic processes, the national general elections of 2024.

In a somewhat break from past Economic Surveys, this year's economic survey seems more of a political document, highlighting through charts, graphs and illustrations, the economic welfare agenda of the current government starting from 2014. It was expected to be in the budget, but with the economic survey grabbing many of those, easy to grasp charts, suggests that the Modi government is really gearing up for pushing India to be the third largest world economy in about a decade's time (caveat that is two new governments, one or both of which is unlikely to have Mr Modi leading the country from the front).

The Economic Survey highlights the reforms regime brought in by the current government immediately after it came to power, which were aimed at enhancing the overall structural efficiency and fundamentals of the economy. The finance ministry's press statement read: "With an underlying emphasis on improving the ease of living and doing business, the reforms after 2014 were based on the broad principles of creating public goods, adopting trust-based governance, co-partnering with the private sector for development, and improving agricultural productivity."

Some examples of those reforms included improved fiscal transparency and realistic revenue assumptions in the budget bringing down extra budgetary borrowings for the government to nearly nil for fiscal year 2023. The major reforms from previous budget documents highlighted in the economic survey included reduction in non-plan expenditure in the budget, thereby, efficiently streamlining government's expenditures towards targeted sectors, while sticking to a fiscal discipline.

The merger of the railways budget with the main budget since fiscal year 2018 helped the government have better management of finances and allowed the finance ministry to focus more money on the integrated infrastructure divisions of railways, roads and ports more efficiently. The Economic Survey did not mention that this smart move brought an efficiency in railways governance, which prior 2014, has been used as a separate vote bank, since some of the most visible and sought after government jobs are in the railways. Finally, the Economic survey does highlight that advancing the general budget to February 1 gives an additional month for all departments of the government for better planning and implementation of the budget schemes.

It is important to understand that the Economic survey presents a macro narrative for the political economy. This document has tons of easily digestible data. The Survey for the first time includes chapters on social sector and climate change and environment, two themes very close to the Prime Minister's inclusive sustainable economic growth agenda. The preface reads, "These chapters highlight how the use of technology has enhanced the quality of life for citizens to ensure the reach of social sector schemes to intended beneficiaries, especially during the pandemic. The transformations in the lives of the citizens happening through the Aspirational Districts Programme, Direct Benefit Transfers, use of Aadhaar and various initiatives in the education, health and basic infrastructure availability are highlights of the chapter."

Clearly the economic report card of Modi government's two consecutive terms is out, and much to the innovative thinking of the current bunch of policy makers, who have pushed it out even before the opposition parties have asked for it. This sets the agenda and helps the political class to take the lead in the perception game. It is up to the various political players within the ruling dispensation to take advantage.

(The author is a foreign affairs commentator)



# Bringing back OPS may be catastrophic



UTTAM GUPTA

The new pension scheme or NPS has addressed the inequity issue by providing a platform to the private sector

Even as the finances of states were beginning to look better as reflected in decline in the ratio of state government debt to GDP from 31.2 per cent during 2021-22 to 29.5 per cent during 2022-23—as per the budgetary estimate (BE)—the political brass in different states have made populist announcements which don't augur well for the future. One of these relates to the revival of the old pension scheme (OPS).

Making a statement in the Lok Sabha, the Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad said, "The state governments of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand have informed the Central government about their decisions to restart OPS for their respective employees."

The Congress government in Himachal Pradesh has also announced restoration of OPS. In view of impending elections in nine state assemblies during 2023 and almost all non-BJP parties more than willing to please voters, more and more states are expected to join the bandwagon. As for the central government employees, although for now, Karad informed Parliament that the Centre has no proposal to resurrect the OPS.

At the outset, let us understand pension. A pension provides a person with monthly income when he is old and hence not productive enough to be able to earn. The increase in life expectancy and rise in the cost of living further reinforces the need for assured monthly income for a decent and dignified life in old age.

Under the OPS, retired employees received 50 per cent of their last drawn salary as monthly pension. As on date, the minimum pension paid by the government is Rs 9,000 a month, and the maximum is Rs 62,500 (50 per cent of the highest pay in the Central government, which is Rs 125,000 a month).

Just as the government offers its employees an adjustment in dearness allowance or DA - calculated as a percentage of the basic salary - to offset increase in the cost of living, the monthly payouts of pensioners also increases. Since, the DA hikes are announced twice a year, generally in January and July, a retiree also gets hikes in pension. For instance, with a 4 per cent increase in DA, a pensioner eligible for Rs 62,500 would get a monthly pension of Rs 65,000.

A government employee under OPS could not have gotten anything better. He was entitled to a decent 'pre-determined' monthly amount; the pension was fully protected against inflation and got it as long as he lived. After death, his wife gets the same amount for seven years and thereafter the family pension being around 60 per cent of this till she is alive.

However, from the perspective of the government, the arrangement could not have been worse. Given the architecture of the scheme, there was an inherent tendency of pension liabilities to balloon due



AS ON OCTOBER 31, 2022, APART FROM AROUND 8,200,000 NPS SUBSCRIBERS IN THE GOVERNMENT (STATES 5,900,000 AND CENTRE 2,300,000), THE CORPORATE SECTOR HAD ABOUT 1,600,000 SUBSCRIBERS, AND THE UNORGANISED SECTOR 2,550,000

(The author is a policy analyst)



to addition to the pensioners' club every year, higher salaries of those joining, inflation indexation, increased longevity and so on. The proof of pudding is in the eating.

In 1990-91, the Centre's pension bill was Rs 3,272 crore. By 2020-21, it had jumped 58 times to Rs 190,886 crore. The outgo for all states put together shot up 125 times from Rs 3,131 crore in 1990-91 to Rs 386,001 crore in 2020-21. Overall, pension payments by states accounted for a quarter of their own tax revenues.

For some states, pension payments took away a much higher share of their own tax revenue. For Himachal Pradesh, it was 80 per cent whereas for Punjab and Rajasthan, it was 35 per cent and 30 per cent respectively.

After payment of wages and salaries to the serving employees and other routine expenses, hardly any money was left with these states for meeting development and welfare expenses.

Prudent financial management required that every year, the government set aside capital which together with return accruing thereon would create a growing corpus sufficient to pay for the pension liabilities. This would have provided for a sustainable basis for discharging these liabilities without causing any stress on the budget. In short, there was a need for funding the pension liability. That was never done.

Instead, both the Centre and states have followed 'pay-as-you-go' impacting their budgets in a totally uncontrolled manner, besides making the present generation of taxpayers to bear the continuously rising burden of pensioners. Moreover, given the persistent shortfall in tax revenue, they

were forced to borrow more and more thereby passing on the burden to future generations of taxpayers as well.

According to an expert committee (2000) under S A Dave, a former chairman of SEBI, on Old Age Social and Income Security (OASIS), just 3.4 crore people, or less than 11 per cent of the estimated total working population of 31.4 crore (as per 1991 census), had some post-retirement income security such as government pension, Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), or the Employee Pension Scheme (EPS).

The rest of the workforce had no means of post-retirement economic security. In this backdrop, using a disproportionate share of state resources for benefitting a tiny section of the working population was iniquitous and unconscionable.

