





# Securing vote bank by giving away highest civilian awards

Highest civilian awards, including Bharat Ratna, which bring more name and fame are simply not exceptional for rulers with 'selective' political vision in securing maximum possible benefit from those awards. Announcing those awards for renowned figures in various fields matters with respect to drawing political purpose by political parties which rule the country. It might be Bharat Ratna award or it might be Dadasaheb Phalke award for legendary film personalities, but the very purpose lies in such concentrated exercise getting political mileage.

Three-and-a-half decades ago when National Front government formed at Centre with Viswanath Pratap Singh as prime minister, such things surfaced out of decisions taken by ruling parties. But the troublesome situation has been brought to the fore by the party which conditionally extending life support system for the then government.



PIN POINT

BJP had extended support to the National Front government at the Centre. Then National Front government's hands were tied with tight rope when its supporter BJP began to dictate the terms without authority. Then leadership of BJP insisted the Union government to conduct centenary celebrations of Dr Kesavarao Baliram Hedgewar, RSS founder in 1989. Eversince the government of National Front formed at Centre, the BJP crossed the budding stage in politics by winning 86 seats in the Lok Sabha from just 2 seats earlier within a short span of five years in 1984.

Thanks to Ram Mandir issue that had been brought to the fore by BJP leadership by leader LK Advani in 1986 who took the reigns of party from ABVajpayee. With its clear agenda of expanding its ideology across the nation, BJP insisted the National Front government to conduct cen-

**Three-and-a-half decades ago when National Front government formed at Centre with Viswanath Pratap Singh as prime minister, such things surfaced out of decisions taken by ruling parties. But the troublesome situation has been brought to the fore by the party which conditionally extending life support system for the then government. BJP had extended support to the National Front government at the Centre.**

tenary celebrations of Hedgewar. Though this had drawn criticism from political spectra, the government had to follow the dictates of its outside supporter. But the same BJP had remained solely responsible for the collapse of VP Singh's government when its delegation headed by Vajpayee met the President of India and submitted the withdrawal of its support to National Front government in protest against the arrest of its

leader Advani en route his Ayodhya yatra in support of construction of Ram Mandir. This development had seen the end of VP Singh's government. Interestingly, the leader with 'liberal weil' in BJP Vajpayee whose credentials are literally source for lakhs of voters for responding positively towards BJP across the country, had to led the party's delegation to President to declare the withdrawal of support.



M D RATNA KUMAR  
Senior Journalist

VP Singh's government had announced Bharat Ratna for the architect of Indian Constitution Dr BR Ambedkar in 1990 that paved the way for creating a positive approach towards third politically viable force in India's political arena, though it has been criticised by the people stating that the declaration of Bharat Ratna for Ambedkar was done nearly after three-and-a-half decades of his demise in 1956. That subsided

with the supportive argument of better late than never. This might have purely exposed the lethargic attitude of Congress that ignored Ambedkar. By taking everybody by surprise, Congress had taken the reigns of the country in subsequent polls held in 1991 in the aftermath of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. Within a short span of just two years, both BJP and Congress had got benefited from politically motivated decisions. But the declaration of Bharat Ratna to Babasaheb had helped the Janata pariwar to make inroads in Hindi heart land by grabbing power in most important states of UP and Bihar with the emergence of two chief ministers Mulayam Singh and Lalu Prasad Yadav respectively. Janata pariwar had never expected the development of the continuous ruling of Lalu Yadav's family for 15 long years.

During the assembly elections of five states recently, Narendra Modi government

declared Dadasaheb Phalke award for Tamil super star Rajani Kant. No doubt he has been the heart throb of millions across the world and he 100% deserved that honour. But the time of declaration of that award had given more different shades in such exercise. Rajani has been chosen for that award allegedly for giving up the idea of floating a new political outfit in Tamil Nadu. BJP has already marginalised AIADMK from being a viable force. This might help BJP to set its strong foot in TN which now is the biggest Sstate in South India. Earlier, undivided Andhra Pradesh was the only one potential State in South with considerable political power with having 42 Lok Sabha seats. Now BJP is strongly wishing to replace AIADMK in TN but things do not appear be so easy for it.

