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**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  


**It is only an interval. The real cinema is next. The real cinema will start from Indravelli. Then not only Billa-Ranga (KTR & Harish Rao) but Charles Shobharaj (KCR) also will have to come out. The tiger will have to go into its cage if it comes out as Congress tigers are ready to cage and bury it. KCR, the game has started. We hoisted the Congress flag on Golconda and we will fly the flag on Red Fort too.**

**- Revanth Reddy, CM Telangana****DON'T MISS...**

## Emphasis on adapting to...

The Indian School of Business (ISB) Executive Education hosted the inaugural edition of the CXO Summit under the theme "Innovate to Accelerate" on its campus in Hyderabad on Thursday. The event witnessed the participation of more than 250 senior leaders as delegates and highlighted ISB Executive Education's commitment to fostering future leaders. It was a confluence of a diverse group of top executives, industry leaders and thought leaders facilitating meaningful discussions...

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## 'Practical methods help check...

Promoting locally practical methods -- with the support and understanding of people -- may reduce the number of individuals bitten by venomous snakes and save many lives, according to a study conducted in Tamil Nadu. The researchers surveyed 535 people in rural agricultural communities in Tamil Nadu, asking what anti-snakebite measures they take, and what stops them doing more to protect themselves. Tamil Nadu has just 5 per cent of India's population, but an estimated 20 per cent of the...

**-PAGE: 5**

## Thermal power plants' capacity...

The capacity utilisation of thermal power plants will increase by a percentage point to 69 per cent in 2024-25, led by the growth in electricity demand and limited thermal capacity addition, says rating agency ICRA. ICRA's outlook for the thermal power segment is 'Stable', supported by the healthy improvement in the thermal plant load factor (PLF), coupled with the reduction in dues from state distribution utilities (discoms) following the implementation of the Late Payment Surcharge...

**-PAGE: 8**

## Kohli wins ICC Men ODI Cricketer...

Indian batting maestro Virat Kohli won on Thursday crowned the ICC men's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2023 for his excellent run in the format last year headlined by a phenomenal outing in the World Cup at home. This is the fourth such award for Kohli, who was the second most prolific run-scorer in ODIs last year behind compatriot Shubman Gill. The former India skipper finished the year with 1,377 runs which included six centuries and eight half-centuries. The year will forever be remembered as...

**-SPORTS**

# Will dig grave big enough to bury BRS

- I am Mestri of reconstructing Telangana
- We have to win 14 seats
- We will chase BRS upto borders
- We have to kill our enemy even if we die

**K VENKATESHWARLU**  
**■ HYDERABAD**

Lashing out at BRS leaders for criticising him using the word 'Mestri' (mason), Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that he is the Meshri who will rebuild Telangana which was destroyed by the BRS.

Revanth said that he is the Mestri who is building the future of unemployed youth by giving them jobs.

He said that he is the Mestri who is building a grave for burying the BRS 100 meters deep and that as a Mestri he is setting right the BRS-

**Addressing a meeting of Congress booth level agents at the LB Stadium on Thursday, Revanth said that the BJP is blocking Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and that the Congress will teach the BJP a lesson.**

destroyed Telangana.

He said that Congress activists are ready to kill the BRS by crushing its throat. "I am a person who will kill an enemy if I am facing death," he said.

Addressing a meeting of Congress Both Level Agents at the LB Stadium on Thursday, Revanth said that the BJP is blocking Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra and that the Congress will teach the BJP a lesson.

He said that the Congress was fighting the BJP across the nation, however, Billa (KTR) and Ranga (T. Harish Rao) are roaming the streets. Moreover, they are also criticising the Congress government questioning its assurances even before the government is 50 days old.

He said that the Congress will chase Billa-Rangas away from TS borders and that the Congress government will implement all its 6-guarantees within 100 days.

Revanth said that he concentrating on governance as he is the CM and therefore not speaking about politics. However, BRS leaders are speaking lies as they like. The CM said that he is starting district tours from next week onwards and that he will spend three days a week among the people.

He said this is only an interval and that the real film will start from Indravelli. "It is only an interval. The real cinema is in the future.

**2**

## Cong leaders must be careful as Modi will use ED & CBI: Kharge

Stating that the Congress government and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's performance are exemplary, AICC President Mallikarjuna Kharge said that Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah will topple the state government if they become weak. The Congress is not weak in Telangana now unlike in the past, however, there is a danger that Modi and Amit will use the ED, the CBI and I-T to conduct raids against Congress leaders. Kharge appealed to CM Revanth Reddy as well as other

Congress leaders to be careful towards Modi and Amit. He said that the BJP is trying to frighten the Congress, however, nobody is scared of the BJP in Telangana. Addressing Congress BLAs at the LB Stadium here on Thursday, Kharge said that former CM KCR never made allegations against BJP. The Congress defeated the BJP on the BRS in Telangana and it will reveal how strong the Congress is.

**Continued on Page 2**

## Eight Padmas for Telugu states

**Padma Vibhushan for Venkaiah Naidu and Chiranjeevi; 5 from TS, 1 from Andhra get Padma Shri**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Tollywood Actor Konidela Chiranjeevi and former Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu have been conferred the Padma Vibhushan.

The President approved conferment of 132 Padma Awards including two duo cases (in a duo case, the Award is counted as one). Of these, five Padma Shris were given to people from

Telangana. Two Padma Vibhushans and one Padma Shri went to Andhra Pradesh.

Actress Vyjayantimala Bali and Padma Subrahmanyam who hail from Tamil Nadu were given the Padma Vibhushan. Bindeshwar Pathak from Bihar was also given the Padma Vibhushan.

The list comprises five Padma Vibhushans, 17 Padma Bhushans and 110 Padma Shri Awards.

Thirty of the awardees are women. The list also includes eight persons from the category of Foreigners/NRI/PIO/OCI and nine posthumous awardees.

Padma Awards - one of the highest civilian awards of the country - are conferred in three categories, namely the Padma Vibhushan, the Padma Bhushan and the Padma Shri.

**2**

## 2 more schemes from Feb first week, says Revanth

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Chief Minister TPCC President A. Revanth Reddy said that the Congress government will implement two more 'Abhaya Hastham' schemes in the first week of February.

He said the Congress government will deposit Rythu Bandhu funds by the end of February. Finding fault with BRS leaders for criticising Rythu Bandhu amounts disbursement, CM Revanth Reddy

said that the previous BRS government deposited it till the end of March.

CM Revanth Reddy said that the Congress government will implement the 6-guarantees within 100 days as assured. CM said that 10.5 crore women travelled freely in the RTC buses. The Congress government enhanced the Aarogya Sri limit up to Rs 10 lakh.

Revanth alleged that the BRS ruled for 3,650 days and bankrupted the state.

## ACB arrests ex-HMDA director; gold, silver seized

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) arrested Shiva Balakrishna, the former Director of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), in a disproportionate assets case on Thursday.

Apart from cash, the ACB seized 2 kg gold and 5.5 kg silver from Balakrishna.

**Continued on Page 2**

## Guv okays Kodandaram, Amer Ali Khan as MLCs

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The Governor, Dr Tamilisai Soundarajan, approved the government's proposals to appoint Telangana Jana Samithi (TJS) President Prof. Kodandaram Reddy aka Kodandaram and Mir Amer Ali Khan, the son of Urdu daily Siasat's Resident Editor, Javed Ali Khan, as MLCs in the Governor's Quota.

The CM, Revanth Reddy, had said that there is a need to select Kodandaram as an MLC.



Kodandaram had supported the Congress during Assembly elections.

**Continued on Page 2**

## Guv asks ECI to act against blackmailing candidates

Addressing National Voters' Day celebrations, the Telangana Governor, Dr Tamilisai Soundarajan, said she was disheartened to speak about an incident in which a candidate in the recent Telangana Assembly elections appealed to voters to vote for him saying that if they didn't vote for him he would commit suicide. Officials must take strict action against such candidates, the Governor said.

The Governor was the chief guest at the 14th National Voters' Day celebrations held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU) auditorium at Kukatapally on Thursday. The Governor did not name P. Kaushik Reddy of the BRS, who had made the suicide threat while contesting from Huzarabad and was elected to the Assembly.

**Continued on Page 2**

## KTR: Will Congress govt last five years?

**NAVEENA GHANATE**  
**■ HYDERABAD**

BRS Working President KTR said that seniors will not contest in the Lok Sabha polls. He said that those who lost in the Assembly elections are under the assumption that there might be sympathy for them and that they could win the Lok Sabha polls. He said that the BRS is giving a strong fight in 17 seats.

Denying reports about KTR and Harish Rao contesting to the Lok Sabha, KTR did not give clarity on KCR's contest.

Speaking on this matter during a chat with the media on Thursday, KTR said that KCR will take oath as an MLA soon. The date will be fixed after seeing a good moment for that. It has been announced that KCR will take oath as MLA soon. KTR also said that KCR will come to Telangana Bhavan on his birthday on February 17.

"Will the Congress government last five years? There is a suspicion among people. Didn't Komati Reddy say that Revanth got his job at PCC by paying Rs 50 crore? The Congress has no history of continuing a CM for five years," KTR pointed out that CM Revanth Reddy's brothers participated in an official meeting at Kodangal going against the



**"Will the Congress government last five years? There is a suspicion among people. Didn't Komati Reddy say that Revanth got his job at PCC by paying Rs 50 crore? The Congress has no history of continuing a CM for five years,"**

rules Soon we will conduct meetings with 30,000 social media activists and Telangana Balagam will be the name of the social media, KTR said. He also made serious charges that the Congress and the BJP are in deep match-fixing. Speaking to the media on Thursday, he said that whatever the BRS leaders said, the governor found fault, but she was completely positive about the Congress.

**2**

# India all set to display military might, women power

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

President Droupadi Murmu will lead India in celebrating the 75th Republic Day with an imposing display of its rising military might and rich cultural heritage during a 90-minute parade at the majestic Kartavya Path on Friday.

The grand celebrations, with an overarching theme of projecting the nation's women power and democratic values, will be graced by French President Emmanuel Macron as the chief guest.

The armed forces will display an array of home-grown weaponry and military equipment such as missiles, drone jammers, surveillance systems, vehicle-mounted mortars and BMP-II infantry combat vehicles at the parade. For the first time, an all-women tri-services contingent will be



**The grand celebrations, with an overarching theme of projecting the nation's women power and democratic values, will be graced by French President Emmanuel Macron as the chief guest.**

part of the country's biggest ceremonial event. In another historic first, Lieutenants Deepti Rana and Priyanka Sevda, who are among 10 women officers commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery for the first time last year, will lead the Swathi weapon locating radar and Pinaka rocket system at the

parade. The parade will be heralded by over 100 women artistes playing Indian musical instruments such as Sankh, Naadsawaram, Nagada for the first time instead of the traditional military bands.

**2**

## 20 gallantry, service awards for TS police

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The Telangana Police will be awarded 20 gallantry and police service awards by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs on this Republic Day. A total of 275 police medals will be awarded by the Ministry out of which police personnel from Telangana will receive two President's Medals for distinguished service, six gallantry medals and 12 medals for meritorious service. Telangana Additional DGP Soumya Mishra and Devendra Singh Chauhan have been selected for the Rashtrapathi Visisth Seva Medals. The six police officials

who won gallantry medals are Vadicharla Srinivas (Constable), Naiveni Harish (Constable), Gaddipogula Anjaiah, Boorka Sunil Kumar, Mohammad Ayyub (Constable) and P. Satish (Constable). The police officials selected for meritorious service medals are DIG Jacob Parimala Hana, D. Chandraiah ASP, Additional Commandant Kokku Veeraiah, Commandant Narukulla Thrinath, SP N. Venkateswarulu, ACP P. Nareesh Reddy, ACP Sriramula Mohan Kumar, SI Bellam Jayachandra, Assistant Reserve SI G. Yeshupadham, Head Constable Jangaiah and SI M. Surender Reddy.



# Musi riverfront to be developed in PPP mode

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The CII Telangana organised the fifth edition of the CII Telangana Infrastructure & Real Estate Summit with the theme ‘Telangana Mega Master Plan: 2050’ in Hyderabad on Thursday.

Addressing the summit Industries Minister D. Sridhar Babu said that the government would develop the Musi Riverfront and said the government aims to adopt sustainable development models for the state by 2050.

Dana Kishore, IAS, in his keynote address said that the government is dedicated to implementing the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) concept aiming for the city’s holistic development.

Sridhar Babu said that the government would unveil a



comprehensive ‘mega master policy’ aimed at catalysing industrial growth by 2050.

He said that as part of this initiative, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) would develop a 55-km stretch of the Musi Riverfront.

“The riverfront will have amusement parks, waterfalls, water sports facilities, street vendor joints, a business area,

and a shopping mall built in Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode,” he said.

The Musi Riverfront project aims to transform the area into a tourism attraction, incorporating facilities like amusement parks and water sports facilities to create an engaging environment for tourists, he added.

In addition to leisure facilities, the provision of business

areas and shopping malls along the riverfront would generate business opportunities, attracting entrepreneurs. The project also promotes a mix of commercial activities, fostering businesses and job creation within the community.

Sridhar Babu said the project will integrate spaces for cultural events and gatherings.

The sessions at the summit covered topics like Policy and Regulatory Changes in Infrastructure & Real Estate Development, Technology and sustainability impact on changing business models, Emerging Markets, Prospects on Riverfront Development Projects through Case Studies, Urbanisation and Infrastructure Trends and Strategic Spatial Planning through Public-Private Partnership.

## Azhar sore, to announce next move after speaking to High Command

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Expressing unhappiness over the Congress not allotting a Governor Quota MLC seat to him, TPCC Working President Azharuddin said that he will announce his future course of action after talking to the high command.

Speaking to the media after the announcement of the Governor Quota MLCs names, Prof. Kodandaram and Amer Ali Khan, Azharuddin said that Congress leaders had assured him that they would give him a Governor’s Quota MLC post. How can MLC posts be given to people other than those who have worked for the party, he said.

“I have been working for the Congress for 18 years. I will announce my decision after talking to AICC elders,” he said.

## PM MODI IN BULANDSHAHR

# ‘Don’t need to sound poll bugle, people do it for me’

PNS ■ BULANDSHAHR/REWARI

Launching a slew of projects in Uttar Pradesh ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asserted that he only sounds the bugle of development and it is the people who sound the poll bugle for him.

Addressing a gathering in Bulandshahr after inaugurating and laying the foundation stone of development projects worth over Rs 19,100 crore, he said when the government reaches all beneficiaries of its schemes, there is no scope left for discrimination and corruption. “This is true secularism, this is true social justice,” Modi added.

“Modi is serving you honestly and that is the reason that under our government, 25 crore people have come out of poverty and those left also have hope that they will come



out of it. You are my family, your dream is my resolve and that is why when common families like you will be strengthened, that will be my capital,” he said.

Talking about ‘Modi ki guarantee’ which is aimed at achieving saturation of welfare schemes, the prime minister said, “What our government says, it does. Our efforts are directed at ensuring that the benefits of government schemes reach all beneficiaries. Modi is giving a guarantee of

saturation, guarantee of a cent per cent (saturation of schemes).”

“When the government reaches all beneficiaries, then there is no scope for discrimination there is no scope for corruption,” he asserted.

The prime minister added that he wanted to reach all the needy people quickly without any discrimination.

“For a long time after Independence, someone gave a slogan of ‘Garibi Hatao’, someone kept lying about social justice but the poor people of the country saw that only a few families got rich and their politics flourished,” he said in an apparent attack at the Congress.

Modi also said that he saw a few channels that claimed he would sound the poll bugle with this programme.

“I saw in the media that Modi will sound the election bugle in Bulandshahr.

# Govt considered Aknuri Murali, RS Praveen for TSPSC chief post

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government adopted a transparent policy in appointing the TSPSC (Telangana State Public Service Commission) Chairman and its Members.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has been paying special attention to the revamping of the TSPSC after he assumed charge. The government emphasised efficiency and social balance while appointing the TSPSC Chairman and Members.

The government offered the TSPSC Chairman’s post first to retired IAS official Akunuri Murali. He declined the offer as he had crossed the maximum age limit of 62.

The government also considered retired IPS officer RS Praveen Kumar for the

Chairman’s post. Praveen Kumar is heading the BSP as its Telangana unit chief and wants to continue in politics. The government then chose Mahendar Reddy as the TSPSC Chairman.