To address the above concerns, a new pension scheme (NPS) was introduced for government employees joining service from January 1, 2004. NPS is a contributory pension scheme under which employees contribute 10 per cent of their salary (Basic + Dearness Allowance). The government contributes 14 per cent towards the employees' NPS accounts.

NPS is free from all the malaises afflicting OPS. It offers a self-financing and fully funded arrangement for discharging pension liabilities in which the state knows for certain 'how much it has to contribute'. There won't be any major stress on the budget even as the employee gets a good pension depending on the amount of contribution made, the age of joining, type of investment, and the income accruing from that investment.

Under this scheme, the pensioner enjoys a lot of flexibility; he

can increase the pension amount by asking his fund manager to invest in say a 'growth fund' wherein 50 per cent of the corpus can be put in equity which is capable of generating better returns than investment in corporate bonds or government securities.

The government has made NPS more attractive by offering fiscal incentives such as deduction up to 10 per cent of salary (basic+ DA) within overall ceiling of Rs.150,000/- u/s 80C in respect of employee contribution; deduction up to Rs.50,000 u/s 80 CCD(1B) for additional (albeit voluntary) contribution and deduction up to 10 per cent of salary u/s 80 CCD(2) towards employer contribution (this is over and above the limits u/s 80C).

The NPS has also addressed the inequity issue by providing a platform to the private sector, including the unorganised sector to secure pension post-retirement.

As on October 31, 2022, apart from around 8,200,000 subscribers in the government (states 5,900,000 and Centre 2,300,000), the corporate sector had about 1,600,000 subscribers, and the unorganised sector 2,550,000. In addition, there were around 4,200,000 subscribers under the NPS Swavalamban scheme—designed especially for the poor and the under-privileged citizens.

Having made good progress in providing a sustainable basis for financing pension liabilities under NPS, for states now to go back to OPS is a retrograde move. This must be avoided or else India could plunge into fiscal catastrophe, come 2034 when they will have to start paying pension to the first lot of those who came under NPS in 2004 and now being shifted to OPS.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE INDIAN RAILWAYS CAPITAL OUTLAY HAS BEEN SET AT 2.40 LAKH CRORE, HIGHEST EVER; 9X OF WHAT WAS IN 2013. — FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN



IS THIS FOR THE EMPLOYEES OR FOR NEW RECRUITMENTS OR IS IT JUST FOR THE MODERNISATION OF RAILWAYS BEFORE SELLING IT TO PRIVATE COMPANIES. — CHHATTISGARH CHIEF MINISTER BHUPESH BAGHEL

# Cyber security, technical education on the horizon

The Indian education sector will see a surge in courses such as risk assessment, financial fraud protection, and system auditing

The government has been at the forefront of driving technology-led initiatives through flagship programmes like Startup India and Digital India to foster a favorable business environment for existing and new businesses to become global unicorns. Therefore, it is now the best time to encourage Indian students to choose cyber security as a career option to introduce young talent at the gates of Indian cyber security.

The education sector in India is sprouting with both elaborate masterclasses and crash courses to facilitate technical education among the youth and cope with its trend simultaneously. Cyber security employment will be in a great demand in future if the



ABHISHEK MITRA

(The author is CEO and Founder of Indian Cyber Security Solutions)

current trend continues.

India's cyber security colleges have been offering a variety of courses that are relevant to the shifting conditions. Given India's massive demand for cyber security specialists, anyone interested in studying a cyber-security education will benefit in the long run. Technical education promotes manpower development and equips persons with skills that will enable them to create, develop and establish industries in various areas.

There are several reasons contributing to the buzz across the education sector pertaining to cyber security and technical education. One of the major factors that are causing Indian students to be more inclined towards cyber security and technical education-based

courses is a global wave of demand for skilled resources in these disciplines. This upsurge in demand has come with the advent of the technology-based revolution which positively impacted all sectors from government to banking. This trend is also evergreen by design, as the new frontier of industries will require a knowledge and tech-skill-based workforce. Owing to this, students are demanding more related courses. Also, there is a demand for a sustainable career, which is future shock proof. We are all familiar with the buzz of how growing advancements in the field of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and automation is causing the eradication of the human labour force.

However, this threat is not

there in the domain of cyber security and other technical-based jobs because it requires constant human intervention and check-ups along with building new frameworks and firewalls; this as of today is not efficiently possible by AI or ML alone. As a result, high schools, community colleges, policymakers, and families are trying to prepare children for a rapidly changing future, and stakeholders across the Indian education ecosystem are competing to provide them with better technical education.

The enormous demand for a competent cyber security savvy and technically sound workforce have arisen across a variety of different sectors as a result of how internet and software integration has affected all industries, sectors, and

sub-sectors, bringing about a fundamental change in the way things are done. Financial institutions, law businesses, real estate companies, stock brokerage firms, insurance companies, and many more are examples of the range and amount of demand from which students can choose.

The government realised the significance of technical courses and how they can contribute to the nation's society and economy. Multi-disciplinarity and a holistic education across the technical studies to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge forms is a salient feature of the New Education Policy-2020. The government endeavoured for the promotion of technical education across the country by estab-

lishing various Institutes of National Importance that include 23 Indian Institutes of Technology. Scheme for promotion of Research and Academic Collaboration (SPARC), National Initiative for Design Innovation (NIDI), Scheme for Transformational and Advanced Research in Sciences (STARS), etc., are implemented in the Ministry of Education for the promotion of technical education and research ecosystem in Higher Education Institutes.

Auxiliary factors responsible for the rapid growth of the hype in cybersecurity-related courses and other technical courses is the scarcity of efficient talent in the tech-first labor market coupled with the huge and diver-

sified demand by organizations across sectors, the monetary remunerations are quite lucrative. Small-duration certification programs directed toward a specific discipline or sub-arena of cyber security are gaining quick momentum and vivid popularity among both young students and professionals. These are acting as a quick guide and gateway into these detailed studies.

In the coming times, the Indian education sector will observe dynamic demand surges concerning technical studies, vocational studies, and cyber security courses such as risk assessment, financial fraud protection, and system auditing among others in both long and short formats across both institutions and ed-tech companies.







# Adam Driver-starrer action-thriller 65 to release in India on March 10

Actor Adam Driver's upcoming film 65, an action-packed thriller, is all set to be released in India on March 10. Movie's logline: After a catastrophic crash on an unknown planet, pilot Mills (Adam Driver) quickly discovers he's actually stranded on Earth...65 million years ago. Now, with only one chance at rescue, Mills and the only other survivor, Koa (Ariana Greenblatt), must make their way across an unknown terrain riddled with dangerous pre-his-

toric creatures in an epic fight to survive. From the writers of A Quiet Place and producer Sam Raimi comes 65, a sci-fi thriller starring Adam, Ariana Greenblatt, and Chloe Coleman. Written and directed by Scott Beck and Bryan Woods and produced by Sam Raimi, Deborah Lieblich and Zainab Azizi, Scott Beck and Bryan Woods. Sony Pictures Entertainment India will release 65 in cinemas on March 10 in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.