Now one latest development is making rounds in the country's political circles with the declaration of Bharat Ratna for former Bihar chief

minister Karpuri Thakur who hails from backward community. Yaswant Sinha, a bureaucrat-turned-politician had worked as private secretary to the lawyer. Thakur's award has changed the politics of Bihar making Lalu Yadav marginalised by breaking Lalu-Nitish political bond. BJP might get positive approach towards itself by this Thakur episode. He has been selected for this highest civilian award only after 36years of his death that was exactly corroborated with that of Ambedkar's! Breaking Lalu-Nitish bond itself can be a positive thing for BJP. The life of Thakur can be compared with that of Damodaram Sanjeevaiah's. Exposing the rulers of yester-years for not giving the same award to him can be as objectionable as that of declaring it ahead of the general elections.

So, politically motivated decisions of giving such awards to those in public life can be a source for continuous controversy in politics.

## RAILWAYS RECRUITMENT EXAM PAPER LEAK

### RRB ex-chief gets five years in prison

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A CBI special court in Hyderabad has sentenced the then -Railway Recruitment Board - Mumbai chairman Satendra Mohan Sharma and nine others to five years' rigorous imprisonment in connection with the leak of exam papers for the recruitment of 1,936 assistant station masters and assistant loco pilots in 2010, officials said on Tuesday.

Among those sentenced in the case by the Principal Special Judge for CBI Cases - Hyderabad is former Assan-Mangalore Rail Development Corporation CEO AK Jagannadham.

The court has also slapped a fine of Rs 1.75 lakh on Sharma and Rs 1.31 lakh on Jagannadham, the officials said. The total fines slapped on all 10 accused amounts Rs 7.87 lakh.

The agency on June 15, 2010, booked the accused in the leak of examination papers for the recruitment of 1,936 assistant

loco pilots and assistant station masters that was scheduled to be conducted by the Railway Recruitment Board on June 6 of that year.

It was alleged that Sharma and Jagannadham had entered into a conspiracy in 2010 with the other accused to leak the question papers through agents for the payment of between Rs 3.50 lakh and Rs 4.00 lakh.

"In pursuance of the said conspiracy convicted accused Jagannadham Shareen Kumar; P Ashok Kumar; Jagannadham Ramesh; Jagannadham Tirupathiah; Mandarama Seshu Narayana Murthy; Vivek Bharadwaj; Srujan Jagannadham; and Shrirama Vijay Shankar, who were appointed as agents, lured several aspirants across the country and collected various amounts ranging between Rs 5,000 to Rs 1,50,000 (Rs 1.50 lakh) and original qualification certificates from about 193 aspirants," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

# Govt strengthened policing to protect people: Bhatti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress government strengthened policing to protect the lives, assets and dignity of the public, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said.

He said that the Congress government will make the police, revenue, health, civil supplies, GHMC and other state agencies function responsibly. He said that these agencies will now function in the manner they are expected to function.

He said that BRS rulers survived by selling assets created by the Congress governments in Hyderabad and that the BRS did nothing to develop Hyderabad.

Bhatti said that people brought in Indiramma Rajyam by throwing out the BRS government which had deprived them of the right to free speech.

He said the Congress government will distribute the



state's assets to the people and will create an atmosphere in which people can live with freedom and dignity.

Addressing a meeting of the party's booth committee members of Jubilee Hills and Sanath Nagar which come under the Secunderabad Parliament Constituency on Tuesday, he said that BRS rulers looted the state's assets and threw the state into debt.

The BRS leaders who destroyed the state by contracting debts should be ashamed of speaking against the Congress government, Bhatti said.