This time, efficient civil servants and academic experts have been given a chance to serve in the Commission. Retired DGP Mahender Reddy has been appointed as the TSPSC Chairman. Retired IAS official Anita Rajendra, retired Indian Postal Services official Amir Ullah Khan, senior professor Dr Narri Yadaiah, Executive Director in the Energy Department, Y. Ram Mohana Rao and retired Municipal Commissioner Palavai Rajini Kumar were appointed as TSPSC members.

The government strictly

adhered to social justice norms while appointing the TSPSC Chairman and Members. Social groups which never had an opportunity to work in the TSPSC were given an opportunity as TSPSC Members.

Retired DGP Mahendar Reddy was appointed as the TSPSC Chairman to bring the TSPSC on the right track as it had faced strong criticism for its inefficiency due to question paper leaks and a series of mistakes committed in the conduct of exams under the BRS government.

Retired IAS official Anita Rajendran belongs to the Gowda community. She has experience of working in about 10 departments as an IAS officer and has also acquired an LLM from Osmania University.

## ‘Congress will show its strength’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka said that Congress workers did not fold their hands when they were beaten and stripped of their clothes by BRS goons.

Addressing Congress BLAs at the LB Stadium on Thursday, he said, “In a democracy, don’t think that all parties are respected. We will show our strength when the time comes,” he said.

He said that out of the six guarantees two were implemented within two days of coming to power. The government is trying to implement the rest of the guarantees. The BJP is ‘spewing hatred’ in the country by ‘dividing’ society in the name of religion, he said. The people should give a gift to the Congress by helping them win 15 LS seats from the state, Bhatti added.

# BRS may spring surprises in Lok Sabha candidates’ list

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The main opposition BRS is trying to protect its image in the coming Lok Sabha elections which was lost in the recent Assembly elections. The BRS leadership wants not to repeat the mistakes that happened in the Assembly elections regarding selection of candidates. According to sources, BRS President K Chandrasekhar Rao has taken up the exercise of the selection of candidates.

A top BRS leader said that the Lok Sabha candidates’ list will consist of surprises and shocks. In Telangana, there are 17 Lok Sabha constituencies. In the previous elections, the BRS won nine seats. At present BRS has eight Lok Sabha MPs. Medak BRS MP Kotha

Prabhakar Reddy resigned to his Lok Sabha membership after winning as MLA from Dubbak Assembly constituency.

As per BRS sources, there is no guarantee for the sitting BRS MPs in getting tickets again. There will be new faces in the place of some sitting MPs. In the previous Lok Sabha elections, BJP won four

and Congress won three seats. The BRS leadership is concentrating on winning these seats in the coming Lok Sabha elections.

Three BJP MPs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Dharmapuri Arvind and S Babu Rao contested in the recent Assembly elections and all three were defeated. In the Congress, all the three MPs, A Revanth

## ‘BJP will announce LS candidates next week’

Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said they will announce Lok Sabha candidates next week. He added that the BJP will be contesting the LS polls alone in Telangana. Speaking to the media on Thursday, Kishan said that the BJP will field a candidate in the

Hyderabad LS constituency. He said that it is an illusion that the Congress government will probe the corruption of BRS leaders and punish them. The people of Telangana do not believe it, he said. He said that the Congress should level allegations against the BJP carefully.

## Guv okays Kodandaram, Amer Ali...

Continued from page 1

He was selected as an MLC in the Governor’s Quota as per the assurance given to him. Kodandaram played a vital role in the Telangana movement and so his name was approved by the Cabinet and sent to the Governor.

Meanwhile, the BRS government had nominated Dasoju Shrayan and Kurra Satyanarayana as MLCs in the Governor’s Quota. But the Governor, Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan, kept both the names pending. The Governor had asked the BRS government to explain on what basis they were nominated as MLCs. Later, both their candidatures were rejected.

# Eight Padmas for Telugu...

Continued from page 1

The Centre selected five personalities from Telangana and one from Andhra Pradesh for the Padma Shri award.

The architect of the Yadadri Temple, Dr Velu Anandachari Stapathi, has been selected for Padma Shri.

Banjara Bhagavdgita writer Kethavath Somlal and Kurella Vittalacharya, the 84-year-old who built a library with his money have also been selected for Padma awards from Telangana.

Dasari Kondappa, the Burra Veena player from Narayanpet, Gaddam Sammaiah, the Yakshaganam Yajman from Janagaon, A. Velu Ananda Chari (art), Kethavath Somlal (Literature & Education) and Kurella Vittalacharya (Literature & Education) of Telangana were conferred the Padma Shri.

Dasari Kondappa, one of the last Burra Veena players, dedicated his life to the indigenous art.

The 63-year-old, who is a third generation Burra Veena player from the Damaragidda village of Narayanpet, dedicated his life to preserving the art form. He holds the distinction of being the last exponent of Burra Veena and has kept the art from extinction.

Kondappa sings ‘Tatvalu’ socio-religious moral compositions and spiritual-philosophical renditions in Telugu and Kannada.

Even though as per custom Burra Veena is played only within their community, Dasari went beyond that to attract wider audiences.

Gaddam Sammaiah was selected for the Padma Shri for highlighting social issues through Chindu Yakshaganam performances for over five

decades.

The 67-year-old is an eminent Chindu Yakshaganam artiste from Jangaon. He has performed this art form for over five decades at over 19,000 shows.

He addresses social issues like total literacy and environment protection. He founded the Chindu Yaksha Kalakarula Sangham and the Gaddam Sammaiah Yuva Kala Skethram to promote this art. He hails from a humble background and has worked as a farmhand. He learnt the art from his parents who were both Chindu Yakshaganam artistes.

Hailing from Andhra Pradesh, Padma Shri winner Uma Maheshwari D. is the first female Harikatha exponent who has performed globally in different ragas.

The 63-year-old Harikatha exponent has showcased her skill in Sanskrit recitation and

recites Kathas in multiple ragas like Savitri, Bhairavi, Subhapanthavari, Kedaram and Kalyani.

She is proficient in Telugu and Sanskrit and has authored over four Harikathas, covering figures like Ramana Maharshi and Potti Srimululu.

Her contributions have encouraged many girls to overcome the barriers of tradition and adopt the art. She hails from a family of musicians and is the grandchild of renowned Nadaswara Vidwan, the late Daliparti Pichihari.

The architect of the Yadadri Temple, Dr Velu Anandachari Stapathi, has been selected for Padma Shri. Banjara Bhagavdgita writer Kethavath Somlal and Kurella Vittalacharya, the 84-year-old who built a library with his money have also been selected for Padma awards from Telangana.

Continued from page 1

“This kind of campaign must not be there. That is wrong. I appeal to the Election Commission to take strong action against such candidates,” she said. The Governor said that candidates should appeal to voters based on their performance. Stating that

voting is the most powerful weapon in the hands of the people in a democracy, she underlined the need for 90 to 95 per cent voting. “Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote,” she said. Citizens have a responsibility to vote so that good candidates are elected and there is good governance.

She termed the vote a weapon to fight misrule. She remarked that youth are reluctant to stand in queue to vote but they are ready to stand in long queues under the hot sun to get visas of foreign countries. People should realise that a holiday is given on voting day to enable them to vote and not to go on picnics.

# KTR: Will Congress...

Continued from page 1

He expressed his impatience that two MLA quota and MLC seats were given separate notifications and that the MLC seats went to the Congress.

“Revanth, who was upset if they hired experienced people as advisers, asked why they had hired political leaders as advisers. What advice Vem Narendra Reddy would give to

CM Revanth Reddy,” KTR said.

He said the Congress government is being run from New Delhi.

BRS Working President KTR said that the CM, Revanth Reddy, lied about starting Rythu Bharosa in the state. KTR demanded that CM Revanth should apologize to farmers for telling lies.

KTR said that people should

be told why the CM has a new camp office. The government has been turned into a centre for political rehabilitation.

He said that changing candidates alone is not a decisive factor in winning elections and asked, “Otherwise, how can anyone explain us winning a majority of Assembly segments in and around Hyderabad despite not changing the sitting candidates?”

## Will dig...

Continued from page 1

It will start from Indravelli. Then not only Billa-Ranga but even Charas Shobharaj will have to come out. The tiger will go to a cage if it comes out as he Congress tigers are ready to keep it there. KCR...the game has started. We flew the tricolour on Golconda and we will fly the Tricolour on Red Fort too,” Revanth said.

Revanth said that Modi and KCR are not different and that both will join hands during the forthcoming Parliament elections. He said that KCR will hand over his MPs to the BJP if his party wins one or two seats in Parliament elections.

## Cong leaders...

Continued from page 1

He said that the party would win if workers worked well in the field. Telangana leaders and cadre achieved good results by working hard and the same results can be achieved at the national level too. The party has to work at the village and booth levels and will receive good results in LS polls, he said. Kharge said that Modi says again and again that opposition parties are weakening democracy. However, the same Modi government suspended 146 MPs for speaking in Parliament. He alleged that Modi destroyed all institutions and everyone had to expose Modi’s conspiracies.

He said that LS Polls will come within two months and booth agents have to work in LS polls too like Assembly elections. The Congress came

to power in Telangana due to the hard work of booth level agents, he said.

The Congress is implementing 6 guarantees one after the other, however, Modi is giving advertisements named ‘Modi Guarantee’. Modi has to answer what happened to two crore jobs every year and what happened to black money, he asked.

Recalling first Prime Minister Nehru’s statement that irrigation projects are modern temples, Kharge said that Modi alone did poojas in Garba Gudi by not allowing Murali Manohar Joshi to enter Ayodhya.

“God exists in all houses. However, Modi says that God is only with him. The government has to feed the hungry, give jobs to the unemployed but Modi is wasting time with election politics.

## Ex-DGP...

Continued from page 1

Mahender’s appointment came after former IAS officer B. Janardhan Reddy resigned last month after the Congress came to power in the state.

After the controversies over question paper leaks and the cancellation of exams, the Chief Minister Revanth Reddy-led government vowed to restructure the TSPSC and had invited applications to fill the posts of the Chairman and Members.

The leak of question papers of TSPSC recruitment tests dominated headlines in 2023.

The TSPSC Chairman and Members will hold office for a term of six years or till attaining the age of 62, whichever is earlier, the government said in a notification.

# India all set to...

Continued from page 1

Around 15 women pilots will also enthral the audience during the Indian Air Force’s fly-past, representing ‘Nari Shakti’ (women power). The contingents of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) will also consist of only women personnel.

The Republic Day parade will commence at 10:30 am and will run for a duration of around 90 minutes.

The ceremony will start with the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the National War Memorial, where he will lead the nation in paying solemn tributes to the fallen heroes by laying a wreath.

Minutes later, President Murmu and her French counterpart Macron will arrive in the ‘traditional buggy’, a prac-

tice that is making a comeback after a gap of 40 years, the defence ministry said.

The national flag will be unfurled followed by the national anthem with a booming 21-gun salute to be given with indigenous gun system 105-mm Indian Field Guns.

Four Mi-17 IV helicopters of 105 Helicopter Unit will shower flower petals on the audience present at Kartavya Path. This will be followed by ‘Aavaahan’, a band performance by over 100 women artistes playing various types of percussion instruments. The parade will then commence with President Murmu taking the salute.

The parade will be commanded by Lieutenant General Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area.

## ACB arrests...

Continued from page 1

The ACB thinks that Balakrishna’s assets are worth around Rs 300 crore to Rs 400 crore, including flats, bank accounts and proxy holdings.

The ACB launched a massive search at the residence of Balakrishna and his close relatives on Wednesday.

A total of 14 teams were involved in the searches at various locations linked to Balakrishna, including his house, relatives’ residences and properties associated with him. The operation was launched based on information suggesting that Balakrishna had accumulated massive assets illegally.

The searches began on Wednesday morning, continued for 24 hours and afterwards he was arrested.





ISB HOSTS INAUGURAL OF CXO SUMMIT

# Emphasis on adapting to tech advancements

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian School of Business (ISB) Executive Education hosted the inaugural edition of the CXO Summit under the theme "Innovate to Accelerate" on its campus in Hyderabad on Thursday.

The event witnessed the participation of more than 250 senior leaders as delegates and highlighted ISB Executive Education's commitment to fostering future leaders. It was a confluence of a diverse group of top executives, industry leaders and thought leaders facilitating meaningful discussions on various business and leadership topics.

The summit featured keynote sessions from industry experts, panel discussions on innovation, leadership and networking opportunities. These sessions provided attendees with insights into contemporary strategies and approaches relevant to the modern business environment.

The event was flagged off by Professor Deepa Mani, Deputy



Prof. Deepa Mani, Deputy Dean, ISB

Dean, ISB Executive Education, and Professor of Information Systems at ISB, who emphasised the importance of adaptable leadership in response to economic, geopolitical and technological changes, saying, "In this dynamic business environment, when people experience you as a leader, they will experience you as someone

with superior judgment. This judgment calls upon leaders to think analytically, critically and incorporate diverse perspectives. With the CXO Summit, our goal is to equip you with the insights, knowledge and strategies necessary to drive business growth and transformation in this era of rapid change and disruption."

Dr V Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Advisor to the

Government of India, conveyed a vision of India's burgeoning potential. He highlighted the country's youthful aspirations, innovation and resilience in the face of global challenges. Emphasising the importance of adapting to technological advancements and ethical business practices, he highlighted the role of Indian businesses in fostering sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Sujatha Kumaraswamy, Executive Director, Executive Education, and Digital Learning, ISB, said, "The CXO Summit - Innovate to Accelerate focuses on three tracks in the Indian growth story: India's Emergence on the Global Stage, the Technology Innovation Ecosystem and Nurturing and Leveraging Talent.

Conversations and experiences such as this reinforce the need for a platform where senior leaders engage and learn and look at ways to innovate and accelerate their growth stories."



## Prez award to Sarfraz for poll management

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Election Commission has selected Sarfraz Ahmed, Joint CEO, for Best Electoral Practices Awards - 2023. Sarfraz Ahmed, Joint CEO, Telangana's received special Award for Election Management from President of India Draupadi Murmu on Thursday at New Delhi on eve of National Voters Day.

The 1995 batch IASS officer, listed about 55 best practices followed during Telangana elections. As per Sarfraz, several initiatives which had a positive impact on the election process, assessed and measured through the metrics of participation, transparency, engagement with stakeholders, and conduct of free and fair polls, were taken up during the 2nd SSR and during the conduct of polls.

# Telangana cops to receive 20 awards on R-Day today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Come Republic Day, Telangana Police is set to receive 20 gallantry and police service awards from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

A total of 275 police medals will be given by the Ministry, out of which police personnel from Telangana will receive two President's Medals for distinguished service; six gallantry medals and 12 medals for meritorious service.

Telangana Additional DGP Soumya Mishra and Devendra Singh Chauhan have been chosen for the



Additional DGP Soumya Mishra

Rashtrapati Visisht Seva Medals. The six personnel who will receive the gallantry medal are Vadicharla Srinivas (Police Constable); Naliveni Harish (Police Constable); Gaddipogula Anjaiah; Boorka Sunil Kumar; Mohammed Ayyub (Police

Constable) and P Satish (Police Constable).

Police officials who will receive medals for meritorious service include Jacob Parimala Hana, DIG Police; D Chandraiah ASP; Kokku Veeraiah Additional Commandant; Narukulla Thrinath, Commandant; N Venkateswarulu (Superintendent of Police); P Naresh Reddy, ACP; Sriramula Mohan Kumar, ACP; Bellam Jayachandra, SI; G Yeshupadham, Assistant Reserve Sub-Inspector of Police; Jangaiah, Head Constable and M Surender Reddy, SI.

## Two held for duping man of Rs 7.15 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyber Crime unit of the Hyderabad police on Thursday arrested two persons involved in investment fraud and duping a person of Rs 7, 15,000.

The accused were identified as Guddingari Venkatesh (23), a resident of Begumpet and Moluguri Vijay (36), a resident of Safilguda. They colluded with fraudsters and tricked the victims by assigning tasks such as ratings and comments on Google maps to get commission.

Initially, the cyber fraudsters used to give smaller amount as commission to make them believe. The accused insisted the victims invest large amounts and stopped responding to the victims. Vijay and Venkatesh provide bank details of the victims to the fraudsters. Similarly, all the accused committed fraud of approximately Rs 3 crore. As many as 104 cases were registered in all over India, of which 13 cases were registered in Telangana State. Vijay and Venkatesh were arrested under Sections 66(C),(D) IT Act and 419,420 of the IPC.