## BHUVAN BAM

reveals what made him want to switch from comedy to acting

Content creator who started with Vines and now has a YouTube channel with over 25 million subscribers, Bam recently made his OTT debut with Taaza Khabar and Dhindora. Just after his recent release, Rafta Rafta for Amazon miniTV, he talked about the ease with which he's been switching between genres like comedy, drama, and romance, all while eating biryani, making paper planes, and chilling with a gigantic teddy bear! "Rafta Rafta is a slice of life, breezy show that people can watch any time of the day with anyone they want, especially their partners. Newlywed couples would love the show because there's so much to learn from this," he explained. On the trajectory of his acting career, he said, "I had been doing comedy for six to seven years, and Dhindora was something I wanted to do. It was my baby. But then



Taaza Khabar happened. One-pager of the show attracted me to the point where I wanted to do it anyhow, and I wanted it to be my debut project. And now Rafta Rafta because I want families to sit together and watch my show. All three have a different essence." For his fans, Bam recommended three movies he'd like everyone to watch, "One is Kumbhalangi Nights. It's too rooted, and the story shows the real India. The cinematography is top-notch. The other movie that I would love people to watch is Tumbbad because it is way ahead of its time. I feel bad for the people who haven't watched it yet. The third movie I want people to watch is Naseeruddin Shah's Paar because it has Naseeruddin Shah in it." When asked to name an Indian movie of 2023 he would have loved to be a part of, Bam said, "Animal because of Ranbir Kapoor and Dunki because of Hiran sir, and of course, Shah Rukh Khan."



## ANGAD BEDI & NEHA DHUPIA to be paired together on screen for the very first time

Angad Bedi, who is always a treat to watch on screen, now is all set to be paired opposite for the first time on screen with his wife Neha Dhupia. The duo who have been now married for nearly 5 years, and going to be seen enchanting the audiences with their chemistry on screen. The duo are the most admired couple with their love which is clearly visible whenever the duo are seen together in public and on their respective social media. The couple is now coming together for a comedy-drama which is penned by popular author Chetan Bhagat. The shoot for the film has already culminated and was shot in Mumbai.

Agand will be playing the character of Raghavan Rao and Neha plays the role of his wife, Savi. The story revolves around a married couple living together during the covid lockdowns. A source reveals, "It's a funny story based on a couple and their shared relationship living together during the covid lockdown. It's an exciting proposition as the duo are social media goals when it comes to being the adorable couple they're and the casting was done keeping their natural chemistry in mind. This is the first time Neha and Angad are paired opposite to each other and the project has recently been completed."

# RUPERT GRINT says filming Harry Potter was 'suffocating'



Actor Rupert Grint gained the spotlight after starring in the film adaptations of the Harry Potter book series. He was only 11 years old when he was cast in the movies and was 22 years old by the time the film series ended, reports 'Deadline'. In a recent interview, Grint said taking on the role of Ron Weasley was not easy and that he found filming "suffocating." "Potter was so full - (filming) all year, then we'd promote the rest of the time. It was quite suffocating," he told Bustle. Grint also said that by

the end of the Harry Potter saga he "wanted a break, to reflect on everything... It was an out-of-body experience for a while, but I think we finished at the right time. If we continued, it could've gone downhill." The actor reflected on the similarities his fictional character had with him personally, including being part of a numerous family. At the time of his casting, Grint said that he "was feeling the difficulty of being seen, being overshadowed. In the movies, we merged into one. By the end of it, I was playing myself. The lines were blurred."

Grint is grateful for the opportunities Harry Potter brought his way and knows that fans still remember him as Ron. "I answer to it, if someone calls me Ron," he said. "It's my second name." Grint will next be seen in the apocalyptic psychological horror Knock at the Cabin. He reunites with Servant director M. Night Shyamalan. Based on the novel The Cabin at the End of the World by Paul G. Tremblay, Grint also co-stars with Dave Bautista, Jonathan Groff, Ben Aldridge, Nikki Amuk-Oh, Kristen Cui and Abby Quinn.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- 1 A game with a bat and ball
- 2 Wear these on your feet
- 3 A large group of soldiers
- 4 School classes
- 5 A very large bird
- 6 A small sharp nail
- 7 See old stuff on display here
- 8 These are a kind of fungus that people eat
- 9 A stand for holding an artist's painting
- 10 World's highest mountain
- 11 Metal money
- 12 Opposite of outer
- 13 A person who shows you to your theatre seat
- 14 A greeting
- 15 The tiniest particle
- 16 Least dangerous
- 17 We breathe this
- 18 Too
- 19 A red sauce is made from these



### SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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





# Leaving the clouds behind, Urvashi Rautela tried skydiving

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The upcoming Tollywood debutant Urvashi Rautela, like others, had her dream country too, and she has crossed it off her bucket list. Wondered which country it was? It's Austria! "I was shooting for my international magazine cover in Vienna, and my motivation to visit that specific place was its small towns too. The breathtaking view will live on in my memory forever! I had never heard of anything called an ice cave, and there was it." There were plenty of things she tried in Vienna, such as "The museums and the palaces. I was just enjoying my peace along with a glamorous shoot. You'll only find green spaces there, with so many roses blooming. Which girl wouldn't want to be there? Vienna was the city I really fell in love with, and returning there will always be a big pleasure for me."

Enthusiastically, she shared that another place she's really fascinated with is Tulum, where "It was impossible to look away from its beaches. I happened to experience some jungle thrills too! Nobody should miss this magical trip to this place. It doesn't matter if I spend one day there or stay there longer, I enjoy every single hour in Tulum as it has a special place in my heart now." She also has her romantic pick. The actress revealed, "In any part of Europe, you are bound to fall in love. The medieval towns evoke romance in you when you are in Europe. There is nothing wrong with the classic dinner date at a restaurant, especially if it's in Europe. As much as Europe is famous, some cities in it still feel like underrated



destinations. It's easy to think that this city is all about monuments, but the truth is that it is much more interesting. To be honest, I was surprised by all the different things to do in Europe, and I was happy to discover its unexpected sides." We asked her what the quirkiest thing she has ever done on vacation was, and she responded, "One of the very famous influencers from Mexico is a really close friend of mine, and he's a trained skydiver. He made me go skydiving! I put on my harness and helmet, and I was given some instructions by him. After signing a few papers, I was on my way to the plane! This is when my heart

started to beat very fast, and I felt lots of adrenaline. Suddenly, I was 10,000 feet above the ground. I felt the wind rush against my face as I fell to the ground. Everything below me looked so small, and my breath was literally taken away. A once-in-a-lifetime experience, all thanks to my friend." Waltair Veerayya actress has a world map in her home. It's her everyday morning ritual of ticking off all the places she has been. She's been such a travel enthusiast from the time she became Miss Universe! Because she was born in the lap of the mountains, her first choice will always be those. She explained, "They are awe-inspiring. While growing up, I have seen these magnificent beauties all around me, and what's unforgettable is the serenity it gives. That's why I keep returning to my birth town with my family. Even if you don't climb it, just being around them is an adventure. That's my wholesome experience from childhood."

TICKING OFF TRAVELLING TO HER DREAM COUNTRY FROM THE BUCKET LIST, URVASHI RAUTELA SHARES HER TRAVEL TALES WITH THE PIONEER, AS WELL AS THE QUIRKIEST THING THAT SHE HAS DONE ON A VACATION.