## 'Priority for projects which provide more water'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka said that every Rupee spent on executing irrigation projects should be useful to the people. Priority should be given to complete projects that provide more water and can be executed cheaply. On Tuesday, Bhatti and Uttam Kumar Reddy reviewed the budget proposals prepared by the Irrigation Department for the financial year 2024-25. He said that the situation of Medigadda,

Annaram and Sundilla projects built as part of the Kaleswaram project has become questionable. "Due to the completion of the Pranahita project undertaken by the Congress government, there is a possibility of meeting the drinking and farming needs of the people of Adilabad joint district. Steps must be taken to complete the Pranahita project. Similarly, after the construction of the Chinna Kaleshwaram project, irrigation can be provided to Karimnagar district," Bhatti said.

## 'KCR, KTR can also seek my appointment'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Responding to a question on BRS MLAs meeting him, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that even former Chief Minister KCR, former Ministers KT Rama Rao and T. Harish Rao can also seek his appointment.

He said that problems in constituencies can be solved only through joint efforts and that all MLAs can meet him at any time to develop their constituencies.

Speaking to the media after the PEC meeting held at the Gandhi Bhavan, Revanth said that the BRS had died in the state. However, the BJP has transformed into a more dangerous one.

He said that the BRS and the BJP are contesting Lok Sabha elections jointly and called upon people to defeat their conspiracy in the coming LS polls. He said that the rights of the state would be secure if the Congress comes to power at the Centre.

## 2 CRPF jawans killed, 10 injured in Naxal attack

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Two CRPF personnel were killed and 10 others injured during a gun battle with the Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Tuesday, official sources said.

The incident occurred near the Tekalgudem village when a joint team of security personnel was out on a search operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P said.

The village is located along the border of Bijapur and Sukma districts.

A team from the 201 battalion of the CoBRA and 150 battalion of the CRPF was

working in the area to establish a Forward Operating Base (FOB) when the exchange of fire began around 1 pm.

An FOB is a remote camp meant to facilitate security forces operating in core Naxal areas.

Two CRPF personnel were killed and about 10 have suffered injuries during the operation, the sources said. The Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) of the CRPF is a jungle warfare unit. The commandos have launched an effective retaliation, the sources said, adding helicopters are being requisitioned for evacuating the injured.



## Prepare plan to face drinking...

Continued from page 1

The Mission Bhagiratha wing has been asked to take responsibility for supplying safe drinking water to villages. The CM said that the maintenance of drinking water supply, taps and pipelines in villages should be entrusted to sarpanches.

The CM said that no one is paying attention to intra-village works and house-to-house tap water supply carried out under Mission Bhagiratha.

The officials told the CM that drinking water management in villages is not under

anyone's control. The CM said that the drinking water crisis will worsen if there is no accountability.

The Chief Minister said that the BRS government's claim of supplying safe drinking water to every household did not help the state practically. Due to this, the CM said the state could not get Jal Jeevan Mission funds from the Centre. The CM warned officials to stop projecting the state as rich by suppressing facts. People are still facing drinking water problems in many tribal tandas, gudums and agency areas.

## KRMB calls for...

Continued from page 1

The meeting will be held in the Chambers of the KRMB Chairman at the Jalasoudha. Both the Engineers-in-Chief are requested to attend the above meeting.

The Secretary of DoWR, RD & GR held a meeting on 17.01.2024 to review the situation at the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam on the Krishna River. After detailed talks, this has been mutually agreed by Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

"The CRPF will keep watch at the dam site and will allow

engineers and officials from GoAP and GoTS to enter the premises of the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam only after permission is obtained from KRMB. Critical maintenance works required at the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam will be permitted under KRMB supervision if written requests are submitted by the States," the meeting said.

The meeting decided that both States will provide funds to the KRMB for this financial year and the dues of yesteryear (if any) to enable the KRMB to fulfil its statutory obligations.

## RS chairman revokes suspension...

Continued from page 1

In its report to the Rajya Sabha chairman a day before the session starts on Wednesday, the committee also recommended that the period of suspension already suffered by the members be treated as "sufficient punishment" for the transgression.