## ACB arrests ex-HMDA chief; Rs 84 L seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Thursday arrested Shiva Balakrishna, former director of Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), in a disproportionate assets case.

Apart from the cash, the ACB also seized 2 kg gold and 5.5 kg silver from Balakrishna. The ACB suspects that the wealth amassed by Balakrishna's was nearly Rs 400 crore, including flats, bank accounts and benami holdings. The ACB launched a massive search operation at the residence of Balakrishna and his close relatives on Wednesday.

A total of 14 teams are involved in the searches at various locations linked to Balakrishna, including his house, relatives' residences and properties associated with him. The searches began in the morning and continued for 24 hours.

3D AUGMENTED REALITY GLASSES

# Revolutionary tech developed for knee replacement

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With millions of Indians living with arthritis and a rise in surgery to prevent people from losing their mobility, newer user-friendly technologies are evolving.

Knee replacement has become one of the most common and successful operation in modern medical history and technology is focusing on both more modern implants as well as increased precision.

Dr Aditya Kapoor, Director of Orthopaedics at Omega Hospitals, Gachibowli, said, "In a groundbreaking development in the field of medical sciences, an innovative proprietary technology has been introduced for knee replacements (from France), employing computer navigation solutions through an inventive tracking tool during surgery.



A camera embedded in smart glasses accurately locates objects in a 3D space with millimetric precision, facilitated by specialised algorithms. The connected glass-

es meticulously calculate the 3D coordinates of instruments by analysing specific markers (QR-Code) captured through the integrated camera.

Navigated information is then displayed in the surgeon's field of vision, interacting with the application through the glasses accelerometers. This advancement signifies a transformative leap in the realm of medical technology."

Dr Aditya Kapoor performed the first surgery in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on a 60-year-old lady suffering with severe osteoarthritis which was impacting her mobility for more than two years, using this technology achieving accurate limb alignment, reduced blood loss, smaller incisions and facilitating early recovery with the patient being discharged after a single night's stay, on Thursday.

# 20 varsities participate in Manthan University Fair

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Manthan School hosted a University Fair with over 20 prestigious universities and colleges in India taking part, offering diverse programmes in Arts and Humanities, Commerce, Engineering, Medicine and Pure Sciences, at their campus in Tellapur on Thursday.

University fairs stand as one among many initiatives undertaken by the school to ensure that students are well-prepared and equipped to successfully navigate their future pathways with confidence.

Samichya from the University of California, Santa Cruz said, "The UC system values innovation, community service, and academic excellence.

We have seen Manthan students embody these qualities and can contribute positively to the university community. Aspects such as academic



achievements, community involvement, leadership qualities and discipline among students make Manthan and its students stand out."

Sadhana from FLAME University, said, "During my several interactions with Manthan students, I have observed that they have a sense

of curiosity and ask questions not just about a single academic area but about the breadth of the programmes that we offer."

Students attending the fair had an opportunity to interact with several university representatives and get an understanding of the requirements and application process involved.

## TSCHE announces schedule for entrance exams

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TSCHE) has announced the schedule for the Telangana State Engineering, Agricultural and Pharmacy Exam -2024 (TS-EAPCET) on Thursday.

The TS-EAPCET will be conducted in JNTUH from May 9 to May 11, 2024, and May 12 to May 13, 2024. TS EdCET will be conducted at Mahatma Gandhi University on May 23, 2024, while TS LAWCET 2024 and TS PGLCET will be held at Osmania University on June 3, 2024. TS ECET 2024 will be held at Osmania University on May 6, 2024.

TS ICET, 2024 for MBA and MCA courses will be held in Kakatiya University from June 4 to 5, 2024 while TS PGECET 2024 will be held in JNTUH on June 6 to June 8, 2024.

## 5 detained in hit-and-run case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Police have detained five youth, including a woman, for Wednesday's hit-and-run case in which a bouncer was killed and another injured.

A brand new car with temporary registration, involved in the accident, was brought to SR Nagar police station. The incident had occurred near Peddamma temple in upscale Jubilee Hills early Wednesday when a car rammed into a motorbike.

Tarak Ram (30), working as a bouncer at a star hotel in Madhapur, was returning



home with a colleague on the bike early morning when the speeding car hit them at the temple arch. The car sped away after hitting the two-wheeler. Tarak Ram, who sustained head injuries, died on the spot while another

bouncer Raju was critically injured. He was shifted to a hospital. The family of Tarak Ram on Wednesday night staged a protest along with his body at Jubilee Hills police station, demanding arrest of those involved. A resident of Sikh Village in Secunderabad, Tarak Ram, had married two years ago and has a seven-month-old child. He was the sole breadwinner for the family, including his widowed mother.

Police scanned the CCTV footage of the incident, identified the car and zeroed in on those who were travelling in the car.

## Man gets jail for murder attempt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A local court here on Thursday sentenced a man to simple imprisonment. The convict was charged with attempt to murder.

The incident dates back to March 15, 2021 at Aziznagar in Moinabad and was reported on March 18; the complainant Savva Vigneshwar Reddy, a resident of Ammenpur mandal of Ranga Reddy district, stated that the accused Naregidem Mohan Reddy, who is a distant relative, attacked the latter with scissors.



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# DCA raids pharmacy for making drugs under food licence

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Drug Control Administration (DCA) on January 24 raided SL Health Care in Kukatapally for manufacturing medicines under a food licence (FSSAI) and seized the stock worth Rs 2.90 lakh.

During the raid, DCA officials found that the firm illegally manufactured and sold two products, ORTHO-D and Pregavit-M, under a food licence (FSSAI), falsely claiming them as food products or nutraceuticals.

Officials seized sale invoices and printed aluminum foil related to two products. SL Health Care sold the drug 'ORTHO-D' to Balaji Pharma in Narasaraopet, and the drug 'Pregavit-M' to Unity Drugs as per the sales invoices.

Officials said, "These 'medicines' shall be manufactured only under a 'drug license' issued under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, adhering to the 'Good Manufacturing Practices' prescribed under Schedule-M of the Drugs



**Officials seized sale invoices and printed aluminum foil related to two products. SL Health Care sold the drug 'ORTHO-D' to Balaji Pharma in Narasaraopet, and the drug 'Pregavit-M' to Unity Drugs as per the sales invoices**

Rules, and shall meet the quality standards prescribed in 'Indian Pharmacopoeia' mandatorily."

"The drugs that are falsely manufactured and sold under a food license are not manufactured in accordance with

'Good Manufacturing Practices and also fail to meet the quality standards prescribed in the Indian Pharmacopoeia, and such products may have serious implications for patients' health," they warned.

## Jagtlial hospital raided for unlicensed sale of medicine

The Drug Control Authority (DCA) on January 24 raided Bright Hospital in Jagtlial for operating a pharmacy without a licence and seized drugs worth Rs 2.10 lakh that were stocked for sale. During the raid, DCA officials also detected huge stocks of medicines on the premises without any drug licence. A total of 55 varieties of medicines including antibiotics, steroids, pain killer drugs, anti-ulcer drugs, cough syrups, antacids etc. Samples of the drugs have been sent to analysis and further investigation shall be carried out, he added. Stocking of drugs for sale without a drug license is punishable under Drugs and Cosmetics Act with an imprisonment up to five years.

## Students from Kerala on study tour to Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

About 30 BCom final-year students, accompanied by their faculty members from CHMKM Government Arts and Science College, Tanur, Mallapuram, Kerala, affiliated to the Calicut University, visited the Department of Commerce at the University College of Commerce and Business Management on Thursday. They are currently on an industrial visit to Hyderabad.

Prof D Chennappa, the Head of the Department of Commerce, along with his colleagues Prof G Naresht Reddy, Prof A Patrick, Prof CV Ranjani, Prof I Shekar, Dr K Srinivas, and research scholar, as well as MCom students, interacted with the visiting team and conveyed information about the career prospects in Commerce and Management.

The students were captivated by the magnificence of the Arts College and the infrastructure at Osmania University. Later, they paid a visit to the Osmania Technology and Science Incubator (OTBI) at the CFRD Building.



BRS MLC K Kavitha speaking at a meeting in Jagtlial on Thursday

# Cong govt unleashes 'police raj' against people: Kavitha

PNS ■ JAGTIAL

Bharat Rashtra Samithi MLC Kalwakuntla Kavita on Thursday wondered if the government is unleashing a "police raj" against people. She accused the Congress government of foisting false cases on the BRS workers. Speaking here, she warned that BRS would not keep silent if false cases were foisted on the BRS party workers. She predicted

that the present regime would not last long. If the Congress leaders continue to show a vindictive attitude, the people will revolt against the Congress regime.

She visited BRS sarpanch Gangareddy of Habsipur who was lodged in Jagtlial jail.

Speaking on the occasion, she alleged that Congress has been misusing power.

The Congress made unimplementable promises to peo-

ple and subjected them to harassment. The BRS would face the Congress conspiracies politically and legally.

Referring to the police dragging a university student by her hair, she said and added that such brutality never took place in Telangana earlier.

Kavita said that the BRS would protect its workers and the party would stand by party activists and leaders.

## NON-PAYEMENT OF BILLS

# Integrated market works comes to grinding halt

PNS ■ JANAGOAN

The integrated vegetable and non-vegetable market works have been come to a grinding halt, while the flower and fruit market works have remained non-starter.

The state government sanctioned Rs 4.50 crore for development of the Integrated market. The contractor was directed to execute the market works in an eco-friendly manner. Latter, the government escalated the project cost to Rs 6.50 crore, adding new features to the scheme. The State government asked the contractors to complete the works within six months.

Out of the 134 shops planned to be built, works related to 46 shops meant for selling meat and 65 shops for selling vegetables reached the last leg of the construction. As far as the development of the main market development



works, works worth Rs 3 crore have already been executed.

The government is yet to clear bills worth Rs 1 crore for the works done. As a result, the contractor suspended all construction activity, delaying the market development further.

In fact, the contractor is yet to build 23 shops for selling fruits. The works did not progress.

In Janagoan, there is no

Rytu Bazaar. There is only one notified vegetable market at Amba Baavi. In tune with the people's needs, the State government decided to build a model market in Sanjay Nagar area of the town on a 1.5 acre site. Out of the Rs 30 crore sanctioned for the beautification of the town, the government earmarked Rs 2 crore for development of a model market and the foundation stone was laid for the same in 2019.

# Five held for trying to sell demonetised Turkish currency

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On credible information, the sleuths of SOT, LB Nagar Zone team, along with LB Nagar police, apprehended five members of an interstate gang who tried to sell demonetised Turkish currency to the customers. The police claimed to have seized one million denomination Turkish currency notes on Thursday.

The arrested are Venkataeshwara Rao, Gundimeda Jyothi Ravi Teja, Thota Venkata Nagaraju, Nimmaganti Jeevan Satya aka Jeevan Markuthi Teja, and Pili Buiji r/o.Kakinada.

The accused Manchaneella Om Naga Prasad belonged to Eluru district in AP state and worked as a carpenter. During the past eight years, he procured Turkish currency from

a person at Eluru and since then he had been trying to exchange the Turkish currency at a lower rate but in vain.

Few days back he came in contact with Jyothi Ravi Teja and Thota Venkata Nagaraju and shared the information about the possession of Turkish currency and offered a good share amount on sale. On that they agreed to the proposal and Nagaraju contacted Pili Buiji and informed about the demonetized Turkish currency.

In pursuance of their plan, on Thursday in the early morning the accused came to Chinthalkunta at LB Nagar in a vehicle and trying to sell the demonetized Turkish currency LIRA. On a reliable information SOT LB Nagar team, along with LB Nagar police apprehended them, the police said.

## Electrical installation works moving at brisk pace in Medaram

PNS ■ MULUGU

The electrification works are going on at a brisk pace in Medaram for the benefit of devotees thronging the biennial Sammakka-Saralakka tribal fair. The works are being executed at a cost of Rs 16.34 crore.

Electricity Department Divisional Engineers have been supervising commissioning of the electric transformers, laying of overhead power cables and so on.

The workers have been working round-the-clock to overcome the problem of low-voltage.

Arrangements have been made for installation of at least 199 power transformers, having varying capacities, at various places at the festival site to overcome the problem of low-voltage.

Low-tension power cables are being laid for a distance of at least 56 km.



## Kolli appointed as BJP TS physically challenged unit chief

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP State unit president G Kishan Reddy on Thursday said that Kolli Nageswara Rao was appointed BJP physically challenged wing president.

Nageswara Rao has been fighting for the rights of physically challenged and led several agitations to secure their rights, he said, adding that for the past five years he has been working as All-India

Vikalangula Vedika, which is affiliated to the BJP.

Kishan Reddy appealed to Nageswara Rao to ensure welfare of the physically challenged people.

Nageswara Rao thanked Kishan Reddy for honouring him with the post and vowed to work for the welfare of the physically challenged people.

He offered to fight for their rights by uniting the physically challenged across the state.



Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan presenting Best Electoral Practices Award to Suryapet Collector S Venkata Rao in Hyderabad on Thursday

## Suryapet Collector receives Best Electoral Practices Award

PNS ■ SURYAPETA

Collector S Venkata Rao on Thursday received award for the Best Electoral Practices-2024 from Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan at an award-presentation ceremony held at JNTU Auditorium in Hyderabad on Thursday.

He was chosen for the

award in recognition of his meritorious service in the conduct of the elections.

On the occasion of observing National Voters' Day on Thursday, the Election Commission identified Venkata Rao for the state category award under best electoral practices category.

The Chief Electoral Officer was also present.

# PM invites 7<sup>th</sup> grade Akarshana to R-Day Parade

The student of Hyderabad Public School established nine libraries

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Impressed with the philanthropic activities by Akarshana Sathish, a seventh-grade student of Hyderabad Public School, Begumpet donated for establishing nine libraries by gathering books from her neighbours, classmates and relatives, Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated her on Wednesday, during the 105th episode of Mann Ki Baat, and extended Republic Day celebrations invitation to her via PMO office.

Akarshana began collecting books in 2021 when she and her parents visited the MNJ Cancer Children's Hospital to provide food. She met youngsters asking for colouring books and

since then she began collecting used books and spreading the word to everyone in her neighbourhood.

She gathered over 6,498 used books and established nine libraries, the first of which is at MNJ Cancer Children Hospital, the second at the Sanath Nagar Police Station, the third at the Gayathri Nagar Association, Borabanda, the fourth at the Juvenile and Observation Home for Girls Hyderabad, the fifth with the Coimbatore City Police Street libraries, and the sixth at Chennai Boys Club in the Nalamur Police Station, the seventh library at Government High School, Sanath Nagar, Eighth Library was at Bharosa Centre at Siddipet maintained by Women Safety wing of



Telangana State Police.

Recently, she established the ninth public library at Kulithurai Village in Kanyakumari District, Tamilnadu. She is confident that these books will inspire people and children to read more books.

Due to her philanthropic activities, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry extended an invitation to her and her parents along with the tickets and hotel stay to attend the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi on January 26.

Akarshana said, "I can't express it in words to get this opportunity to witness the Republic Day celebrations. It was such a proud feeling that I got an invitation to the celebrations. I would love to thank all the Hyderabad locals for supporting me and because of them, I have established nine libraries till now. I will have an opportunity to interact with successful people there.

My future goal is I want to set up six more libraries by this year."

## 'Excellence in Sports commentary and Journalism award' for Harsha Bhogle

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Public School has bestowed the 'Excellence for Sports Commentary and Journalism Award' upon the esteemed alumnus Harsha Bhogle, a renowned Indian cricket commentator on Thursday.

The recognition ceremony was attended by Gusti Noria, President of the HPS Society and Skand Bali, the Principal, underscoring the school's dedication to recognising remarkable contributions to society.

Bhogle recently addressed students from classes 3rd to 8th. During his insightful talk, he walked down memory lane, reminiscing about his own school experiences. Bhogle shared how he enjoyed every



aspect of school life, including his active involvement in writing for the school magazine.

He emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between academics and sports, reassuring students that the 24 hours a day provide ample time to excel in both areas. Furthermore, he cautioned against falling in love with cell phones, advising students to use their time wisely and not let digital distractions hinder their overall development.