# REJUVENATING THE legacy in music

TEJAL SINHA

Having been born into a family of musicians, Kaushiki Chakraborty is much more than just a classical vocalist. While most toddlers love playing with toys, Kaushiki was interested in music. In her illustrious career, she has lent her voice to a number of Hindi, Bengali, and South Indian films. A ten-day music concert featuring legendary Indian artists was recently held in Hyderabad to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary week of Shri Ram Chandraji Maharaj of Fatehgarh, known as Lalaji—the founder of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission. The Pioneer quickly connected with the virtuoso, who opened up about creative challenges, being compared with the veterans, the Indian Classical music scene, and more. Being the torchbearer of the Patiala Gharana tradition that was popularised by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Kaushiki feels that creative challenges are a process of growth. "Creative challenges are very personal for an artist and very difficult to put into words. They are a part of the process of growth. As an artist, when you grow, you go through transitions, and there are many phases of transitions. You break yourself and rebuild your craft, and every time you redefine yourself, you position yourself apart from it. So I think it's a constant process. It is not something that has happened in the past and would not happen. It's a constant, throbbing, growing discipline. Whichever way I am perceived now has nothing to do with my personal journey of growing as a musician. Creative challenges are many, and they keep happening. That's how it is and should be. It's a healthy way to develop. When you listen to your 5-year-old's music, you think, "This is not how I want to sing this song again if I get a chance; I would reinterpret that song and rag in a different way," which is my state of mind at the current moment." They say that being mentally prepared for a performance is just as important as being physically prepared. However, when we asked the artiste about her take on the same, she said, "Mental preparation is not just for a performance, I would say. I always say that the music is not the sound that you produce. Before that, it's the state of mind that you're in. When we learn and when we do our riyaz, we also work on the state of mind, which then translates into the music that we perform. Your state of mind and being has a huge impact on how you translate that into music because music is ultimately the transition between who you are and who you are becoming." While most musicians prefer to rehearse before the final performance, Kaushiki thinks otherwise. "We don't rehearse the performance, we prepare ourselves as musicians, which takes years of very persistent training, practice, and preparation, but you do not prepare for a particular performance. We don't rehearse, but it's the daily "riyaz". Our performance is absolutely impromptu, improvised, and created on the spot. As I said, the state of mind plays a very important role, we don't rehearse before a performance, but I think we prepare ourselves for every performance that's coming up," enthused the dulcet artiste, for whom music is an expression of life. For her, maintaining a balance among all the elements is an ideal performance. Kaushiki has been revered for experimenting with her singing, which she believes comes from a great deal of comfort with music. Being one of the most sought-after voices, Kaushiki has been compared to many veteran female singers, but

IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT WITH THE PIONEER, KAUSHIKI CHAKRABORTY, WHO WAS HERE IN HYDERABAD TAKING THE CITY ON A MELODIOUS RIDE, SHARES WITH US ABOUT CREATIVE CHALLENGES, BEING COMPARED WITH THE VETERANS, THE INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC SCENE, AND MORE.

she remains unaffected and says, "I wouldn't want to be compared with anyone because I'm too small and have always worshipped senior musicians who have inspired me through my journey and who I have learned so much from watching, understanding, and trying to decode their thought process, how they would think. I would consider them a guide; I would rather consider them a guru figure in the journey of learning music. I don't think you can ever compare a junior student's music to that of a senior practitioner. It's unfair, but I see where they come from—the audience or the critics—when they compare. I think they want to find a point of reference. Rather than comparing, they want to relate. As a student of music, I would want to

appreciate and devote myself to respecting their music rather than comparing myself with theirs." Indian classical music has always been around for over several centuries. However, classical music had faded away a few years ago, with young people becoming more interested in pop songs and other genres. But now, it looks like the Indian classical music scene is back, where many youngsters are much inclined towards the genre. And even Kaushiki couldn't stop herself from agreeing to this. "About 15 years ago, there was a media frenzy claiming that no young people were attending Indian Classical Music concerts and that no one was interested in it. I'm very happy that now it's changed, and the fact that it's changed at a time when I'm singing makes me happier and more proud of the time that I belong to. Many youngsters are taking a lot of interest in taking it as a career option, learning it, following it, coming to the concert, and getting a lot of inspiration and enthusiasm that I see around these youngsters, which is very inspiring. This ensures that this craft will thrive in the future because if the younger generations do not take an interest, it will be as if you are sowing a seed that you will only water, and there will be no one to care for it after you. My generation is in a beautiful space musically because we carry forward a legacy and we are connected to traditions." Apparently, there are sacrifices behind every success. But according to Kaushiki, "I would rather say contribution. Sacrifice is sometimes seen as a negative thing, but my parents, my guru, my family, my in-laws, my husband, my son, and myself have all put in our best effort so that music can happen. Everyone has done and not done so many things so that music can happen. Sacrifice only speaks of things that people have not done, but they have done so much more. I strongly believe that everyone has done so much with such an open heart and love that it has given me the life that I live now. I am indebted and thankful to God the Almighty for giving me such a beautiful purpose in life. And for every single person who came into my life."



# ORAL PIERCINGS AFFECT ON ORAL HEALTH

Piercings have always been in style. It's an adrenaline rush, a way of expression, a sense of freedom, and a style statement. This trend is here to stay. Back in the day people chose a simple minimalist ear lobe or nose piercing but today this trend has found its way to the belly, eyebrows, eyelashes, nose, lip, and even tongue! The question is do we really need to 'hop on the bandwagon' just to 'look cool' without adequate research? Dr. Kshama Chandan, celebrity dentist, founder of House of Tooth in Mumbai, explains the possible complications oral piercings can cause and how adequate research needs to be carried out before getting a metal poked in your mouth. Talking about oral piercings she states that your mouth is known to contain millions of bacteria and usually infection and swelling are the most common complications post-oral piercings. For instance, your mouth and tongue may swell to the point where your airway is closed or you could choke if the piercing breaks into your mouth.

**INFECTION:** Your mouth hosts millions of breeding bacteria which is an ideal environment for an infection to take place. This includes blood-borne hepatitis, angina, and herpes. An oral piercing is a foreign object in the mouth that increases the chances of developing an allergic reaction and soft tissue infection.

**INFLAMMATION WITH PAIN:** Pain and swelling are common symptoms of oral piercings. Worst case scenario your mouth and tongue may swell to the point where your airway is closed leading to difficulty in breathing or you could choke if piercing breaks in your mouth.

**UNCONTROLLABLE BLEEDING:** If a blood vessel is punctured by the needle during piercing, it could lead to uncontrollable bleeding, gum recession and severe blood loss.

**CHIPPED OR CRACKED TEETH:** If you bite too hard on your piercing there's a chance of chipping or cracking the tooth. Constant contact can progress to a fracture which will eventually need tooth removal. Teeth with prosthesis such as crowns or veneers or previously done fillings can also be damaged if the piercing hits against them.