The MPs held "guilty of breach of privilege and contempt of the Council" of States are Jebi Mather Hisham, L Hanumanthaiah, Neeraj Dangi, Rajmani Patel, Kumar Ketkar, G C Chandrashekhar, Binoy Viswam, Sandosh Kumar P, M Mohamed Abdulla, John Brittas

and A A Rahim. The committee presented the report to Dhankhar, taking note of the situation that the suspended members would not be able to attend the special address of President Droupadi Murmu to both Houses of Parliament, the first address in the new building of Parliament, on Wednesday. The committee usually submits its recommendations to the House.

The sources said the chairman invoked the authority vested in him under the rules of procedure to revoke their suspension enabling the members to attend the special address by the president.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Panchami: Jan 30 08:54 AM to Jan 31 11:36 AM

Shashthi: Jan 31 11:36 AM to Feb 01 02:03 PM

Nakshatram: Hasta: Jan 30 10:06 PM to Feb 01 01:08 AM

Chitra: Feb 01 01:08 AM to Feb 02 03:49 AM

Rahukalam: 12:29 PM to 1:53 PM

Yamagandam: 8:16 AM to 9:40 AM

Varjyam: 10:01 AM to 11:48 AM

Gulika: 11:05 AM to 12:29 PM

Amritakalam: 06:22 PM to 08:10 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy

Temp: 31°C

Humidity: 43%

Sunrise: 6:48 AM

Sunset: 6:11 PM

Updated: January 30, 2024 5:00 PM

## High Command will select LS...

Continued from page 1

He said that the party has started accepting applications from ticket hopefuls who would like to contest in the LS elections. Applications can be submitted till February 3. The application fee for general candidates is Rs 50,000. The application fee for SCs, STs and the disabled is Rs 25,000. Ministers and in-charges have been appointed for 17 LS constituencies.

He said that the Congress is going to blow the poll bugle at the Indravelli Sabha on February 2. He said that he has a sentimental attachment to Indravelli and prefers it for launching election campaigns.

## Congress must win ...

Continued from page 1

There is a need for the nation to elect Rahul Gandhi as Prime Minister, he added.

He said that KTR and Harish Rao have been behaving like Billa and Ranga. Voting for the BRS in the LS polls is like dumping it in the Musi River, he said.

The CM said that talks are going on between Modi and KCR and that it is madness to say that the Congress and the BJP are one.

He said that they are sticking to their unanimous resolution that Sonia Gandhi should contest the Lok Sabha polls from Telangana.

## Budget Session from...

Continued from page 1

Opposition leaders raised a host of issues during the meeting of floor leaders chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. Congress leader K Suresh said the party would raise the issue of unemployment, high inflation, agrarian distress, and the situation in ethnic violence-hit Manipur during the session.

Trinamool Congress leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay said the finance minister should include the pending dues to West Bengal on account of various central schemes in the Interim Budget.

"It is unfortunate that a chief minister has to sit on a dharna to demand timely allocation of central dues to the state," he said.

Samajwadi Party leader S T Hassan demanded steps to strengthen the Places of Worship Act that freezes the status of religious places of worship

as they existed on August 15, 1947, and prohibits their conversion while ensuring the maintenance of their religious character.

Hassan's demand came in the wake of demands to hand over the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi to the Hindu community.

Emerging from the customary all-party meeting, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Joshi described the interaction as "very cordial" and said the government was ready to discuss every issue during the brief session.

Joshi said the government did not have any legislative agenda for the Budget Session and its thrust would be on the President's Address, debate on the Motion of Thanks, presentation of the Interim Budget and the budget for Jammu and Kashmir.

## Willing to discuss every ...

Continued from page 1

The session will be the last one of the present Lok Sabha before parliamentary elections are announced. Defence Minister and Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha, Rajnath Singh, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Joshi and his deputy Arjun Ram Meghwal represented the government at the meet.

Congress' K Suresh, TMC's Sudip Bandyopadhyay, DMK's T R Baalu, Shiv Sena's Rahul Shewale, Samajwadi Party's S T Hasan, JD(U)'s Ram Nath Thakur and TDP's Jayadev Galla were among the leaders present at the meeting at the Parliament House complex.

## HC blocks ...

Continued from page 1

The High Court adjourned the case to February 8 and ordered status quo after examining the arguments of both sides.