# CM launches 300 4G cell towers in tribal areas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday launched 300 4G mobile cell towers in remote tribal areas in the state.

An official release from the government said the towers, which were launched virtually from the chief minister's camp office here, will provide communication facilities in remote areas where there is no connectivity to date.

Out of the 300 new towers, 246 were established in Alluri Seetharama Raju district, while the rest were erected in Parvatipuram Manyam (44), Prakasam (4), Eluru (3), Srikakulam (2) and Kakinada (1) districts. Airtel and Reliance Jio established 136 and 164 towers



respectively, the release said.

Nearly two lakh people belonging to 944 habitations will get communication facilities with the new towers, Jagan said, adding that 42,000 people benefited from the 100 towers established earlier.

These new towers were set up with

an expenditure of Rs 400 crore.

The government plans to extend communication facilities to people living in 5,459 remote habitations by erecting 2,900 mobile towers, he said, adding that the dispensation has convinced the Centre to be part of the Rs 3,119 crore plan for which

lands have already been handed over.

The chief minister said that the government aims to complete the construction of all the towers in the next one year and that the connectivity would help people get TV and mobile connections and aid them in registering for the welfare schemes online.

The idea of extending mobile connectivity to remote areas is also part of the revolutionary changes being introduced to transform the rural landscape with village secretariats, village clinics and English medium schools.

Some tribals participated in the programme and thanked the Chief Minister for extending the 4G network in their areas, the release added.

# Jagan exploiting religion for political gains: Pawan Kalyan

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan has alleged that Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy is exploiting religion for political advantage.

Pawan Kalyan met with the heads of the Christian community from combined East Godavari and West Godavari at the state office in Mangalagiri on Thursday. During this meeting, he became acquainted with the concerns of religious leaders. Addressing the gathering, Pawan Kalyan criticised Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy,



asserting that the Chief Minister does not adhere to the teachings of Jesus Christ but manipulates religion for personal gain.

"If Jagan Mohan Reddy followed the teachings of Jesus Christ, the State would not be facing a crisis. A person who

upholds humanity transcends religious boundaries. Those who cherish their faith while respecting others can truly serve the interests of the people," remarked Pawan Kalyan.

Pawan Kalyan also highlighted the politicisation of secularism by some leaders, emphasising the societal tendency to condemn attacks on minorities while overlooking similar incidents targeting Hindus.

"Under the governance of Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSRCP, 517 temples were reportedly vandalized and desecrated in the state.







## To each their own

Two major players in INDIA bloc plan to go it alone in LS polls. Where does it leave the Oppn grouping?

Despite the constituents' best efforts to paper over their differences and present a united facade, the worst apprehensions about the INDIA bloc are coming true. Its seat-sharing formula is just not taking shape. The much-hyped bloc, an alliance of 28 Opposition parties aiming to counter the BJP's dominance, seems to be unravelling. Recent announcements by key constituents indicate a shift in strategy, with prominent leaders opting for independent paths in the Lok Sabha elections. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's rejection of sharing seats with the Congress and AAP's decision to go it alone in Punjab are enough to upset the bloc's apple cart even before it could start its electoral journey. Mamata, the TMC chief and a key architect of the INDIA bloc, has signalled a fracture in the purported unity. She has emphasised the need for regional parties to assert themselves and prioritise State-centric issues over national alliances. This stance has added an element of unpredictability



to the bloc's future, as it challenges the idea of a united front against the BJP. As if Mamata's stance were not enough, AAP has also decided to go it solo. In Punjab, the party has declared its intent to contest the elections independently. It comes as a major blow to the INDIA bloc: In retaliation, the Congress could go it alone in Delhi and Haryana, effectively making it a three-cornered contest in Delhi, Punjab and Haryana.

The challenge for the INDIA bloc now lies in reconciling the divergent aspirations of its constituent parties and finding common ground to build a cohesive narrative on. It is, however, essential to acknowledge that the dynamics of Indian politics are fluid and alliances can evolve swiftly. The INDIA bloc could potentially reassess its strategy and work towards a more unified front as the general elections approach. The posturing by the TMC and AAP should make the INDIA bloc leaders go back to the basics and rework their strategy. It may find renewed purpose in addressing shared concerns while respecting the autonomy of individual parties. The success of the INDIA bloc at the hustings hinges on its ability to navigate internal differences. The bloc's initial promise lay in consolidating regional strength; for this, it must overcome fissures and present a coherent vision for governance at the national level. It needs to convince voters that a coalition of regional parties can provide stable and effective leadership, addressing both local and national concerns. Its success will depend on its capability to forge a common agenda, communicate it effectively to the electorate and demonstrate a united front against the ruling party. While the bloc's future appears uncertain at the moment, political landscapes are known for rapid transformations. The road to general elections will test the resilience and adaptability of the INDIA bloc, determining whether it can emerge as a potent force capable of shaping the national narrative and challenging the status quo.



Devotees take part in a religious procession to celebrate Thaipusam festival, in Chennai PTI

## Managing diversity in small and remote teams

Small companies managing multi-location teams thrive through clear communication, inclusivity and technological leverage

In the modern era of remote work and globalisation, small companies are increasingly embracing multi-location teams to tap into diverse talent pools and expand their reach. Effectively managing teams spread across different locations presents unique challenges and opportunities. Small companies can mitigate these challenges by exploring strategies that help to successfully navigate the complexities of managing multi-location teams. First and foremost, since technology has made remote working possible, it should be further leveraged for seamless communication. It is the cornerstone of managing multi-location teams. Small companies should invest in reliable communication tools that facilitate seamless collaboration. Platforms like video conferencing, project management software, and instant messaging can bridge the geographical gap. Having established a connection with the team, it is vital to ascertain clear communication protocols that are essential to avoid misunderstandings and ensure everyone stays informed. Establish guide-



lines for virtual meetings, project updates, and team communication channels. Consistency in communication practices helps maintain a sense of unity among team members, regardless of their physical locations. While written communication is valuable, face-to-face interactions build stronger connections. It is beyond doubt that distance can create a sense of isolation, making team building crucial for multi-location teams. It is therefore important to include virtual team-building activities, such as online games, virtual happy hours, or collaborative projects. These initiatives promote camaraderie and create a positive team culture. In a long-distance, multi-location work environment, clarity is the king. Clearly defining roles and responsibilities for each team member to avoid confusion and ensure accountability is a must. Small

companies should establish a transparent framework that outlines expectations and deliverables. This clarity minimizes the risk of duplication of efforts and promotes efficiency within the multi-location team. Utilizing the requisite project management tools play a pivotal role in coordinating tasks and projects across different locations. Small companies can benefit from using tools that enable real-time collaboration, document sharing, and task tracking. These tools enhance productivity and streamline workflows within the multi-location team. In addition, inclusivity is vital for the success of multi-location teams. Small companies should actively cultivate a culture that values diverse perspectives and contributions. Provide opportunities for skill-building, training, and career advancement for all team members, regardless of their location. This investment enhances individual capabilities. Another important aspect that helps to manage a small multi-location team is regular check-ins and feedback sessions to assess the well-being and

progress of each team member. Small companies should create an open and supportive environment where team members feel comfortable sharing concerns or ideas. Constructive feedback sessions help in addressing challenges and fostering continuous improvement. To enhance transparency in the multi-location teams, a centralized knowledge repository accessible to all team members is a vital requirement. This repository can contain important documents, project updates, and resources, ensuring that everyone has access to the information they need. This type of centralised hub enhances transparency and minimises the risk of information silos within the multi-location team. Last but not least, being a multi-location team, embrace and celebrate the diversity within the multi-location team. Small Companies should promote cultural awareness, acknowledging the unique backgrounds, customs, and perspectives of team members. *(The writer is assistant professor at Amity University; views are personal)*



HIMA BINDU KOTA

## Taiwanese conundrum for mainland China

The best bet for the Chinese is to seek organic support for 'reunification' with the main land from the Taiwanese themselves. A coercive posture and rough language would not help

Contrary to Chinese assertions, insistences, and sensitivities to what it unilaterally calls 'Chinese Taiwan' or 'Taiwan, China', the Republic of China (ROC) or Taiwan has its own functional democracy, constitution and approximately 3,00,000 combatants protecting its territorial sovereignty. With mainland China claiming to represent One-China as the legitimate power, the battle of wits tilted in favour of mainland China in 1971, when the United Nations switched diplomatic recognition onto mainland China. Since then, mainland China has flexed its patent admixture of financial, military, industrial and diplomatic power to bludgeon support in its favour. Today, the fast-receding number of countries that recognize Taiwan has fallen to a meagre 12 countries. Even this list includes relatively 'lightweight' nations like St Vincent and the Grenadines, Eswatini and Tuvalu, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, Palau, Nauru, Holy See, Marshall Islands etc. Chinese President Xi Jinping has repeatedly warned against "Taiwanese independence separatism" and promised that Taiwan would "surely be unified". Xi's rhetoric is deeply suggestive and intimidatory. However, audio-visuals of choreographed brinkmanship aside, such a beligerent move would be anything but a cakewalk in terms of consequences for the Chinese. Practically, Chinese sabre-rattling is part of deliberately postured nationalism that is vital to buttress the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, as the main lever of legitimacy i.e., socio-economic upliftment of the Chinese, is now under extreme stress. In the absence of economic prosperity, muscle-flexing against Taiwan distracts and galvanises the Chinese masses. The disproportionate Chinese military strength to Taiwan's militaristic preparedness on paper notwithstanding, the near-certain international reactions of sanctions and embargoes onto the Chinese if they were to attack Taiwan, would break the proverbial camel's back, in terms of fur-



ther economic sufferings for the Chinese masses. It could lead to unsustainable economic regression and societal discontent. It is a price that Xi Jinping simply cannot afford, especially as the economic upside of a forcible integration, would pale in comparison to the downsides of a plausible invasion. Besides, Taiwan is extremely well-fortified with missiles, early warning systems, precision-strike weapons, underwater mines, and other counter-attack capabilities that could inflict significant damage on any invasion attempt, irrespective of the ultimate result. In any case, the Chinese would have to mount a significant fleet and accompanying wherewithal which could easily alert of an impending invasion – a discreet and sudden Chinese attack, is next to impossible. Even the fact that a potential Chinese invasion would involve breaking through large urban squallors and cities, it would entail deadly urban warfare that has tested the skills of even hardened Israelis and Russians in recent times, let alone the untested Chinese PLA soldier. Urban warfare and associated 'costs' could lead to the undoing of any residual support the Chinese may have amongst the Taiwanese. The famed Taiwanese 'porcupine'

“ XI JINPING HAS REPEATEDLY WARNED AGAINST 'TAIWANESE INDEPENDENCE SEPARATISM' AND PROMISED THAT TAIWAN WOULD 'SURELY BE UNIFIED'. XI'S RHETORIC IS DEEPLY SUGGESTIVE AND INTIMIDATORY

strategy is predicated on making a heavily laden Chinese invasion fleet face a prickly proposition and based on defensive survivability. The fact that such an invasion could draw the committed US forces would have its own resultant algorithms. So realistically the best bet for the Chinese is for organic support for 'reunification' with the mainland Chinese, by the Taiwanese themselves. This is not an unfathomable situation, given the existence of 'pro' China and 'anti' China sentiment amongst Taiwanese political parties. While the recent Taiwanese Presidential elections have brought back the decidedly 'anti-China' forces of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) with 40.05% of the popular vote (third successive victory), the fact that the other two parties have varied shades of 'pro-China' anchorage i.e., Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan's People Party (TPP), garnered 33.49% and 26.46% respectively, shows faultlines. It could be credibly argued that while the Taiwanese were aligned with DPP's nationalistic stand, there must have been anti-incumbency on local issues like low wages, unaffordable housing etc., that led to significant support for KMT and TPP. However, the competitive race

of identities in Taiwan has led to a steady assertion of locals identifying themselves as just 'Taiwanese' as opposed to 'Both Taiwanese and Chinese' or plain 'Chinese'. Yet, post the electoral results the Chinese foreign ministry reiterated, "Whatever changes take place in Taiwan, the basic fact that there is only one China", clearly signalling the continuation of stalemate and tensions. If the Chinese were to overdo the further sanctioning against provisions of an existing free trade agreement with Taiwan (or even suspend it altogether), it would lead to painful hardships for the Taiwanese, but also to further anti-Chinese sentiment that clearly cannot be countered by military superiority or plausible invasions. The best bet for the Chinese is to have the local Taiwanese perceive more socio-economic merit in 'unification' as opposed to 'independence', a battle that puts Beijing on the backfoot given stories coming out of Hong Kong or Tibet. So, the Chinese battle-rattle-tattle for crossing the straits in a purported invasion will continue, however, the costs to walk the talk will remain prohibitive. *(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**FIR AGAINST RAHUL GANDHI**  
Sir — The under-pressure Assam police on Tuesday registered an FIR against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other leaders for "wanton acts of violence" on Tuesday, Frustrated Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Jatra is currently in Assam and the alleged acts of violence took place while the party supporters and leaders allegedly clashed with police personnel in their bid to enter Guwahati. Four police personnel were injured in the scuffle, Guwahati Police Commissioner Diganta Bora said. Under fear, Sarma had earlier in the day instructed the Director General of Police G P Singh to register a case against Rahul Gandhi for provoking the crowd to break the barricades. Gandhi said the chief minister directing the DGP to file a case against him shows "that they have fear in their hearts... They are afraid as the people of Assam are standing up as 'Tufan' and 'Andhi' (storm) against them". The barricades were erected along a highway to prevent Congress leaders and supporters taking part in the Yatra from entering the main thoroughfares of Guwahati, the largest city of the north-eastern state. As Congress supporters removed the barricades, a scuffle with the police personnel ensued leading to injuries suffered by state Congress president Bhupen Borah and leader of the opposition in the state assembly Debabrata Saikia. Gandhi alleged that while BJP president J P Nadda was allowed to take the same route earlier, Congress was not permitted.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

**CONTRIBUTION OF NETAJI**  
Sir — The country can always remember the contribution of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to the freedom movement. His slogan 'Give me blood, I will give you freedom' sparked a new revolution in the country. The army 'Azad Hind Fauj' formed by him forced the British to leave India. The British had first handed over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Azad

**Yemen crisis**  
  
The US and Britain are carrying out joint air strikes on the positions of Iran-backed Houthis separatists active in Yemen, in retaliation for blocking and attacking fleets in the Red Sea. Not only this, America has once again declared Houthis as a terrorist group. But instead of solving the area's problems, they are becoming more complicated day by day. First of all, poor countries like Yemen, where today every area has fallen into the hands of fighters. The group of Arab countries, which includes Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, tried to control all the forces opposing each other by entering that country but failed. Now an in-depth investigation has revealed that the UAE, while fighting there, has carried out many targeted killings with the help of money. American mercenaries were given a contract by the Emirati government to kill members of a specific group. Most of those killed by these mercenaries were members of 'Islah', the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is a popular international Sunni Islamist movement that no one has ever classified as a terrorist organization but is banned in many Arab countries. They are included in the United Arab Emirates where its political activism and support for elections is seen by the country's royal family as a threat to their rule. Had gone to Yemen to restore peace but started killing Islah members. This should be investigated by the United Nations. The dark deeds of the UAE should be exposed.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Hind Fauj and Netaji hoisted the tricolour there on 30 December 1943. Netaji had become synonymous with courage, bravery and patriotism. Netaji's death remains a mystery. The present Central Government has expressed gratitude to Netaji by celebrating his birthday as Parakram Diwas (23 January), making public all the files related to him and installing the statue of Netaji at India Gate. Netaji's life will always continue to inspire patriotism among the youth.