**RECEDING GUMS:** Oral piercings can irritate and injure soft gum tissue causing long-term irreversible recession of gums, exposing the root of the tooth, and making the teeth more prone to decay and periodontal disease. Piercings in the mouth can interfere with normal oral function and cause excessive delay in your ability to pronounce words properly, and the flow of saliva and cause difficulty with swallowing and chewing. If you choose to have your mouth pierced or if you already have - don't fret! Make sure you get it done from a shop that is well sanitised and clean. Make sure the piercer keeps in



mind all the sanitisation protocols, is well experienced and adequately trained, and the gloves and needles used are disposable and not reused for anyone else.

**Guidelines to avoid complications:**

- Immediately just after the piercing make sure that your piercing heals, and doesn't get infected. You can rinse your mouth with salt and warm water or an antibacterial mouthwash. Be patient for about 3/4 weeks till it completely heals. Choose a lightweight plastic piercing to reduce your chances of tooth damage.
- Do not try to remove, disturb or twist your piercing before the area is completely healed.
- Avoid smoking or chewing tobacco as it interferes with the healing process.
- Avoid eating anything spicy, salty, or acidic. Stick to soft meals and comfort food
- No hot drinks, like coffee, tea, or hot chocolate.

Keep checking for any signs of infection after a piercing. If you have an unusual discharge, swelling, tenderness, redness, bleeding, rash and fever, immediately consult a doctor nearby

Is there a safe way to keep an oral piercing? Dr. Kshama says, "As long as your mouth stays free of infection and your oral piercings don't interfere with your normal dental routine, they can stay in your mouth indefinitely. Practice good oral hygiene, brushing and flossing twice daily. Keep regular appointments for teeth cleanings and check-ups. Those already having a piercing should be screened by a dental professional for early detection of the adverse effects and for possible complications on a regular basis. Just make sure you see your dentist at the first sign of pain or swelling with your oral piercing. There are many other ways to express yourself which do not involve permanently damaging your mouth. But, if you are considering getting on or you already have an oral piercing, be mindful about following the advice and prevent damage."



# TACKLING SLIDE SPIN WILL BE KEY TO OZ'S SUCCESS IN INDIA, SAYS McDONALD

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Australia head coach Andrew McDonald believes the biggest challenge for his side in the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Test Trophy will be to tackle "slide spin" from the Indian tweakers in the early overs.

As the tourists got down to the business of preparing for the gruelling four-Test series beginning in Nagpur on February 9, McDonald also warned his batters that they will have to come up with individual methods and techniques to counter the sliding deliveries.

The Australians have chosen to train all by themselves instead of playing tour games as they feel practice matches serve little purpose.

Both McDonald and Steve Smith have said that serving green tops for tour games and spinning tracks for actual games defeat the very purpose of playing practice matches.

"I think the new ball is the one that creates more of that slide and when the batters do get done on the inside ... we're preparing for that (during the preparatory camp in Bengaluru)," McDonald had said before the team's departure for Bengaluru on Wednesday. On Thursday, cricket.Com. Au re-tweeted images of the squad training at Alur, clicked by its journalist, which showed the touring party batters going about their paces in the nets.

"That slide spin, we'll expect the spinners to bowl early against our opening batters as well with the new ball so all that is taken care of in the training environment and (batting co-



ach) Diva (Michael Di Venuto) does a fantastic job in preparing. "The key to success there is to have a clear method and that will be individually based and depending on the conditions we're confronted with," McDonald was quoted as saying by Sydney Morning Herald on Thursday.

With prolific Usman Khawaja scheduled to arrive later on Thursday after his visa approval got delayed, he will join the touring party on Friday to prepare for the spin challenge in the right

earnest.

McDonald said that despite the squad training on their own, there will still be variation in the track offered at Alur and the ones on which Test matches will be played, and here batters will have to use their judgement while playing shots.

"We'll be trying to make sure the batters are clear on their method," said McDonald, adding, "You're never going to get exactly the same as you're going to get in a game, and that's one of the real complexities

around preparing for a cricket tour."

The coach, who took over from Justin Langer, said another reason for not playing a tour game in India was to keep players fresh at the back end of the month-long tour.

"We haven't played a tour game, for three years. It's probably not something new to us, put it that way," McDonald said.

"We value freshness at the back end of the tour. Something we've seen teams go there before and expend a lot of energy at the

front end. We feel with the profile of this group, quite an experienced group, quite an experienced batting unit as well, who have been there before, I think 11 out of the squad has been there before.

"A significant chunk of the squad that's been there before, so we feel that better places them leading in and then you never get guarantees over those practice game surfaces you get. Often, there's no real connection

between that practice game into the first Test match. We feel as though we can control the surfaces here," he added. He said the strategy would be to prepare a blueprint while training in Bengaluru and replicate it in Nagpur during the first Test.

"(We'll) get a bit more control in Bangalore to replicate what we're going to come up against and then we go into Nagpur fresh and hopefully it pays dividends at the back end."

## Australia will win on 'fair Indian wickets': Healy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Hosts India will have the upper hand if the tracks are rank turners in the upcoming Test series but Australia will win on "fair" pitches, feels former wicketkeeper Ian Healy.

"I think if they produce fair Indian wickets, that are good batting wickets, to start with, (that) probably spin and spin pretty consistently but spin a long way, late in the match ... we (Australia) win," Healy said on 'SENQ Breakfast'.

"I'm worried about (Mitchell) Starc and (Nathan) Lyon in the first Test ... if they're unfair wickets which I've seen in the last series, where balls were jumping ridiculously and sliding down low from day one, I think India play those conditions better than us," he added.

Healy advised the less-experienced Australian players to soak in the pressure and not commit any fielding lapses.

"I want the players to be very aware if they are escaping that pressure (from the locals) if you're escaping that pressure and hiding in your room using the golf simulator... I think you've got to do something else," he said.

"That's an escape, you shouldn't be doing it, you're dodging, just be very aware of what you are feeling at any given time. Immerse yourself before you really get to deploy your technique... don't drop catches, fielding can be difficult over there.

"What happens in India, to get ten wickets, you'll only get ten chances, whereas in Australia with bounce, carry and speed you can create 13 chances and you can waste a couple... but they don't come along as easy in India. I just think they have to live and breathe that pressure and have a philosophy over there."

Australia haven't won a Test series in India since 2004.

Technically & tactically, it was a near-perfect game for me: Shubman



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Young opener Shubman Gill said his unbeaten 63-ball 126 was "tactically and technically" a near-perfect game as it set up India's massive series-clinching 168-run win in the third T20I against New Zealand.

Gill smashed 12 boundaries and seven maximums in his scintillating maiden century in the shortest format to power India to a mammoth 234 for 4 in the final T20I.

The hosts then bundled out New Zealand for 66 in 12.1 overs to not only win the match but

also secure a 2-1 series win.

"To be able to play how I play, I have to be mentally clear," Gill said during an interaction with skipper Hardik Pandya, a video of which was posted on BCCI.Tv.

"This is what you (Hardik) told me. Every time I hit a six, he came and told me -- hold your shape in the next ball, you don't have to do anything extra, just do what you are doing and don't try to go too hard. Every ball he kept reminding me and that helped.