Meanwhile, the Telangana Jana Samithi (TJS) said that the conspiracy of BRS chief KCR's against Prof. Kodandaram has come to light once again. TJS General Secretary Dharmarjun said that the BRS got the oath-taking of Prof. Kodandaram adjourned by filing a case in the HC. KCR is wary of Kodandaram entering the legislature, he added.

Dharmarjun said that KCR spent crores to defeat Prof. Kodandaram in graduate elections fearing that Kodandaram may expose the BRS government's corruption.

## 15 PFI workers ...

Continued from page 1

The court also considered the state report which showed that the accused persons are hardcore criminals and there is no chance for reformation.

The probability that the accused can be reformed and rehabilitated is little, the court observed citing that "they have never shown any repentance for what they have done in this case." "So, the chance of reformation and rehabilitation cannot be considered as a mitigating circumstance in this case," the court said. The family of the slain leader and the BJP welcomed the judgement, with the saffron party hailing Sreenivasan as a 'great martyr' who got justice today. State Police Chief Sheikh Darvesh Sahib expressed satisfaction with the verdict. In a statement, he commended all the officers who worked on the investigation and said they will be rewarded.





# Marut delivers drones for mineral exploration to NMDC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Marut Drones, a drone manufacturer provided drones to the National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) to pioneer 'Drone-Based Mineral Exploration' in India on Tuesday. NMDC procured two customised Octacopter drones from Marut Drones.

This collaboration marks a significant leap in the field of mineral exploration, introducing advanced technology to enhance precision in mineral exploration and mapping for sustainable mining practices.

The firm has achieved a historic milestone by producing India's inaugural set of custom drones. These drones not only mark a first for the country but also introduce advanced sensors that are being utilized for the initial time in India, specifically designed for mineral exploration.



ration.

The mineral exploration drone is packed with cutting-edge features, including advanced sensors such as Magnetometer, Hyperspectral and Lidar, enhancing its capabilities for accurate exploration and mapping. Its innovative coaxial design not only ensures stability but also facilitates precise maneuverability, a crucial aspect for effective mineral exploration.

Prem Kumar Vislawath, CEO of Marut Drones, said, "It is through our research and development done in the state-of-the-art infrastructure; we have been building customised drones for different sectors in the country. The introduction of drone-based mineral exploration aims to revolutionise exploration approaches, particularly in prospecting for critical minerals like lithium, copper, gold, diamond, rare earth

elements, and other essential minerals."

The spacing and altitude for the flight are determined through mission planning followed with hyperspectral survey, ensuring a 30 per cent overlap of the captured land during the drone flight. The acquired data is later processed using Hyperspec III and ENVI software by NMDC.

Similarly, in drone-based magnetic surveying, the drones are calibrated and the spacing and altitude are decided before planning the mission.

The drones aim to make the magnetic survey not only five times faster but also 10 times more cost-effective. This emerging technology allows drones to fly closer to the surface, enhancing data collection with higher resolution, making surveys more efficient and affordable from the outset.

## Family seeks public help in locating missing boy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Jayesh Kanodia, 17, has been missing since January 17. A lean body he has in 5'7" height, he was last seen at Ahmedabad railway station, Gujarat on January 23.

The family is working closely with local law enforcement and local police, but they are also appealing to the public for any information that may assist in locating him. The family urged anyone with information about Jayesh's whereabouts to come forward. The family assures that no questions will be asked, and their sole focus is on reuniting with Jayesh.

The family encouraged the community to share the attached missing person flyer and related information on social media. Any leads or information, no matter how small, can be crucial in bringing Jayesh home.

# L&T Metro reports hike in revenue due to ridership

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

L&T Metro reported an increase in revenue due to increase in ridership in Hyderabad.

Larsen & Toubro achieved consolidated revenues of Rs 55,128 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2023 recording a Year-o-Year growth of 19%, aided by ramp up in execution of the strong order book in the projects and manufacturing portfolio.