N Mateeni | Pune

**BHARAT RATNA FOR THE JAN NAYAK**  
Sir — The centre has posthumously fulfilled a long-standing demand by announcing the Bharat Ratna award for the Former Chief Minister of Bihar, Karpooi Thakur, a dedicated leader committed to uplifting the poor and marginalized. As a notable figure in Bihar politics, Thakur's lasting impact on India's socio-political landscape is evident, offering hope and positivity to Dalits and backward classes. Hailing from

a backward class and affectionately known as the 'Jannayak' or people's hero, Thakur embodied the ideals of Subhas Chandra Bose and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. His commitment to breaking caste boundaries was represented during his 28-day fast unto death in support of Telco labourers, showcasing his dedication to social justice and workers' rights. As Bihar's Education Minister, Thakur promoted Hindi, removed English as a compulsory subject, and became the first Chief Minister to enforce total alcohol prohibition, addressing crucial social issues and challenging established norms. His legacy is evident in the transformed India where individuals from backward classes now hold prominent positions. Karpooi Thakur's Bharat Ratna is not merely an award; it's a recognition of his unwavering pursuit of justice and equality, shaping a more inclusive and equitable India. **Preetiynkta | Bhubaneswar**

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S COMPLEX GLOBAL CHALLENGES IN 2024

India navigates global complexities amid elections and geopolitical uncertainties



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Even as the world gathered to witness once in a lifetime event in the historic dusty small temple town of Ayodhya EAM Jaishankar was speaking about the changing concepts of multilateralism and international relations in the realigning world order in Kampala and Lagos, Nigeria. India's strategic focus on being the leading voice of the global south, at a time when major democracies including India, are going to face the elections and two wars are showing little signs of ebbing, have made the path a tad more difficult. During its G20 presidency last year, India achieved a horizontal consensus, successfully obtaining a joint communique despite stark differences between Russia and the US. Impressively, India also brought the African Union, a pivotal constituent of the Global South, into the dialogue. However, the conflict in West Asia, teetering on the brink of genocide, is now extending from the Gaza Strip to the Red Sea. Pakistan and Iran, two major Islamic nations, engaged in reciprocal surgical strikes, each claiming to eliminate terrorist bases. Iran's influence on certain terror groups obstructs crucial maritime routes in the Red Sea, resulting in increased shipping costs. Recently, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar visited Iran to discuss the imperative of secure maritime routes. Nevertheless, the broader Gaza Strip conflict and its potential impact on the upcoming US elections seem unlikely to subside. India has adeptly cultivated a strong bilateral and bipartisan relationship with the US over the past decade, despite occasional disputes on trade and human rights. It is evident that India views the US as a crucial ally in countering the military expansion of China, safeguarding security, and promoting fair practices in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. During the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) conference, the External Affairs




Minister (EAM) reiterated India's call for a multipolar world and the reform of global institutions, including the UN. India's longstanding demand for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council has faced opposition from China. Notably, tech billionaire Elon Musk has backed India's bid for a permanent seat. In the past decade, India has advocated for a multipolar world order, emphasizing each powerful nation's distinct sphere of influence. The Ukraine conflict has reignited tensions between Russia and Western powers, while bipartisan support in the US for containing China persists under President Biden. The upcoming 2024 election, where Republican Trump may challenge Biden, could elevate immigration issues and super nationalism, potentially shifting American international influence away from multilateralism. The current Indian government, led by Prime Minister Modi, is perceived to have a positive rapport with Trump, should he return to power. However, potential challenges may arise regarding India's key concerns, as emphasized by the External Affairs Minister during the NAM summit. These concerns include establishing regional economic hubs, resilient supply chains, predictable mobility, and trusted data flows. People-centric policies, sustainable lifestyles, digital public infrastructure, food, energy, and health security, women-led development, prioritized connectivity with respect for sovereignty, and adequate resourcing for climate action and SDG realization are highlighted as crucial aspects. If Trump returns to the White House in 2024, India's global climate change initiatives may lose US support. Immigration challenges, exemplified by a large influx of Indian citizens at US borders, could escalate. India's upcoming elections face the daunting task of convincing voters, particularly in border states, that China has not encroached on Indian territories. The year 2024 poses significant challenges for international relations. *(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)*

# NEP: Multidisciplinary approach in higher education

## NEP is fostering inclusivity and merit-based research to address security challenges and encouraging multidisciplinary practices


Nelson Mandela once commented, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Over the past few years, there has been a notable shift in the landscape of education, emphasizing its pivotal role in shaping individuals physically, intellectually, and morally. Education is seen as a liberating force, breaking the chains of darkness and bigotry. Recently, there has been a concerted effort to integrate real-life experiments of democracy, environmental awareness, globalization, and governance into the framework of the new education system. The intellectual establishment plays a crucial role in providing theoretical rationale and



SUDHIR HINDWAN

strategies for educational advancements. It is imperative to explore how innovations in higher education can drive positive changes, instil confidence among the masses, and disseminate the latest global research and developments in education. This discourse aims to delve into the multifaceted aspects of the evolving higher education system, emphasizing the need for inclusivity and growth.

Is the Government's debt sustainable?



UTTAM GUPTA

The Government should take recourse to borrowings only for the creation of long-term assets. This will help generate income streams that can help in servicing the loans



Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecast that India's general government debt - it comprises the debts of the Centre and states - will overshoot 100 per cent of the GDP (gross domestic product) by the financial year (FY) 2027-28. Responding to this, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) clarified that this wasn't under a 'baseline scenario' - a jargon to describe normal economic conditions. It added the IMF was referring to a 'worst-case scenario' wherein a global shock would equally affect all countries. Is the government's debt sustainable? The government's debt is linked with how it manages its total expenditure vis-à-vis its total receipts or fiscal deficit (FD) which is excess of the former over the latter. The expenditure and receipts are broadly of two types viz. revenue and capital. Revenue expenditure (RE) is essentially consumption expenditure which does not result in the creation of assets. It includes expenses for the normal running of government departments and various services, interest charges on debt incurred by the government, subsidies and so on. Capital expenditure (CE) includes the money that the government spends on long-term assets such as property, plant, and equipment. Revenue Receipts (RR) are receipts that neither create any liability nor lead to any reduction in the assets of the government. These comprise tax and non-tax receipts, duties and fines, and interest and dividends receipts on government investments and assets. Capital receipts (CR) are those receipts that either create liabilities or reduce the asset value of the government. These are loans raised by the government to fund long-term developmental needs. Ideally, RR should fully pay for the RE implying that revenue deficit (RD) - the difference between RR and RE - should be zero. The government should take recourse to borrowings only for the creation of long-term assets. Spending in this manner will help generate income streams that can help in servicing the loans thereby making such debt sustainable. In reality, RR have consistently fallen

“THE FINANCE MINISTRY EXUDES CONFIDENCE THAT THE CENTRE IS 'ON TRACK TO ACHIEVE ITS STATED FISCAL CONSOLIDATION TARGET' OF REDUCING FD TO 4.5 PER CENT BY 2025-26”

short of RE leading to a revenue deficit which meant that the government was borrowing merely to finance consumption expenditure. Besides, even the loans taken for financing CE were not productively used. The result was an increase in debt to an unsustainable level. As a result, even in 2003-04 when the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act (2003) was passed by the then Vajpayee-led NDA - government, interest payments accounted for one-third of the RE. Under the FRBM Act (2003), the Vajpayee government promised the elimination of RD by the year 2008. It also committed to reducing FD to 3 per cent of the GDP. Against these pledges, during 2008-09, RD was 4.7 per cent whereas, FD was 6.2 per cent. In his budget speech for 2016-17, the then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced the intent of the Modi government to review the FRBM Act (2003) with a view to making the FD target more flexible. For this, he had set up a committee under Dr N K Singh. The committee recommended a "glide path" for the next six years, i.e., from 2017-18 to 2022-23. It recommended an FD target of 2.5 per cent, RD of 0.8 per cent, a combined Centre-state debt ceiling of 60 per cent, and a central debt ceiling of 40 per cent for the terminal year, i.e., 2022-23. Further, it fixed 3 per cent FD to be achieved during 2018-19. The committee also allowed the Union Government to breach the target - by up to 0.5 per cent - in the case of "far-reaching structural reforms with unanticipated fiscal implications." In the amendment to the FRBM Act in the Finance Bill 2018-19, even while retaining the "escape clause" to cover unanticipated events, the government adopted the glide path of achieving a 3 per cent

FD by 2020-21 instead of 2018-19, which was mooted by the committee. Further, it set the debt limit at 40 per cent for the Centre to be reached by 2024-25 instead of the mandated 2022-23. The relaxation in the glide path may be seen in the backdrop of the government missing the FD target for 2017-18 by 0.3 per cent and seeing no hope of achieving 3 per cent during 2018-19, as recommended by the committee. In the Budget for 2020-21, the finance minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman had already invoked the escape clause of the FRBM (Amendment) Act to alter the FD targets for 2019-20 from 3.3 percent as provided in the Budget to 3.8 percent in the revised estimate and for 2020-21, from 3 percent - as per the glide path required under the Act - to 3.5 percent. Seen in relation to the target set by the N K Singh Committee or even to the FRBM (Amendment) Act, the performance of the government had been off the mark. For instance, during 2018-19, the FD was 3.7 per cent against the 3 per cent required as per the Singh Committee. If deferred subsidy payments (DSPs) are also included (in those years, substantial amounts of major subsidy bills, viz., food, fertilizers, and fuel, were kept pending), the FD would be 5.7%. Likewise, for 2019-20, including DSPs, the FD would be 5.1 per cent. Due to Corona pandemic, the year 2020-21 saw plunging revenue and ballooning expenditure. As a result, the FD zoomed to 9.1 per cent against BE of 3.5 per cent. Being an exceptional year, a comparison with the glide path may not be apt. In the following year, even as the pandemic waned and the economy rebounded, in her budget speech for 2021-22, Sitharaman fixed the FD target at 6.9 per cent saying her goal was to achieve 4.5 per cent by the year 2025-26. The actual FD for 2021-22 was lower at 6.7 percent. For 2022-23, she set the target at 6.4 per cent describing this as 'advancing on the road to fiscal consolidation'. The actual was precisely at 6.4 per cent. For 2023-24, she kept the target at 5.9 per cent. It is likely that even this would be achieved. From the above, the finance ministry exudes confidence that the Centre is 'on track to achieve its stated fiscal consolidation target' of reducing FD to 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. This is misleading. To reset the fiscal trajectory making it substantially relaxed and then claim that fiscal numbers are well on track looks amusing. Let us not forget that even as per the FRBM (Amendment) Act, the Centre should have achieved 3 per cent in 2020-21. Against this, the actual FD during 2021-22 and 2022-23 was more than two times whereas during the current year, it is expected to be nearly twice this level. The RD at 4.1 per cent during 2022-23 and 3 per cent during 2023-24 (expected) is 4 to 5 times the 0.8 per cent level as recommended by the NK Singh Committee. The debt to GDP ratio of the Centre is around 60 per cent against the 40 per cent mandated as per the amended Act. As per the FRBM Act (2003), the FD was to have come down to 3 per cent by 2008. Against this, we are talking of 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. As per the Act, RD was to become 'Zero' by 2008. During 2023-24, it is stuck with 3 per cent. It shows how much the Centre has lagged behind in managing its fiscal situation. True, but for Modi's efforts in boosting tax revenue, the situation would have been much worse. Nonetheless, a lot more needs to be done especially by slashing RE. *(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)*



MONEY MATTERS

## Air India to take delivery of 5 more A350s by June

Air India will add five more wide-body A350 aircraft to its fleet by June, and the process of upgrading 40 of its legacy Boeing 787 and 777 planes will begin in July, its chief Campbell Wilson said on Thursday. As Tata Group's takeover of loss-making Air India completes two years on January 27, Wilson also said that on average, one aircraft will arrive every six days throughout 2024. There will be an addition of 5 more A350s, which will progressively take to India's skies between January and June 2024, the Air India CEO and Managing Director said in a message to the staff. Air India will also induct 17 A320s and 46 B737s. The airline started the commercial operations of its first A350 aircraft on January 22, with a flight from Mumbai to Chennai. Currently, Air India has 117 operational aircraft and together with Air India Express, the total number of operational planes is 180. Last year, Air India placed an order for 470 planes with Airbus and Boeing.



## HPCL net profit treble to Rs 529 crore in Q3

Industan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) on Thursday reported trebling of profit in the December quarter as robust marketing margin negated inventory losses. Standalone net profit of Rs 529.02 crore, or Rs 3.73 per share, in the December quarter, as compared to Rs 172.43 crore, or Rs 1.22 a share, in last year, the company said in a statement. The 21-month record freeze in retail fuel prices despite fall in input raw material (crude oil) prices helped raise marketing margins but refining margins were lower and the firm also suffered inventory losses because of the lag in buying and processing oil during which time rates fell. HPCL earned USD 8.49 on turning every barrel of crude oil into fuel like petrol and diesel during October-December as compared to USD 9.14 per barrel gross refining margin last year. However, the firm booked Rs 700-750 crore inventory loss in the period under review.



## TCS looks to double staff in France over next three years

TCS is aiming to double staff in France over the next three years as it sees handsome business growth in the European country, a senior official said on Thursday. At present, the largest Indian IT services company employs 1,600 people in France across four major centres in the country. France is among the fastest growing markets in Europe for TCS, growing much faster than the numbers it reports for the continent, its head of European business, Sapthagiri Chapalapalli, told PTI. Chapalapalli said TCS has been present in France for over three decades now and right now, it feels that the bulk of the groundwork is ready for a faster growth of the business going ahead. The business in France will 'multiply' from here on by growing at an accelerated pace courtesy building blocks which have been put in place, he said.



## Agriculture Minister urges farmers to learn new methods of farming

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda on Thursday said the country's progress lies in the progress of farmers and urged them to learn new methods of farming.

Addressing 1,500 farmers and their spouses invited as special guests for the 75th Republic Day, the minister asserted that the government's aim is to empower farmers and improve their livelihoods.

Munda said, "The progress of the country lies in the progress of the farmers. In the changing times, learning new methods of farming will prove beneficial for the farmers," an official statement said. Farmers have come to the national capital to attend Republic Day, which is not just an event but is going to open a door to enter 'Amrit Kaal' (The Era of Elixir), he added.

In the conference, agriculture ministry officials and farm scientists shared with the farmers and members of Farmer Producers Organisations (FPOs) about modern farming methods and innovations. They also shared about various agriculture schemes.

## Govt, RBI actively engaged on digital currency: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the government and the Reserve Bank are actively engaged in improving the central bank digital currency (CBDC) so that it can be used for cross-border payments.

RBI began the pilot project wholesale CBDC and picked up nine banks -- State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, YES Bank, IDFC First Bank, and HSBC.

Besides, RBI has already rolled out a pilot in the retail version of CBDC or e-rupee on December 1, 2022. The e-rupee is in the form of a digital token that represents legal tender.

It is being issued in the same denominations as the paper currency and coins. It is being distributed through financial intermediaries, i.e. banks. Users are able to transact with e-rupee through a digital wallet offered by the participating banks.

"We strongly believe it helps

**"We strongly believe it helps in cross-border payments. It will bring in greater transparency and traceability... Both the regulator and the government are working on it. We are actively engaged in it. Agriculture retains its primacy and we are looking at strengthening agriculture by modernizing some of the practices, post-harvest practices and so on."**



in cross-border payments. It will bring in greater transparency and traceability..." Sitharaman said while speaking at an event to mark 125 years of Hindu College.

It helps in speeding up payments with less cost, she said, adding it brings down costs for inward and outward remittance.

"Both the regulator and the government are working on it. We are actively engaged in it," she said.

Asked about priority sectors

to make India 'Viksit Bharat', she said, the focus areas would be manufacturing and agriculture.

"Agriculture retains its primacy and we are looking at strengthening agriculture by modernizing some of the practices, post-harvest practices and so on," she said.

In manufacturing, she said, the government had identified 13 sunrise sectors including renewable energy, semiconductor, machine learning, earth sciences and space.

## 4 companies get Sebi's nod to launch IPOs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Entero Healthcare Solutions, JNK India, Exicom Tele-Systems and Akme Fintrade (India) have received markets regulator Sebi's approval to raise funds through initial public offerings.

However, the Securities and Exchange Board of India has returned the IPO papers of Stallion India Fluorochemicals.

As per the processing status of draft offer documents till January 19, the watchdog has approved the initial public offering (IPO) of the four companies. These four firms, which had filed their preliminary papers with the markets watchdog between June and October, obtained observation letters on January 16-19, an update with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed on Thursday.

In Sebi's parlance, obtaining observation letters means its go-ahead to launch an IPO. Going by the draft papers of Entero Healthcare Solutions, the IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares worth up to Rs 1,000 crore and an Offer For Sale (OFS) component of up to Rs 57.15 lakh equity shares.

## 3 infra projects worth Rs 9,600 cr recommended for approval

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Three infrastructure projects of roads and railways worth Rs 9,600 crore have been recommended for approval under the PM Gati Shakti initiative, an official statement said on Thursday.