"In the last over of (Mitchell) Santner, I was in the zone and I was hitting. So, I thought I will go after him but you asked me to hold myself back and target other bowlers because he (Santner) is bowling well in the entire T20 series. So, tactically and technically it was a near-perfect game for me."

Player of the series' Pandya snapped four wickets as he bowled with the new ball to dismiss Finn Allen and Glenn Phillips. He later returned to take two more wickets to demolish the Kiwis.

"Four wickets, to be honest, are just part and parcel of the sport but I think I bowled at 145 (kmph) if I am not wrong and that kind of gave me the happiness and the smile you can see. So, I told him (Gill) today that it is my last game and I am going on a break," said Hardik, who will play his next game in about two months' time.

"So, today (Wednesday) gonna be full all guns blazing and I am going to bowl as fast as possible and, to be honest, the kind of start we got, it made our life very easy."

# Malan, Buttler and Archer earn consolation win for England

AP ■ KIMBERLEY

Dawid Malan and captain Jos Buttler hit centuries to set up a 59-run win for England in the third and final ODI against South Africa at the Diamond Oval in Kimberley on Wednesday.

Malan made 118 and Buttler scored 131 in an England total of 346 for seven. South Africa were bowled out for 287 with fast bowler Jofra Archer taking a career-best six for 40.

South Africa had already clinched the series by winning the first two matches but England captain Jos Buttler said Wednesday's win was a reward for the hard work his players had put in during the short series.

"There's been some really good stuff. Guys getting hundreds and Jofra Archer was brilliant. We've got a good thing going. We're building nicely," said Buttler, who was named player of the match and player of the series.

South African captain Temba Bavuma said the series win was important. "We came in under a lot of pressure. We've done ourselves justice and come closer to automatic qualification for the World Cup."

South Africa need one win in their remaining two matches against the Netherlands to move ahead of West Indies into one of the eight qualifying places in the World Cup Super



League, although Sri Lanka could still move ahead of them in a forthcoming series against New Zealand.

The left-handed Malan and his right-handed captain shared a fourth wicket partnership of 232 off 211 balls after coming together with their team in trouble at 14 for three in the sixth over.

A slow start to the partnership became a torrent of runs as they took command on a slow pitch.

England scored 217 runs in the last 20 overs of their innings, scoring rapidly even after the two centuries were dismissed.

## Ahmed gets Eng white-ball call-up for B'desh tour

AP ■ LONDON

England picked teenage leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed in their white-ball squads for the first time on Thursday ahead of next month's tour of Bangladesh.

The 18-year-old Leicestershire bowler became England's youngest men's Test cricketer against Pakistan in Karachi in December and marked his debut in style with a five-wicket haul.

Ahmed had played just three first-class matches before making his Test bow, but has more experience in white-ball cricket, having appeared regularly for his county side.

Saqib Mahmood has been

included in the ODI squad for the first time since suffering a stress fracture of the back in May last year.

But there was no place for Alex Hales, with the big-hitting batsman set to honour his contract to play in the Pakistan Super League after only returning to England duty last year.

Hales was a key figure in England's T20 World Cup triumph in Australia in November after a positive test for recreational drug use came to light on the eve of the 2019 50-over World Cup led to more than three years of international exile.

England will play three ODIs and three T20s in Bangladesh from March 1 to 14.

The T20 fixtures are their first in the format since Jos Buttler's men became world champions, adding to their 50-over global title.

### SQUADS

**ODI squad:** Jos Buttler (capt/wkt), Tom Abell, Rehan Ahmed, Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Sam Curran, Saqib Mahmood, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Jason Roy, Phil Salt, Reece Topley, James Vince, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood  
**T20 squad:** Buttler, Tom Abell, Rehan Ahmed, Moeen Ali, Jofra Archer, Sam Curran, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Chris Jordan, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Reece Topley, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood

# Hardik doesn't mind playing Dhoni's role for Team India

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Star India all-rounder Hardik Pandya feels he has developed the ability to absorb pressure and doesn't mind playing the anchor role that the great Mahendra Singh Dhoni played for the team.

The 29-year-old has always been known for his batting pyrotechnics but says he has now learnt to take the back seat and anchor the innings, something which master chaser Dhoni did in the fag end of his international career.

"See, to be honest, I've always enjoyed hitting sixes, but I have to evolve and that is life," the stand-in T20 skipper said during the press conference after India sealed the T20 series against New Zealand 2-1.

"I have to take the other part where I've always believed in partnerships. I want to give my team and the other person more calmness and the assurance that at least I'm there.

"I've played more games than any of those guys out there. So, I've known the experience and more than the experience part, it's where I've batted, and I've learnt how to accept pressure and I've learnt how to kind of swallow the pressure and kind of make sure the team and everything is calm," Hardik added.

Dhoni is known for his calm demeanour and Hardik feels now it is his responsibility to step into the legendary wicketkeeper's shoes as a batter and he is ready to sacrifice his strike-



rate to play that role.

"In that way, maybe I have to get my strike rate down or... Taking new opportunities or taking new roles is (something) I've always looked forward to. I don't mind coming in and playing the role which somewhere down the line Maahi (Dhoni) used to play," he said.

Hardik has scored 1271 runs at a strike-rate of 142.17 in 87 T20Is.

"I think at that time, I was young, and I was hitting all around the park, but now since he has gone, all of a sudden that responsibility... It has just naturally come to me, and I don't mind (doing it). We're getting the result we want and it's okay."

During the third T20I against New Zealand, Hardik did just that, allowing the in-form Shubman Gill (126) to take

the attack to the opposition as India posted a massive 234 for 4 and then bowled out NZ for 66 for a 168-run win.

With pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah nursing an injury, Hardik has backed himself to bowl more with the new ball, having bowled 12 overs in the powerplay, conceding 86 runs for two wickets this home season.

"I had to bowl with the new ball (in T20Is) because Arshdeep (Singh)... I don't want any new guy to come and have that difficult role of (bowling first up with the new ball) because if they're put under pressure, then we're chasing the game," Hardik said.

"So, I've always been (like) leading from the front and I've been working on my new-ball skills, which is helping me."

# Sai Praneeth enters Thailand Open quarters

PTI ■ BANGKOK

India's B Sai Praneeth defeated Korean qualifier Hyeok Jin Jeon in a tough three-game contest to enter the quarter-finals of the Thailand Open Super 300 badminton tournament here on Thursday.

Praneeth beat his Korean opponent 24-22, 7-21, 22-20 in the men's singles second-round match.

He will next face sixth seed Li Shi Feng of China in the last-eight round.

Earlier in the day, Kiran George and Ashmita Chaliha put up gallant fights before going down in three games in the second round of their respective events.

While George, the Odisha Open champion, went down 22-20, 15-21, 20-22 to third seed Lee Cheuk Yiu of Hong Kong in men's singles, Ashmita lost 21-19, 13-21, 27-29 to sixth-seeded Den Hojmark Kjaersfeldt of Denmark in a gruelling women's singles round-of-16 match.

Eighth seeds Tanisha Crasto and Ishaan Bhatnagar suffered a 19-21, 16-21 loss to Indonesia's Akbar Bintang Cahyono and Marsheilla Gischa Islami in mixed doubles.