The company for the quarter ended December 31, 2023, reported a consolidated Profit after Tax (PAT) of Rs 2,947 crore, registering a growth of 15% compared to the corresponding quarter of the previous year. L&T in its development projects category said, "The development projects segment recorded customer revenues of Rs 1,220 crore during the quarter ended December 31, 2023, registering a growth of 10% compared to



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vious year, driven by improved PLFs in Nabha power and higher ridership in Hyderabad Metro."

The company said, "The segment EBIT for the quarter ended December 31, 2023 was at Rs118 crore as compared to a loss of Rs 6 crore during the corresponding quarter of the previous year, primarily due to increase in ridership in Hyderabad Metro and consolidation of profits of Nabha Power."

## Cyberabad police arrests 8 members of notorious gang

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Raidurgam Police of Cyberabad Police Commissionerate apprehended a notorious gang of eight members, who have posed as a Crime Investigation Team (CID) and police and kidnapped three employees of a software firm. The police nabbed them on Sunday and seized four cars, 16 mobiles and Rs 35,000. The accused are from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

Advocate Mahendra Kumar, IT expert Shaikh Mohammed Abdul Quadir, real estate agent Vijay Shekar, ex-manager Akkera Ranjith Kumar, associate advocate Balinga Rahul, Dadiboina Subba Krishna, Sandeep Kumar and Raghu Raju were apprehended and other two are absconding who are Raja and sub-inspector Sujan.

An accused Mahendra conspired with another accused Ranjith, ex employee and hatched a plan to steal money from the AJA ADS India Private Limited. Later, Mahendra discussed this issue with Kurnool SI Sujan. The SI introduced him to a cyber expert named Quadir. Then

they created an ID card on his name, which was designated as Assistant Investigation Officer, Cyber Crimes.

Police said that according to their plan on January 26, five members of the gang entered into the office by introducing themselves as CBCID and asked the employees to stop work and started taking their pictures and videos and went to the server room and turned off the power supply to the systems.

They claimed that they have a report about irregularities in that company. In the beginning they demanded Rs 10 crore. On negotiation it was fixed at Rs 2.3 crore. But with the limited time, the complainant was able to provide Rs 71.80 lakh. As a result, the accused took three employees forcibly into their vehicles, took them to a hotel and confined them in a room.

Cyberabad Police Commissioner Avinash Mohanty appreciated Madhapur Additional DCP Nandiyala Narsimha Reddy, Madhapur ACP P. Srinivas, the Raidurgam Police, SOT Shamshabad and Madhapur Zone who apprehended the notorious gang.

## RICH TRIBUTES



Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and other Congress leaders pay tributes to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi to mark his death anniversary in Hyderabad on Tuesday

## Education dept team to tour Gujarat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Commissioner of School Education, Devasena, along with the Education Department team will tour Gujarat from February 1 to 3.

It will study the performance of educational institutions like schools, Skill



University and Education Review Centre in the State.

Inter Board Secretary Shruti Ojha and other officials will study skill universities in the states of Odisha, Delhi and Gujarat in the context of setting up skill universities.

This team has already studied the educational institutes in Karnataka.

## Kishan Reddy requests TS govt to allot land for railway stations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister G Kishan Reddy has written a letter to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to allot additional land for Cherlapally, Secunderabad and Moulali railway stations on Tuesday. He requested the government to take special initiative or immediate steps to provide the necessary assistance and support for the development of the railway stations.

In view of increasing population and passenger traffic, the three main railway stations of Hyderabad city, Kachiguda, Secunderabad and Hyderabad are heavily burdened. As a solution to this problem, Indian Railways has decided to develop a new terminal at Cherlapally railway station within the city limits.

Accordingly, many development programmes including the construction of terminal and construction of addition-



al platforms are being carried out rapidly within Cherlapally railway station as a target of March 2024. While the development programmes are going on within the railway station, there is a need to widen the approach road outside the railway station to facilitate the movement of passengers and vehicles to and from the railway station. Also, additional land is to be allocated on both sides of the station for parking etc. 200 feet wide road should be developed from FCI godown road towards the new station building. In future, this

road will become the main road to reach Cherlapally railway station.