These projects were assessed in the 64th Network Planning Group (NPG) meeting on October 17.

"During the meeting, the NPG discussed three proposed greenfield projects of Ministry of Railways (1) and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (2), with an aggregate project cost worth about Rs 9,600 crore," the commerce and industry ministry said.

The meeting was chaired by Special Secretary (Logistics), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Sumita Dawra.

The inter-ministerial NPG meets every fortnight and appraises infra projects to ensure multi-modality, synchronisation of efforts, and comprehensive development

PM GATI SHAKTI



**The NPG discussed three proposed greenfield projects of Ministry of Railways (1) and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (2), with an aggregate project cost worth about Rs 9,600 crore**

to develop an integrated infrastructure to reduce logistics costs. All logistics and connectivity infrastructure projects, entailing investments of over Rs 500 crore are routed through the NPG.

The NPG's approval is required before clearance of the project by the Public Investment Board (PIB) or Department of Expenditure under the finance ministry.

The maximum projects recommended so far by the group are related to roads, railways and urban development.



## Sensex declines 359 pts on selling in IT shares

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex declined by 359 points while Nifty closed below the 21,400 level on Thursday due to selling in IT shares and continuous foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 359.64 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 70,700.67. The index opened lower and plunged further 741.27 points or 1.04 per cent to hit a low of 70,319.04 in day trade. As many as 19 Sensex shares dropped while 11 advanced.

The broader Nifty fell by 101.35 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 21,352.60 with 34 of its constituents closing in the red.

A rise in US bond yields and mixed financial results by corporates triggered FII selling, analysts said. IT, pharma and

FMCG shares declined while realty and energy stocks bucked the trend.

Among Sensex shares, Tech Mahindra fell by over 6 per cent after the company reported a 60 per cent decline in net profit to Rs 510.4 crore in the December quarter.

Bharti Airtel, ITC, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, Nestle, Tata Steel, and Maruti were among the other major laggards. IT shares declined as third-quarter results have failed to impress investors. Wipro dropped 1.68 per cent, HCL Tech by 1.54 per cent, TCS by 1.03 per cent and Infosys by 0.22 per cent.

NTPC, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries, JSW Steel, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the gainers.

## Nova Agritech IPO subscribed 109.36 times on last day of offer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Initial Public Offer (IPO) of Nova Agritech got subscribed a whopping 109.36 times on the last day of subscription on Thursday, with heavy participation coming in from institutional investors.

The Rs 143.81 crore-IPO received bids for 2,77,94,75,730 shares against 2,54,14,746 shares on offer, according to data available with the NSE.

The portion for non institutional investors fetched 224.06 times subscription and Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) quota got subscribed 79.31 times. The category for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) received 77.10 times subscription.

The IPO of the manufacturer of agricultural inputs had a fresh issue of up to Rs 112 crore and an offer-for-sale of up to 77,58,620 equity shares.

Price range for the offer was Rs 39-41 a share.

On Friday, Nova Agritech had raised a little over Rs 43 crore from anchor investors.

## India Inc awaiting Feb 1 Budget for growth-boosting measures

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India Inc wants Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to announce more measures in her interim Budget to boost manufacturing, earmark larger funds for infrastructure development, and accord more focus on social sector schemes, while giving relief on taxation front.

Sitharaman, who has already presented five annual Budgets, will be unveiling an interim Budget for fiscal 2024-25 on February 1 in the Lok Sabha. It will be the last major economic document before the next general elections.

Industry says that it is imper-



ative for the government to take measures to boost economic growth in the country as India marches towards becoming the third largest economy in the coming years.

Industry body CII has suggested launch of 'National Mission for Advanced Manufacturing' to enhance quality and productivity in manufacturing. "The mission

## Competition Comm to soon float tender for market study on AI's impact on businesses

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Competition Commission will soon float a tender for conducting a study on the impact of artificial intelligence on businesses and services, its chief Ravneet Kaur said on Thursday.

The Chairperson of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) also emphasised that the regulator cannot take "one-size fits all" interventions in technological markets, which require nuanced assessments.

She was interacting with reporters on the sidelines of a conference here.

"Shortly, we will be coming out with a tender seeking inputs from companies to carry out a market research for us so that we understand better how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can impact businesses as it offers services and also act as a platform," Kaur said.

She said that hopefully, the tender should open in about two weeks though the terms of ref-

erence of the proposed study are yet to be framed. According to her, a management consultancy, an accountancy firm or a legal firm can take up the study.

In recent times, there has been an increasing use of AI applications in several sectors.

About data protection, Kaur said the CCI is looking at it from two angles, one is about personal data and the administrative ministry concerned has already come out with the required norms.

## Indian firms sign pacts at POWERGEN expo in US

PNS ■ HOUSTON

Indian companies are looking for business as well as collaboration opportunities in the power generation sector, with some of them signing pacts with global entities at an ongoing expo in the US.

The POWERGEN International Expo (January 23-25), is being organized by the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in support with Ministry of Commerce and Industries. There are about 18 participants from power generation, distribution and utilities sector.

The Indian pavilion was inaugurated by D C Manjunath, Consul General of India in Houston, along with Sandipan Aich, Senior Executive Officer ICC. Many Indian companies have signed pacts with American firms during the expo.

"IOW Group and Reverso

Pumps LLC in the US collaborated with CBS Technologies from India. Danefoam Technologies from Miami, US will source firefighting foam and equipment from Integrated Fire Protection Pvt Ltd from Kolkata," Sandipan said. Steam Equipments from Pune also signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Texas-based EPC Industries Inc and Chicago-based Tekrol Technology Solutions.

Manjunath had an engaging discussion with industry leaders and a glimpse into the sustainable future and cutting-edge technology.

"Delighted to visit the India Pavilion at the POWERGEN International Expo where major powergen players are participating and showcasing their product line, along with top international companies from around the world.

## Thermal power plants' capacity utilisation to rise to 69%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The capacity utilisation of thermal power plants will increase by a percentage point to 69 per cent in 2024-25, led by the growth in electricity demand and limited thermal capacity addition, says rating agency ICRA.

ICRA's outlook for the thermal power segment is 'Stable', supported by the healthy improvement in the thermal plant load factor (PLF), coupled with the reduction in dues from state distribution utilities (discoms) following the implementation of the Late Payment Surcharge (LPS) scheme since August 2022, a statement said.

"The current under-construction thermal capacity is

about 30 GW, which is predominantly in the Central and the state-owned generation segment and is expected to be commissioned over the next two to four-year period," Girishkumar Kadam, Senior Vice President & Group Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said in the statement.

In our view, there is a clear need for incremental capacity beyond this pipeline if the annual electricity demand growth continues to exceed 6.0 per cent till 2030, after factoring in the renewable capacity addition, he added.

He stated that if annual demand growth is stronger at 7.5 per cent till 2030, to meet the same, the incremental thermal capacity requirement will need to be as large as 70



GW. Coal has remained a dominant fuel source to meet the base load power demand in the country, and its share in the overall energy generation mix is estimated to decline from 73 per cent in FY2023 to about 58-60 per cent in FY2030, assuming the renewable capacity addition scenario

of 200 GW between FY2024 and FY2030, as per ICRA estimates.

Nonetheless, the share of coal in the generation mix is expected to remain significant till 2030, it stated.

The average spot power tariffs in the day-ahead market (DAM) of the Indian Energy

Exchange remained high at Rs 5.4 per unit in YTD FY2024, owing to the sharp demand growth.

The spot tariffs are likely to remain elevated at around Rs 4.5-5.0/unit in the near-term against a long-term average of Rs 3.0-3.5/unit. Further, the coal stock level for the domestic power plants remained modest at around 12 days as of December 2023, lower than the normative requirement.

Nonetheless, this remains similar to the corresponding period of the previous year, it stated.

For the renewable energy segment, ICRA's outlook remains 'Stable', led by strong policy support, healthy demand prospects, and superior tariff competitiveness.

Further, the realisation of

past dues and regular payment of ongoing bills by discoms following the LPS scheme remain positives for the sector.

Kadam said in the statement, "the sharp decline in solar PV cell and module prices, abeyance of the order on Approved List of Models and Module Manufacturers (ALMM) till March 2024, and the timeline extension approved for solar and hybrid projects, are expected to lead to an improvement in RE capacity addition to 18-20 GW in FY2024 from 15 GW in FY2023."

This, he said, along with the growing project pipeline, is likely to support the scale-up in capacity addition to about 25 GW in FY2025, mainly driven by the solar power segment

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA IRRIGATION & CAD DEPARTMENT**  
**E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
Tender Notice No.: 28/SE/IC.1/MBNR/2023-24 Dt: 23-01-2024  
Name of the work: Kolsagar Lift Irrigation Scheme - Operation & Maintenance of Stage-I pumping station at Nagireddy (V), Narva (M), Stage-II pumping station at Tesla (V), Mankal (M), Narayanpet District for the year 2022-2023 for the period of 9 months i.e. 11-02-2023 to 10-11-2023 - Major Repairs / Replacements under 0.75% provision - Sub-estimate for Repairs / Replacements to Ventilation Duct in Kolsagar Lift Irrigation Scheme of Stage-I Nagireddy (V), Narva (M), Narayanpet District. Estimate Amount: Rs. 10.87 Lakhs, Last date & time for receipt of Tenders: Dt: 12-02-2024, 5:00 PM, Name & Address of the S.E. Concerned & Phone Number: L.Chakradharam, Superintending Engineer, I&CAD, Irrigation Circle No.1, Mahabubnagar. Ph. No. 7702335870. Further details can be seen at e-procurement market place [www.tender.telangana.gov.in](http://www.tender.telangana.gov.in). Sd/- Superintending Engineer, I&CAD, Irrigation Circle No.1, Mahabubnagar.



# ‘The cobblestone streets in Galle were a lot of fun to stroll through’

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Kritika Kamra recently travelled to Galle, a Portuguese town situated on the southwest coast of Sri Lanka. It doesn't hide its past from view. Its colonial-era focal point is surrounded by windswept beaches and nodding palms, while the remainder of the city is lined with Dutch-style homes, eccentric stores, whitewashed mansions, and historical museums.

*The Pioneer* hears about her “rejuvenating” travel and trekking experiences, which allowed her to experience a breath of fresh air in this ancient city. For instance, the well-known *Mitron* fame divulges, “My vacation to Galle was the ideal escape. The cobblestone streets were a lot of fun to stroll through while taking in the culture and architecture. I was also quite impressed by Sri Lanka’s warmth.”

The Portuguese constructed the Galle Fort, which the Dutch subsequently strengthened, and it is now recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Archaeologically, historically, and architecturally, it is significant. The way the old and modern worlds converge in Galle is something she found really intriguing. Although its appearance could take you back in time, the people and culture there now are cutting-edge and dynamic.

“I also visited Ahangama, which is a beach popular among surfers south of Galle,” says the Bareilly girl, and she continues. “The beaches are lovely and well-kept. Gorgeous blue skies and seas, smooth beaches, with palm trees along the roadways. Sri Lanka has individuality and is naturally lovely. There are some great surfing locations in the south of the nation that are appropriate for both novice and expert surfers.”

She thinks local cuisine tells you a lot about a place. “A Sri Lankan thali or plate of regional cuisine can educate you about the geography and history of the area. An understanding of Sri Lanka’s colonial past can

Actress Kritika Kamra, who recently travelled to Galle, gets candid with *The Pioneer* for our weekly segment of Travel Tales, sharing her travel diaries and more from the trip.

also be gained from the native ingredients, which include the spices for which the country is renowned, and the culinary methods, which combine traditional European methods with indigenous ones. A local chef taught me an extremely interesting and educational culinary class,” added the fashion graduate.

The Galle Fort is heavily influenced by its colonial past. Things from the past that have been preserved include the architecture, the marine museum, and even geographical names, such as Ceylon, which was Sri Lanka’s previous name. You may stroll to two famous buildings: the lighthouse and the clock tower. Everything in the fort town is easily accessible by foot, which is its best feature. You can walk there in a matter of minutes, whether your goal is to have a gelato or a stroll along the beach, informed *Tandav* fame!

She continued, “India’s geog-

raphy, history, and culture are all astounding. We have everything from beaches to mountains, rivers to deserts, rainforests to well-known landmarks. There are a plethora of languages, cuisines, and art forms to discover in our nation. Even if popular tourist destinations like Rajasthan, Goa, and Pondicherry exist, I have a special place in my heart for Kashmir. Kashmir is absolutely unlike any other location. While I have seen the Swiss Alps, nothing compares to Kashmir’s untainted beauty and unique character. An experience unlike any other can be had by taking a Shikara ride on the Dal Lake, going for a stroll through Nishat Bagh in Srinagar, lodging by the Lidder River, skiing in Gulmarg, and spending evenings by the Bukhari. Kashmir is the most enchanting and romantic location on earth.”

The experience stays and boutique hotels are her favorites. “I would rather stay in thoughtfully luxurious accommodations with a consistent buffet than generic five-star chain hotels. For me, the details are crucial. The features I search for in the ideal hotel include customizable itineraries, flexible scheduling, seclusion, food that is based on ingredients, lots of outdoor space, and an excellent pool,” the *Bambai Meri Jaan* fame gave her thoughts.

Goa due to its convenience and closeness to Mumbai, it has been ideal for a brief getaway or a change of scenery for her with just enough activities to keep one busy if desired, whether it’s for a weekend or a week off. She said, “The blend of urban and rural life is excellent. I can spend my days lounging on the beach, sipping coffee from a shack, selecting an excellent yoga class, receiving an ayurvedic massage, sipping negronis in a classy bar, and enjoying the best sushi for supper. I’m fond of the opportunities that Goa presents.”

She has never taken a solo trip. She admits openly it’s not for her. However, her best friend and she once thought they were being followed while on a girls’ trip. She recalled, “We were pretty scared, and it was in Paris. Our hotel was a little walk from the train station. That evening, we returned safely, but the following day, we misplaced our camera. In a restaurant, it was taken from our table. We received CCTV footage, went to the police, and nearly pursued the man, but we were unable to retrieve the camera. This was a long time ago. I now take great care of my goods and safety.”

She enjoyed trying a variety of local foods guilt-free, including curries, baked goods, and coconut sweets when in Galle. Despite the

heat, they managed to locate a delicious gelato shop, where she enjoyed a scoop every day. The coconut water was quite delicious and fresh as well! To be precise, “I went surfing in Ahangama. Though I’m far from perfect, it was a start. I’m going back to do more of it. In order to see the views, I also climbed the Galle lighthouse. Climbing and descending the historic spiral staircase was a lot of fun. We took a lovely journey from Galle to the southern beaches, passing through little villages and seeing the scenery change every few minutes. Whale viewing was one thing I did not get to do on my vacation. When I visit Sri Lanka later, I intend to carry it out.”

She would adore taking a trip with Soha Ali Khan, Cyrus, Lara Dutta, Naseer Sahab, or Dino. They shot in Rajasthan for a new series, and it was almost like a holiday. They were all in one resort and in a bio-bubble because it was during the lockdown. They spent a lot of time together, lived there, and shot there. The whole group got along pretty well, and it was a lot of fun. She would adore doing it again. “One benefit of being an actor is getting to shoot in beautiful places. It’s honestly a very ideal situation to be able to do what I love you in a beautiful environment with the people I love,” the actress concluded.



## ‘If I’ve mastered my craft, I’m ready for more performances’

Actress Komal Sachdeva, who was recently seen in Shah Rukh Khan’s *Dunki*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing her feelings about being a part of a Shah Rukh Khan-starrer, being appreciated by Rajkumar Hirani, and more.



TEJAL SINHA

Every film aficionado, especially the 90s ones, says that Shah Rukh Khan was, for once in our lives, the dream boy whom we could never stop crushing over. And to have that one glimpse of his, to date, has been a dream to many. Getting to stand alongside him and making that eye-to-eye contact could be no less than a drop-dead heart-stirring moment.

Well, the same feeling, or in fact substantially more, was it for the budding actress Komal Sachdeva with her recent stint in the recent blockbuster *Dunki*, playing the character of Chameli.