N Sikki Reddy and Rohan Kapoor also couldn't cross the second round, losing 11-21, 10-21 to sixth seeded Chinese Feng Yan Zhe and Huang Dong Ping.

# Gopal's career-best 161 puts K'taka on cusp of Ranji semis

PTI ■ BENGALURU

All-rounder Shreyas Gopal stood tall with a career-best 161 not out as Karnataka piled more misery on Uttarakhand with a massive first innings lead of 490 runs in their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal here on Thursday.

At close on day three, Uttarakhand were 106/3, still 384 runs in arrears with Dikshanshu Negi and Swapnil Singh remaining unbeaten on identical scores of 27 in an unbroken 46-run partnership. Vidwath Kaverappa (2/22) claimed the Uttarakhand opening duo of Avneesh Sudha (4) and Jiwant Singh (24), while debutant M Venkatesh dismissed former Delhi batter Kunal Chandela, who had played in their 2016-17 final against Vidarbha.

Uttarakhand also have wicket-keeper-batter Aditya Tare, the Ranji

Trophy-winning former Mumbai skipper in waiting but it seems a lost battle against the eight-time champions Karnataka who are eyeing their first semi-final appearance since 2020.

Resuming on 474/5, Karnataka had their strategy clear as they batted along with no declaration in sight.

Overnight centurion Gopal, who on Wednesday slammed his first Ranji Trophy century since 2017-18, continued from where he left and in the process completed 3000 runs in first-class cricket.

### BENGAL IN COMMAND

**Kolkata:** Bengal are on course to their third successive Ranji Trophy semi-final appearance after Shahbaz Ahmed produced yet another sparkling all-round show to put them in the driver's seat on the third day of their quarterfinal match against Jharkhand.

Batting at No. 6, left-hander Ahmed top-scored with a gritty 81 off 120 balls (9x4, 2x6) as Bengal posted 328 in their first innings to secure a healthy first innings lead of 155 runs.

At stumps on Day 3, Jharkhand were ahead by just seven runs, with their second innings in disarray at 162 for 7. A total of 11 wickets tumbled on day three.

The lower order Jharkhand batters are now left battling to delay the inevitable with two more days left in the game.

Ahmed, the left-arm spin bowler, also made an impact with the ball, dismissing Anukul Roy (40) and Jharkhand skipper Virat Singh (29) in their second innings.

Opener Aryaman Sen waged a lone battle for Jharkhand with a fighting half century (64 off 132 balls) but Ishan Porel brilliantly set him up with



a bouncer and dismissed him at the fag-end of the day.

It was a total batting failure for Jharkhand as only three batters managed double digit figures with Aryaman stitching two fifty-plus stands with Anukul Roy and then with Singh.

### BOWLERS PUT MP BACK

**Indore:** Defending champions Madhya Pradesh bounced back in contention on the third day of their quarterfinal against Andhra, despite conceding a huge first innings lead, thanks to pacer Avesh Khan's exploits.

Set a winning target of 245, MP ended day three at 58 for no loss after bundling out the opponents for 93 in their second innings.

Andhra skipper Hanuma Vihari, like in the first innings when he returned to bat braving a wrist injury, batted left-handed to score 15 coming in at No.11.

He swatted three fours, including a reverse sweep but could not do much as the team collapsed to 93 all out in 32.3 overs.

Earlier, resuming at the overnight score of 144 for 4, MP was bowled out for 228 with left-arm medium-pacer Prithvi Raj Yarra picking up five wickets.

Prithvi Raj added the scalps of Harsh Gawli (1), Saransh Jain (8), Avesh Khan (15) and Kumar Kartikeya (24, 4 fours) to finish with superb figures of 5 for 26.

The home team looked in danger of being dismissed below 200 before Kartikeya and Avesh stitched a 48-run stand for the ninth wicket to stretch the score to 228.

With a big lead of 151, Andhra was expected to bat well in the second innings to put MP out of contention. However, the MP bowlers ran through the visiting team's batting unit in just 32.3 overs.



# ‘Michael is a semi-psycho kind of a person with the right ideals’

Sundeep Kishan starrer *Michael* is going to hit your nearest theaters today. Prior to the release, the actor interacted with the Hyderabad media and shared some interesting insights from the film.

AMARTYA SMARAN

Asking in the glory of a series of Pan-Indian successes from the South Industry, more so from Tollywood, Ranjith Jayakodi's *Michael* starring Sundeep Kishan, Vijay Sethupathi, Divyansha Kaushik, Varalaxmi Sarathkumar, Varun Sandesh and Gautam Vasudev Menon is another flick that has all the potential to score big at the global box-office. A romantic drama set in the evil gangster world of the 80s and 90s, *Michael* simultaneously hit 1500 screens worldwide in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, and Hindi today. The movie is produced by Karan C Productions and Sree Venkateswara Cinemas.

Despite a dismal stint at the cinemas for many years, Sundeep Kishan's passion and love for the craft remained intact. The buzz around Sundeep not having a market came to an end with *Ninu Veedani Needanu Nene* (2019), which was produced under his own banner—Venkatadri Talkies. While his next release *Tenali Ramakrishna BA. BL* (2019) managed to seep right through the Telugu heartland, *A1 Express* (2021) yet again cemented his place as a bankable hero in the industry. After a turbulent two-year period, the Venkatadri Express star is back with *Michael*.

Ahead of the release, Sundeep enthusiastically interacted with film journalists and shared intricate details regarding the project. He put out his thoughts and feelings in a confident manner and let us in on his future projects.

The actor put everything on the line for *Michael*. At one point, he lived on egg whites and iced coffee for 15 days to pull off an intense sequence which eventually took a toll on the actor. His leg gave up on him but just within a week, he picked himself up, finished the shoot, and again injured himself badly. The makers had to halt the shoot for a month.

Guess what the actor thinks about all this? Let's hear it from the actor, "I never felt it was hard work. It was a great experience and I really enjoyed the process. The technicians worked a lot harder than me and we are all super happy with how the film turned out."

Ranjith delivered something which was way beyond our imagination. When I watched the first cut, I walked out of the screening room feeling this film is going to be so special."

The *Prasthanam* actor informed that he considers *Michael* his biggest success in recent times. "Making the film itself was a huge success and I am looking forward to seeing how people react in the theaters."

With a renewed philosophy of selecting fresh stories that

are visually strong and emotionally sound, Sundeep said, "The theatrical success of a film depends on the promotions and I am very happy that we've got such good producers who've been super supportive throughout the process. If the emotional content of a film is strong, the audience will support the film. I strongly believe that the audience will love how visually appealing *Michael* is going to be. This film is high on emotions and drama and it will surely offer a great visual experience to the audience. I don't think anybody except Ranjith could've done justice to the script."

The *Michael* star is known for his family dramas and romantic films, but with *Michael*, he created a brand new image for himself. We wondered if he even made changes to his acting style and he explained, "*Michael* doesn't have friends, *Michael* doesn't talk to anyone and he's an extreme loner. He's a semi-psycho kind of a person with the right ideals. The things that happen in the movie don't usually occur in the real world. If you ask me if I used any of my personal experiences to enhance my performance, I'd say no. I went by the script and behaved like the character. In my earlier films, there was a possibility for me to use my own experiences but in *Michael*, I used my imagination and emoted accordingly."