Though she has worked on some great projects, be it her first commercial project, *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha*, *Shubh Mangal Saavdhan*, Amazon Prime’s *Tandav*, Disney Plus Hotstar’s *Criminal Justice*, or an ad with Rajkumar Rao for Glance Live, the turning point for her was the *Dunki*. The role, exposure, and amazing team, including Shahrukh Khan, Rajkumar Hirani, Taapsee Pannu, Vicky Kaushal, and Boman Irani, made it an incredible experience for her.

An elated Komal begins, “I’m short of words! It feels amazing and thrilling. I’m filled with gratitude to be part of this project. You know, what comes on screen is

just a small portion of what actually happens behind the scenes. My shoot days were around 20 to 25 days, and there were rehearsals, look tests, and other things. The whole journey—starting with this team, rehearsing, developing the character, being part of the scenes—took about one and a half years. Overall, it has been an amazing experience, and it feels out of this world to be part of this project.”

Initially, since the day she arrived in Bombay, just like an outsider, she too had a routine to check for audition updates and look through various sources like Instagram and WhatsApp groups. And sometimes even visiting casting offices in Aram Nagar to see what’s happening. And then one day, “I came across a post from Mukesh Chhabra. They were looking for a Punjabi-speaking actor, and there was an email address in the post. I shared my profile with them through that email, and they sent me the script on WhatsApp. During those days, auditions were mostly done at home. You had to record your own audition and then send it to the casting people. It was right after the COVID-19 period, so I went through the script and the character brief and interpreted it my way. I recorded the audition and sent it back to the casting associate, who approached me. In a very short time, I got confirmation that I was locked for the project.”

Working with the OG SRK was no less than an incredible experience. “There’s so much to learn from him, not just as an actor but also as a human being,” gleefully enthuses the *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* actress. “The way he behaves with his team and people around him, especially with women, is outstanding. He’s so courteous and gentle when interacting with you. What’s remarkable is his humility; he is so humble and grounded. He has no air around him, and he makes you feel very comfortable. It gives you the space to perform your part. Shah Rukh sir’s work ethic is out of this world. I’ve learned a lot from him in terms of work ethic. Even when he’s not in the frame and the focus is on another person, he gives his best cues so that you can perform accordingly and get those reactions. He doesn’t need to do that, of course, but I think he’s amazing. He’s not only an incredible actor but also an amazing human being.”

So, what actually happened was that filmmaker Rajkumar Hirani had seen her audition and had very much appreciated her work too. Her first meeting with

him was on the rehearsal day for the classroom scene. For that scene, she recalls, “We were sitting there in the classroom setup when he entered the room. I said, ‘Hi sir, I’m Komal,’ and he recognised me. He said, ‘I know; I’ve seen your audition, and we loved it.’ Those two or three seconds felt like they were moving so slowly, and it felt magical. For someone like him, who has seen so many auditions, to remember mine meant a lot to me. When you’re in the field of acting, there are days when you feel low and doubt yourself. Getting feedback or validation from someone at the top of their game in the industry is motivating and inspiring. It encourages you to keep going.”

Apart from Shahrukh Khan, an ensemble cast includes Boman Irani, Vicky Kaushal, and Taapsee Pannu. Initially, before that, she could begin her shooting; she did feel very nervous, and why not? She recalls, “I thought it wouldn’t be easy for me to keep up with the kind of energy and performance they put forward. But it turned out to be the other way around. It was much easier with them because they made me feel very comfortable. They gave me space and made me feel like I was part of the team, an important part of our project. We were all one team working towards the same goal, and they created a safe environment that made it easy for me to fit in. I think it was amazing, and I learned so much from them.”

Looking at her filmography, she shares that every time she picks up a project, she aims for substantial roles. Though she has played good cameos in some great movies, she feels the projects she’s been a part of are significant because, she says, “of the good teams I worked with, whether it’s *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* or *Tandav*. They had a good team and a very good script. The second thing is, even if my character has just one or two scenes, those are my scenes. I mean, in those scenes, I have the scope for performance, and I believe I have to get my foot inside the door. When I came to Bombay, I knew nobody, so my intention in starting to act was to do whatever I could. I wanted to show my work and give a small performance, hoping that people would support me based on that. I wanted them to wonder whether I was an actor. If I’ve mastered my craft and if I’m ready for more performances, I want to work on projects that have meaning, where I can portray the character well, and it helps me explore myself as an actor.”

## A CULINARY TRIBUTE THIS REPUBLIC DAY

### APRICOT DELIGHT RECIPE



#### INGREDIENTS:

- Sponge cake - 300g
- Apricots - 100g
- Sugar - 200g
- Strawberry crush - 10ml
- Kiwi crush - 10ml
- Cream - 10ml

#### METHOD:

- Step 1. First, prepare the apricot delight by combining apricots and sugar. Cook the mixture until it forms a thick consistency. Set it aside to cool.
- Step 2. Cut the sponge cake into three layers. Step 3. Spread a layer of the prepared apricot delight on the first layer of the sponge cake.
- Step 4. Place the second layer of sponge cake on top of the apricot delight.
- Step 5. Apply another layer of apricot delight on the second layer of the sponge cake.
- Step 6. Finally, place the third layer of sponge cake on top.
- Step 7. Garnish the top layer with strawberry crush and kiwi crush, creating a design resembling a flag.
- Step 8. Whip the cream until it forms soft peaks and use it to decorate the edges or any other desired areas of the cake.
- Step 9. Allow the cake to set in the refrigerator for a few hours before serving.
- Step 10. Slice and serve your Apricot Delight with the delightful flavors of apricots and the colorful presentation resembling a flag.



COURTESY:  
CHEF VH SURESH-  
CORPORATE  
EXECUTIVE CHEF  
PLATFORM 65

### TIRANGA PANEER TIKKA RECIPE

#### INGREDIENTS:

- Paneer - 500g
- Curd - 300g
- Ginger garlic paste - 50g
- Palak (Spinach) - 10 leaves
- Cheese - 15g
- Salt - As per taste
- Mango Chilly - 10g
- Garam Masala - 5g
- Black Salt - As per taste
- Butter - 15ml
- Tomato - 1
- Capsicum - 1
- Onion - 1

#### METHOD:

- Step 1. Cut the paneer into square pieces.
- Step 2. Make a paste of palak separately.
- Step 3. Melt cheese in a separate bowl.
- Step 4. Prepare a masala mixture in another bowl with mango chilly, garam masala, and black salt.
- Step 5. Take three bowls and marinate paneer separately with palak paste, melted cheese, and the masala mixture prepared in step 4.
- Step 6. Cut the tomato, capsicum, and onion into circular slices.
- Step 7. Skewer the marinated paneer and the vegetable slices onto three separate sticks, creating a tricolor effect.
- Step 8. Cook the skewers on a clay oven or grill until the paneer is cooked and has a nice char.
- Step 9. Arrange the cooked skewers in the order of the Indian flag’s colors - saffron (mango chilly-marinated), white (cheese-marinated), and green (palak-marinated).
- Step 10. Before serving, you can brush the tikka with a mixture of melted butter and a pinch of garam masala for added flavor.
- Step 11. Serve the Tiranga Paneer Tikka as a delicious and patriotic appetizer.









SIVA KARTHIKEYA



## ‘The exchange between the extraterrestrial and human in *Ayalaan* will resonate with viewers’

PNS| HYDERABAD

**S**tarring Siva Karthikeya in the fantasy sci-fi movie *Ayalaan*. The protagonist is Rakul Preet Singh. J. Rajesh produces this R. Ravikumar-directed movie under the KJR Studios label. A.R. Rahman, the renowned music director and Oscar winner, wrote the soundtrack. For Sankranti, it was launched in Tamil Nadu on January 12. Ganga Entertainments is releasing Maheshwar Reddy in Telugu states on the January 26. During the film's premiere, Sivakarthekeyan spoke with the Telugu press.

He says, “The movie *Ayalaan* contains 4500 visual effects shots. Compared to the movies *2.0* and *Robo*, this one features more special effects. We have a tight budget. One could seem to dream bigger if the movie could be produced on a tight budget. That's the reason I chose to take so long to complete this film.” The newest sensation in Tamil cinema, *Ayalaan*, has garnered a lot of interest. The film, has earned more than Rs. 50 crore in Tamil Nadu already.

The well-known actor who traveled to Hyderabad for a promotion stated, “There are some reservations, though. I won't reveal the title of the Hollywood production, but the scene we recorded was included in a later release. Since it's a fantasy superhero movie, some of the scenes we shot may

appear in other movies that are released later. However, *Ayalaan*'s central narrative—the encounters and scenes between the alien and human—has not yet been adapted into a motion picture. We haven't finished our script yet. Although our director Kanaka may make screenplay adjustments if he writes the script, Tamil Nadu moviegoers did not voice any complaints regarding the plot. They stated as much and they liked it.”

On January 26, 2024, the Telugu version will be released in theaters. According to the most recent rumors, *Ayalaan* will debut on Sun NXT, an over-the-top platform, on February 16, 2024. This story has gone viral in Tamil circles, despite the fact that it has not been verified. “There is a global notion in this movie. The exchange between the extraterrestrial and human will resonate with viewers worldwide. In Tamil Nadu, our film was a big hit. It will also be a huge smash in Telugu, I'm sure of it. I'm confident that everyone who has viewed the movie will value our work.”

This esteemed endeavor was produced by Kotapadi J. Rajesh under the auspices of KJR Studios. The lead actress was played by Rakul Preet Singh. Other important players were Yogi Babu, Bhanu Priya, Isha Koppikar, and Sharad Kelkar. Checking for further developments, we get to know, “We decided not to release our film because Sankranti already has a lot of Telugu films out. I was confident that it would succeed, even if it arrived two weeks later than expected. Three Telugu songs—*Love Today*, *Vidudalai*, and Vishal's *Abhimanyudu*—became successful after being released in Tamil. It will function if the content is strong. I held out for the movie for five years. A fortnight is not too much to ask.”

*Ayalaan* will definitely have a sequel. A formal update regarding the film's sequel has now been released by the producers. After its release, *Ayalaan* garnered favorable reviews and performed well at the box office. Furthermore, “It's been said that a 200–300 crore budget is necessary to make a movie of this caliber. It is possible to complete a project on a tight budget if you have the appropriate team and idea. In the event that it becomes successful, the producers will pitch in extra money. Then we have even greater dreams.

Actor Siva Karthikeya, who is all set to enrapture hearts now even in the Telugu states with *Ayalaan*, speaks to the Hyderabad media sharing more insights about the film, a global notion in the film, and more.

That was our driving force.” Ninety percent of the scenes feature graphics. Alien content makes up 70% of the film. The bulk of the film, then, features special effects!

Moreover, “We shot the film prior to COVID. Visual effects could not be completed since due to corona studios were closed. A.R. Rahman was fixed, indeed. My first movie with him is this one. I think Rahman is fantastic. I've always wanted Rehman to write the soundtrack for my movie. Rahman worked till the very end because of Ravikumar's idea and the inspiration he provided. Some musical improvisations were made because the Telugu release was only two weeks away.”

However, the main actor believes that *Ayalaan* is more like a theme park than a film. A fun ride has begun. After two and a half hours of comfortable viewing, you can get to work. “To produce Alien, we invested extra time and conducted a great deal of research. The concept of a sequel has long been around. We intend to produce the sequel much more extensively. We were inspired by Tamil Nadu's success.”



## Vishal-starrer *Rathnam* will hit the cinemas on April 26

Action hero Vishal who had a considerable market in Telugu too has been struggling recently to draw decent openings in Telugu. His last solid hit was *Ahimayudu*. His last release *Mark Antony* became a success in Tamil but ended up as below average in Telugu. Vishal is currently doing a powerful action film, *Rathnam* under the direction of Hari. The makers of the movie recently announced the film's title, besides unveiling a teaser called *First Shot* which is shot as a single shot which created buzz. This is the third movie in the combination of Vishal and Hari, after the success of *Bharani* and

Pooja. On Thursday, the makers announced the film's release date. The film will be released worldwide on April 26th in Tamil and Telugu. Priya Bhavani Shankar is the leading lady in the movie, where Samuthirakani, Yogibabu and Gautham Vasudev Menon will be seen in crucial roles. Rockstar Devi Sri Prasad will score the music, while the cinematography is handled by M. Sukumar. Along with Karthik Subbaraj, Kaarthikeyan Santhanam and Zee Studios together are producing *Rathnam*, while Kalyan Subramaniam, Alankar Pandian are the co-producers.

## Mohanlal's *Malaikottai Vaaliban* sequel is on the cards



**F**ollowing the resounding success of *Neru*, the highly anticipated Mollywood film *Malaikottai Vaaliban*, starring the renowned actor Mohanlal, has hit the big screens today to positive acclaim. Lijo Jose Pellissery is the helmer of this biggie. It has been officially confirmed that a sequel to *Malaikottai Vaaliban* is in the works. The announcement was made at the film's end, generating excitement among fans. However, details regarding the sequel's release date in cinemas are yet to be revealed.

The movie features stellar performances by Manikanda Rajan, Sonalee Kulkarni, Andrea Raveera, Hareesh Peradi, and Danish Sait in significant roles. Produced by John and Mary Creative in collaboration with Max Labs and Century Films, this period action drama boasts the musical talent of Prashant Pillai. Stay tuned for more updates.



## Homable films to produce Akhil's next

Akhil Akkineni will be doing a film directed by newcomer Anil Kumar. It will be primarily produced by UV Creations. The latest speculation in Tinseltown is that the big-ticket extravaganza will also be produced by Hombale Films, known for the magnum opus *KGF* franchise, the staggering hit *Kantara* and last year's biggest pan-Indian Tollywood movie *Salaar*. If the rumour is true, the *Most Eligible*

*Bachelor* actor can't ask for more. After the calamitous failure of Surender Reddy-directed *Agent* last year, he couldn't have expected a big-scale project immediately. Not only is he doing such a project but the same is backed by two cash-rich banners.

The untitled film of Akhil will go on the floors soon. It will be released in the first half of 2025. It will involve VFX and mega action set pieces.

## Mani Ratnam and Kamal Haasan begin filming *Thug Life*



The makers of *Thug Life* recently announced that filming has officially begun, which heightened anticipation to unprecedented levels.

The movie *Thug Life*, starring Ulaganayagan Kamal Haasan and directed by Mani Ratnam, which was first revealed earlier this year, has begun production. Trisha, Gautham Karthik, Dulquer Salmaan, Aishwarya Lekshmi, Jayam Ravi, and Joju George are among the film's many well-known stars.

The film's production, which is being produced by Mani Ratnam's Madras Talkies and Kamal Haasan's Raaj Kamal Films International, commenced on Wednesday. The production company shared a video showing the actors and crew and wrote, “Today's shooting is off to a good start.” *Malaganayagan*, Kamal Haasan, Ulaganayagan, #ThugLifeShootBegins.”



## Producer Ravi Kasturi is confident on *Game On*

**G**eetanand and Neha Solanki will be seen in meaty roles in the upcoming action thriller *Game On*, produced by Ravi Kasturi under the banner of Kasturi Creations and Golden Wings Productions, Presented by Sakshi Ravi (Sai Lakshmi Talari). Dayanandh has wielded the megaphone. The film is all set for a grand release on February 2nd. The film created solid buzz with the promotional content.

On Thursday, producer Ravi Kasturi interacted with media about the film, and shared, “I've been interested in films since my college days, and the idea to make a film with Geetanand as the hero and myself as the producer was always there. Now that we have a compelling story, we've embarked on this project, allocating ample time for pre-production to ensure perfection. This psychological thriller incorporates real-time game with added commercial elements, encompassing action, emotion, and family drama. The film explores how a person striving to live his life tackles challenges.”

As a producer, he shared that he has learnt about having patience through his journey. He further shares, “Geetanand, being my friend, has always impressed me

with his performance. I gave Dayanandh, his brother, a free hand as the director. Subhalekha Sudhakar is a gem of a person, and we had a lot of fun on set. Aditya Menon is a stellar performer, and Madhubala's second innings in her career is anticipated to start with this movie.”

He further adds, “Our faith lies in the content, and this movie experience will undoubtedly guide me for future productions. I've already heard two promising stories, and we plan to announce them after the release of this film.”



press conference for *RRR*, mentioned that Ram Charan was reserved and kept to himself, while Ram Charan, in response, acknowledged being awestruck by Alia's beauty. Their off-screen partnership was further highlighted by a successful ad commercial for the popular drink Frooti, showcasing their appealing and energetic on-screen presence.