The film was shot for 73 days and now that the *Gully Rowdy* actor is placing all his bets on the movie, *The Pioneer* asked him if the thought of the film bombing at the box office bothers him. "I am someone who deeply analyzes everything. When it comes to this film, the script is very fresh, visually it looks good and I have the best actors on board. In the worst-case scenario, people will still walk out of the theatres thinking they've watched a good film. I'd say I'm mostly anxious because so many people told me the film is great. However, I'm waiting for the theatrical response. I am not saying this out of overconfidence, but whatever film I'm doing next, they're all going to be good films," told the actor in an assuring tone.

*Michael* is Sundeep's statement to the world out there that he's capable of tapping into the experimental stories. The actor has *Ooru Peru Bhairavakona*, *Captain Miller*, and *Buddy* in his kitty.

"I am also working on *Family Man* season 3. There's another exciting film that I can't talk about right now; it's going to be my craziest character to date," concluded the star.



## Vedha team expressed their gratitude to Pan-India star Prabhas

Actor Siva Rajkumar is one of the iconic heroes of the Kannada film industry. His upcoming film *Vedha* is going to be a special film for the actor, as the film not only marks his milestone of 125 films, but also his first venture under his home banner Geetha Pictures headed by his wife Geetha Siva Rajkumar. Directed by A. Harsha, this action drama film released in Kannada on December 23 and created a sensation. Shivanna, Ghanvi Laxman, Aditi Sagar, Swetha

Changappa, Umashree and many others acted in the film. The film will be released in Telugu on February 9. Producer VR Krishna Mandapati said, "The first look of this movie as well as the motion poster have received a good response. This movie is going to be released in Telugu on February 9. I liked the story and bought this movie. A good movie is always appreciated by the Telugu audience. Many people tried to release this movie in Telugu. But I got a chance. We will organize

a pre-release event for this movie soon. Needless to say, how much love the Shiva Rajkumar family has in our Telugu too, we also call them Shivanna. They will also attend this pre-release function. I am going to release more great movies soon under this Kanchi Kamakshi Calcutta Creations banner." Meanwhile, the team of the film have expressed a special gratitude to Pan-India star Prabhas who is supporting this film.

## Brahmanandam's heart touching performance in *Rangamarthanda* will get you teary eyed

Legendary Tollywood comedian Brahmanandam celebrated his birthday on February 1st amid the best wishes from his family, friends, fans, and fellow celebrities. On this special day, Creative director Krishna Vamsi shared a glimpse of Brahmanandam's talent with a video showcasing his monologue from the upcoming film *Rangamarthanda*.

The scene, in which Brahmanandam delivers a powerful performance from a



hospital bed, left everyone astounded and served as a testament to his versatility as an actor.

This film marks a departure from Brahmanandam's usual comedic roles and has heightened expectations for the film. The movie, a remake of the Marathi film *Actor Samrat*, features an all-star cast including Prakash Raj, Ramya Krishna, Sivamika, Anasuya, Ali Reza, Rahul Sipiganj and more, making it a must-watch for all movie fans.

Yelelo Yelelo captures different emotions of pregnancy

Samantha starrer *Shaakuntalam* is a Smythological love story between Shakuntala and Dushyanth based on Kalidasa's Sanskrit play 'Abhijnana Shakuntalam'. Gunasekhar, known for mounting such films, is the director. Already the makers launched the trailer



and the first two songs. Now, they launched the lyrical video of the third single, *Yelelo Yelelo...* The song shows Shakuntala being a pregnant lady yearning for love for her husband. It was shot on a boat while the boatman played by Prakash Raj seems to be singing the song.

Anurag Kulakarni's soulful vocals added depth to the song. Mani Sharma's composition sounds soothing and lyrics can be heard clearly with effective use of instruments. Lyrics were penned by Chaitanya Prasad and they depict Shakuntala's pain and anticipation to reach her love. The song visuals also look grand. It was shot aesthetically with night effect surrounded by mountains sailing on a boat in a river.

This Gunasekhar directorial is bankrolled under his home banner 'Guna Team Works' Produced by his daughter Neelima Guna collaborating with Hanshita Reddy and Dil Raju's Sri Venkateshwara Creations banner. There is no mention of a release date.

## Chiranjeevi comes to the aid of veteran cameraman Devaraj



Megastar Chiranjeevi is a synonym for kindness and helping nature. Everyone in the industry knew about this and even people also of the same opinion. It's not something he does for a particular occasion. He lends his helping hand whenever, wherever it is necessary and whichever comes to his notice. He always help in whatever way he can. Not only the Charitable Trust where Blood and Eye banks are running. There are numerous times he helped artists, technicians, fans and even common public who are in dire need.

Latest is he has handed over a cheque of Rs 5 Lakhs to a veteran cameraman Devraj. He worked for Chiranjeevi's films during the early time of his career in 1980's. Devraj handled camera for Chiranjeevi's films like *Tinguragadu*, *Ran Kasula Rangamma*, *Naagu*, *Puli Bebbuli*. Knowing about the financial problems of Devraj, Chiru donated Rs 5 Lakhs immediately. Everyone is praising the kind gesture of Megastar. But, these are only those that came into light. He was, is and will be helping many needy people and many will not even come to know the public. Chiranjeevi has recently delivered the biggest blockbuster *Waltair Veerayya*. It registered record collections and emerged as one of the biggest grossers in his career. Currently he is busy with shooting of *Bhola Shankar*.

## Nidhi Agerwal makes a special appearance on *Unstoppable*

It is known that Pawan Kalyan recently shot for Nandamuri Balakrishna's blockbuster talk show, *Unstoppable 2*. This is one of the flagship episodes of the show. In the episode that streamed on Thursday, along with Pawan Kalyan, the talented young actress Nidhi Agerwal made a special appearance in the episode. She took part in the show virtually.

It is known that Nidhi is playing the leading lady in Pawan Kalyan's *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*. The duo over a video chat discussed the same in the episode.



## Eeswar: *Suryapet Junction* will be close to reality

Kothaga Prayanam fame Eeswar and actress Naina Sarwar have paired up for a massy youthful entertainer *Suryapet Junction* directed by Nadendla Rajesh. The film is jointly produced by Anil Kumar Katragadda, NS Rao and Vishnuvardhan under the banner Yoga Lakshmi Art Creations. On Thursday, the makers had released the teaser of the film.

Speaking on the occasion, Eeswar said, "I am happy that we have released the teaser of the film today. Our media friends who saw the teaser said it was very good. My special thanks to our director, our team, who believed in my story and traveled with me for two and a half years. We tried to make the film seem as close to reality as possible. I want this film to reach as many people as possible."

Actress Naina said, "The director and the team have supported us well. Every actor in the film has done well in their respective roles. This film is our collective effort. I would like to thank everyone who came to this *Suryapet Junction* teaser launch function." Thanking her director Rajesh, Naina said, "Thank you sir for giving me this opportunity in Telugu. I am confident that this film will be a good success."