Although B-town diva Jhanvi Kapoor is also in contention for the well-defined female role in this rural sports drama, the prevailing sentiment is that Alia Bhatt may secure the role, given her escalating popularity nationwide. The source emphasizes that Alia, with

## Alia Bhatt to reportedly star alongside Ram Charan in *RC16*

Mumbai, and the actress has shown a positive inclination towards the role.

According to sources, the camaraderie between Ram Charan and Alia Bhatt, established during their collaboration in *RRR*, has played a pivotal role in this decision. Their on-screen chemistry as Alluri and Sita garnered immense appreciation, and the duo shares a deep understanding of each other's acting prowess and professionalism.

Recalling their previous collaboration, Alia Bhatt, in a

her blend of beauty and talent, offers a safer bet for a high-profile entertainer, and the prospect of reuniting a successful on-screen duo is seen as a strategic move.

The role of Bollywood divas is becoming increasingly significant in Tollywood, given the industry's expanding reach beyond regional boundaries. As of now, Alia appears to have an edge over other contenders. If this dynamic pairing materialises, it would undoubtedly be a casting coup of considerable magnitude in Tollywood, promising an exciting cinematic experience for fans.





# SPINNERS PUT INDIA IN STRONG POSITION ON DAY ONE

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

After spinners put England batters through a harsh scrutiny, Yashasvi Jaiswal rolled out his own version of 'Bazball' en route to a crushing fifty as India posted 119 for one to take the upper hand on day one of the opening Test here on Thursday.

At close, Jaiswal (76 batting, 70 balls, 9x4, 3x6) and Shubman Gill (14 batting) were at the crease and the hosts are 127 runs in arrears of England's anaemic first innings total of 246, which was built around skipper Ben Stokes' hardheaded 88-ball 70. India were comfortably placed at 119 for one at stumps after bowling out England for 246 on the opening day of the first Test here on Thursday.

Around Stokes, England batsmen crumbled as the spin trioka of Ravichandran Ashwin (3/68), Ravindra Jadeja (3/88) and Axar Patel (2/33) rudely nudged them back to reality of batting on an Indian pitch that offers barrowful of turn and grip even from day one.

But when the Indian openers came out bat the RGI Stadium,

pitch appeared to have lost its bite and the England tweekers looked like a defanged lot. Jaiswal wrapped himself with the leader's cape despite the presence of his captain Rohit Sharma (24, 27 balls) at the other end, tearing into England bowlers with gusto.

The gap between runs and balls could give the left-hander's innings a hue of carelessness but it was anything but that. Jaiswal started his and the team's innings with a clipped boundary to square leg off pacer Mark Wood, but that was just the appetizer as the left-hander offered a harsh welcome to Tom Hartley to international cricket. The 22-year-old smashed the England left-arm spinner for two sixes in his first over, one over long-on and the other in front of the square.

His twinkling feet and fast hands made it tough for the England spinners to settle into a rhythm against him.

Jaiswal and Rohit added 80 runs in just 12.1 overs to give their side a wonderful launching pad.

It came to an end when Rohit gave a catch to Stokes off left-

## INDIA 119/1 AFTER BOWLING OUT ENGLAND FOR 246



arm spinner Jack Leach while trying to clear him over the long-on.

But for the rest of the innings, it was a futile toil for the English bowlers as this could be the beginning of a long and tiring tour for them.

To make it even more exasperating for them, they have already exhausted all the three reviews for this innings as well.

However, the whole atmosphere was different when the Indian spinners were operating - the ball bounced, turned and

gripped to leave the English batters an edgy group except a few small passages.

One of them came in the post-lunch session when Joe Root (29, 60 balls) and Jonny Bairstow (37, 58 balls) added 61 runs for the fourth-wicket as England

attempted to stay above the fast-rising water.

Root and Bairstow, generally, relied on sweep and the reverse avatar of that shot occasionally to gather runs. However, Root was culpable of being too premeditative and it eventually led

to his downfall.

Jadeja hit a fuller length which resulted in a top-edge off Root's bat that flew to short fine leg where Jasprit Bumrah did not have to strain himself much to complete the catch.

Bairstow too did not last long as Axar delivered a peach from wide of the crease to take out the batter's off-stump.

Ben Foakes has this reputation of being a fine player of spin but on this day only struggle was visible as he departed with a 24-ball four, offering a simple catch to stumper KS Bharat off Axar as England lost five wickets in that session for 107 runs.

It was left to captain Stokes, who employed conventional and non-conventional sweeps to counter spin, to wage a lonely battle in the company of tailenders and even looked solid during his stay in the middle.

But then on dire occasions like the one England encountered here, even a lion-hearted warrior like Stokes could only add a modicum of respectability to the total.

After a sedate beginning, Stokes slipped into his own and played some dazzling shots before

Bumrah disturbed his stumps. His innings contained six fours and three sixes.

In the morning session, England might have daydreamed of another buccaneering effort after openers Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley made 25 runs in the first four overs which later swelled to 55 in 11.5 overs.

But Ashwin underlined his mastery over left-handers for a zillionth time while dismissing Duckett.

The 37-year-old managed to skid one on to beat Duckett's defence to hit his pads as the latter played for non-existent turn.

Umpire Chris Gaffaney did not have to think twice before raising his finger, and even a review could not save Duckett.

The Indian spinners rushed through that creek to dismantle the England innings as India tightened the grip over the proceedings.

**BRIEF SCORES:**

**England 1st innings:** 246 all out in 64.3 overs (Ben Stokes 70; Ravindra Jadeja 3/88, R Ashwin 3/68).

**India 1st innings:** 119/1 in 23 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal batting 76).



## Jaiswal has taken to Test cricket like a fish to water: Ashwin

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Veteran India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin is in awe of Yashasvi Jaiswal's batting in only his fifth Test, saying the youngster has not put a foot wrong in his 76-run knock against England and has taken to the five-day format "like a fish to water".

Jaiswal remained unbeaten after playing 70 balls, hitting nine boundaries and three sixes on the opening day of the first Test.

"He (Jaiswal) had a great time in the IPL, had a wonderful start in first-class cricket. I am quite enjoying it. I am seeing Rishabh Pant there. His fearless cricket is

serving him well," Ashwin said after the end of the opening day's play.

"Yashasvi has not put a foot wrong, he has taken to Test cricket like a fish to water," the senior spinner added.

"It was pretty interesting in the first session, maybe there was a bit of moisture. Because of the early moisture, there was enough speed. Then it slowed down. Not enough speed to carry through to the slips," Ashwin said.

"240 was a very very good competitive total. Thought 30-40 runs more than what we would have liked. Someone making a hundred tomorrow will put us in the driver's seat."

## Rohit remains optimistic despite decade long ICC Trophy drought

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

India skipper Rohit Sharma firmly believes that their "time will come" to win an elusive ICC trophy, a milestone they have been chasing for the past decade. The recent World Cup 2023 final loss to Australia saw India's quest for an ICC title stretch to 10 years with their last victory dating back to the Champions Trophy in 2013 under the leadership of MS Dhoni.

"The last three years have been great. Except winning the finals of ICC trophies, we have won everything," Rohit said while talking to JioCinema on the sidelines of their opening Test against England here.

"That's one thing we've not been able to accomplish, but I think time will come. All we need to do is stay in a good mindset, not worry too much about the past, because you can't change the past.

"What you can change is what is going to come next, so all of us are quite focussed on that. We are playing our hearts out."

After being runners-up in the T201 World Cup in 2014, the team faced semi-final exits in the 2015 ODI World Cup, the 2016 T20 World Cup, and the 2019 ODI World Cup.

The agony continued with defeats in the finals of the 2017 Champions Trophy along with



a semi-final loss in the 2022 T20 World Cup.

They also lost the finals of the first two World Test Championship cycles.

**NO NUMBER-GAME:** Sharma, known for his aggressive style of strokemaking, further spoke about his approach to captaincy.

"I wanted to bring about certain change, players going out there and playing with a lot of freedom. I wanted to take the statistical side of cricket out of this team.

"Numbers are overrated. In India, we do talk a lot about numbers and all of that. I got five hundreds in the 2019 World Cup, but we still lost. The hundreds don't matter.

"I may think about them maybe 20 years later after I retire, but what did we get? I wanted the trophy.

"If you don't win trophies, I don't think those 5-6 hundreds make too much sense. Team sport is all about winning trophies, not about individual accomplishments," he added.



## Kohli wins ICC Men ODI Cricketer of the Year Award for fourth time

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian batting maestro Virat Kohli was on Thursday crowned the ICC men's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2023 for his excellent run in the format last year headlined by a phenomenal outing in the World Cup at home.

This is the fourth such award for Kohli, who was the second most prolific run-scorer in ODIs last year behind compatriot Shubman Gill.

The former India skipper finished the year with 1,377 runs which included six centuries and eight half-centuries.

The year will forever be remembered as the one in which Kohli surpassed the great Sachin Tendulkar's longstanding record of ODI centuries, and the award caps a memorable 12 months for the India batter, who guided the country to the World Cup final, winning the Player of the Tournament prize along the way for scoring a record 765 runs in 11 matches.

This is the seventh individual ICC award won by Kohli during his glittering career, and his fourth in the ODI category after previous wins in 2012, 2017 and 2018.

He also won the Test award in 2018 while the years 2017 and 2018 saw him also win the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year.

Kohli claimed the silverware from a shortlist that included countrymen Gill and

Mohammed Shami, plus New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell.

Kohli lost out on the race for the Cricketer of the Year Award to Australian captain Pat Cummins, who won it ahead of compatriot Travis Head and Indian duo Ravindra Jadeja and Kohli.

Cummins won the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for men's Cricketer of the Year and England all-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt bagged her second successive Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for women's Cricketer of the Year.

Australia batter Usman Khawaja was named the men's Test Cricketer of the Year, holding off competition from fellow Australian run-scorer Travis Head, India spinner R Ashwin and England batter Joe Root.

Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu won her maiden women's ODI Cricketer of the Year award, becoming the first female cricketer from the country to win an ICC award.

A landmark year has not only seen Athapaththu clinch the individual award, but also saw her being named captain of both the ICC women's ODI and T201 Teams of the Year, announced earlier in the week.

England umpire Richard Illingworth won the David Shepherd Trophy for Umpire of the Year for the third time, after previously winning in 2019 and 2022.

Zimbabwe were revealed as the winners of the Spirit of Cricket

Award for their sporting conduct immediately following the thrilling victory over West Indies in the men's World Cup Qualifier match in Harare in June.

Cummins received the trophy after a phenomenal year which saw him produce outstanding individual performances while also leading his side to the World Test Championship and World Cup titles.

Cummins is the fifth Australian to win the trophy, following Ricky Ponting (2006 and 2007), Mitchell Johnson (2009 and 2014), Michael Clarke (2013) and Steve Smith (2015).

Cummins grabbed 42 wickets in 11 Tests during the year at an average of 27.50 with a best match haul of 10 for 47 in the Boxing Day Test against Pakistan. These notable contributions came as Australia claimed their maiden World Test Championship mace and retained the Ashes on English soil.

In ODIs, he grabbed 17 wickets in 13 matches at an economy rate of 5.74. His best figures of three for 51 against South Africa in the World Cup semi-final was followed by a crucial spell of two for 34 against India in the blockbuster final in Ahmedabad.

"It's a huge honour. It has been a big year, lots of wonderful team success. To get this individual honour is huge and I am pretty amazed. In terms of individual accolades, it is right up there," Cummins said in an ICC press release.

## Sarfaraz serves reminder with 161 for India A

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Barely 48 hours after receiving his umpteenth snub from the selectors, Mumbai's 'run-machine' Sarfaraz Khan served a stern reminder to the national selection committee with a majestic 161 that put India A in complete command over England Lions on day two of the second 'unofficial Test' here.

Having bowled out England for 152 on the opening day, India A, starting the day at 150 for no loss, ended on 489 with a massive 337-run first innings lead which will give them a good shot of gunning for an innings victory.

While seasoned Abhimanyu Easwaran (58) and left-handed Devdutt Padikkal (105) set the

platform with a 162-run opening stand, Sarfaraz took full advantage of good batting conditions looting runs off the Lions spinners, who didn't have answers to his repeated onslaught.

Sarfaraz, expectedly hurt after being pipped by Rajat Patidar as Virat Kohli's replacement in the two Tests against England, did the best possible thing — let his bat do all the talking.

The conditions were featherbed at the Narendra Modi Stadium 'Ground A' but no one can take the credit away from the burly Mumbaier, who gave a masterclass on how to tackle spinners.

All his five sixes came off specialist spinners — three he hit off left-arm spinner Callum



Parkinson, all down the ground while a couple of maximums came off off-spinner Oliver Price, one of which was hit into the cow corner.

He took a special liking for Parkinson, who was also hit for nine of his 18 boundaries. He repeatedly used his feet and also

played a lot of inside out drives.

Sarfaraz was also severe on opposition's best bowler Matthew Potts (6/125), the right arm seamer who has already played for England. He was creamed for half dozen boundaries as he repeatedly peppered the cover and extra cover

boundary region.

He added 169 for the sixth wicket with Washington Sundar (57) and 96 for the seventh wicket with spinner Saurabh Kumar (77), who was also in rollicking form with the willow, helping himself with 16 fours.

The innings would keep Sarfaraz firmly in contention for a Test berth as no one knows when someone gets injured as he would certainly be the next in line if Shreyas Iyer fails to get going in the current series.

**BRIEF SCORES:**

**England Lions** 152, **India A** 489 (Sarfaraz Khan 161, Devdutt Padikkal 105, Abhimanyu Easwaran 58, Washington Sundar 57, Saurabh Kumar 77, Matthew Potts 6/125).

# Silva, Hodge lead West Indies to 266-8 against Australia

AP ■ BRISBANE

Joshua Da Silva and Kavem Hodge rallied West Indies to 266-8 against Australia with resolute half-centuries on day one of the day-night test at the Gabba on Thursday.

Da Silva (79) and Hodge (71) shared a 149-run stand in almost two sessions in a rare frustrating day for the Australians in a home season that's seen them whitewash Pakistan 3-0 and win the first test against the West Indies at Adelaide by 10 wickets.

Off-spinning allrounder Kevin Sinclair, who made his test debut in place of Gudakesh Motie, was unbeaten on 16 while Alzarri Joseph counter-punched with seven boundaries among 32 runs before he edged Josh Hazlewood in the slips in the last over.

Nathan Lyon broke up Da Silva and Hodge two overs before the second new ball became available. Lyon trapped Da Silva lbw on the back foot while bowling round the wicket. The batter went for an unsuccessful referral.

The second pink ball netted Hodge and Joseph.

Hodge was caught at second slip off Mitchell Starc, who took 4-68.

Da Silva's patient 157-ball knock included seven boundaries. He braved a brief spell of short balls from the Australian quicks in the second session during which captain Pat Cummins used seven bowlers without any success.

Hodge, in his second test, pulled Starc for six over fine leg after dinner and hit eight boundaries in his 194-ball innings, playing some impressive drives to over-



pitched deliveries on the off side. Australia could have broken the West Indies' first century stand in the series early in the last session, but Hodge's nick flew through vacant second slip, then Cameroon Green couldn't hold on to a tough left-handed catch at gully off Starc.

Hodge and Da Silva showed plenty of patience against the Australia pace trio and Lyon's spin threat as they grinded out a brilliant partnership against a softened pink ball. The pitch also got better for batting in the twilight.

Starc earlier became the fifth Australian bowler to take 350 test wickets when he claimed three in the first session.

Starc got opener Tagenarine Chanderpaul caught at slip by Steve Smith on 21 and Alick Athanaze was caught behind by Alex Carey on 8 as the West

Indies top order struggled with the bounce of the pitch. Starc removed Justin Greaves on 6 with the last ball before tea.

Australia has a perfect record in day-night tests, winning all 11 it has played with the pink ball. As expected, Australia opener Usman Khawaja was passed fit to play. Travis Head is set to play despite a recent positive COVID-19 test.

After a match-winning century in Adelaide, Head contracted COVID-19 but Cummins said he was recovering well.

On Wednesday, Cricket Australia said allrounder Green and coach Andrew McDonald were the latest members of the squad to catch COVID-19. They were isolated until testing negative. In line with Cricket Australia protocols, Green and McDonald were able to take their place in the test.