The road from Bharat Nagar side (next to Indian Oil Petrol Station) to Charlapalli station should be developed. There is already a 30 foot road here. It should be spread at least 100 feet wide.

The road from EC Nagar to the MMTS platform at Cherlapally station is very narrow. The road reaching the station from the EC Nagar main road is to be developed with a minimum width of 100 meters and a length of 700 meters.

In addition to these, three acres towards the new building of Charlapally station and 2.7 acres towards the MMTS platform have to be allotted for parking etc.

The Railway Department has already deposited Rs 4 crore under the contract for establishing water supply connection to Cherlapally terminal.

## TS govt approves proposal to install Gaddar statue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has approved the installation of a statue of revolutionary singer Gaddar in Tellapur municipality on Tuesday. The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) approved the Tellapur Municipality's request to install the statue of



the singer in an area of 1076 sq. yds.

Gummadi Vital Rao, famously known as Gaddar, died in August 2023. He was born in a poor Dalit family in Medak district. His daughter, Vennela fought in the Assembly elections 2023 from Secunderabad Cantonment but lost.

## 8-day remand of Balakrishna for corruption

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Nampally Court on Tuesday granted an 8-day remand of former Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) Director Shiva Balakrishna to the Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) in connection with a corruption case.

The ACB will interrogate the accused and his bank accounts will be opened during this period. In its petition, the ACB asked for a 10-day remand of Balakrishna. The agency reportedly wrote a letter to the HMDA asking them to hand over files related to projects taken up during Balakrishna's tenure along with those related to a project in Puppulaguda.

The ACB officers conducted searches in the houses and offices of the accused and his relatives.

## Special postal cover on Bhadrachalam Sri Rama temple



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On the lines of releasing a special postal stamp in connection with consecration of Lord Rama temple at Ayodhya, the postal department has brought out a special postal cover in connection with the Srirama Navami celebrations to be held on April 17 at Bhadrachalam.

The special cover, which was released at a function held in Hyderabad on Sunday at Dak Sadan by Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Dev Singh Chauhan, contained the image of the deity of the Bhadrachalam temple.

These special covers have rare significance as the collectors gather them treating them as a heritage property for the benefit of the posterity. The postal department will print more and more such covers depending on the customer demand. These

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covers will be priced between Rs 5 and Rs 50. These covers will become useless once they reach the destination.

Last year, the postal department sent over 30,000 packets of Talambralu of Lord Srirama in connection with Sri Rama Navami. This year, these special covers will be used to dispatch the Mutyalatalambralu to various destinations. However, these covers will be priced at Rs 45 and Rs 60, according to Bhadrachalam region postal authorities Suchender and Rammohan.

## Two nabbed for kidnapping

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hussaini Alam Police on Tuesday arrested two persons involved in kidnapping and rescued a boy.

The accused were identified as Orusu Venkanna (30) and Orusu Kavitha (26), both residents of Peddamberpet. The incident occurred on January 23 when the couple kidnapped K Shiva Kumar (6) from the premises of the maternity hospital in Petlaburj. Kumar's mother approached the Hussaini Alam Police on January 24 and filed a complaint. The police initiated an investigation and nabbed the accused. Upon being interrogated Venakanna revealed that he is a native of Nalgonda and

came to Hyderabad five months ago; working as labourer at Hayat Nagar.

The accused has three daughters and wished to have a son; he met Darshanam Raju while working at the site. Venkanna discussed the issue with Raju and the latter promised to get him a male child for Rs 1 lakh. Venkanna agreed to pay Rs 60,000 after the work is done.

On January 23, the two accused, along with Raju and his wife Kamma, visited the hospital and lured the victim through chocolates. As Kumar approached them, the accused picked him up and left for Pedda Amberpet.

The accused were arrested under Section 363 of the Indian Penal Code.

## CM hopes for improved connectivity between Hyderabad and Australia



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Australian High Commissioner to India, Philip Green paid a courtesy call on Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy at the Secretariat on Tuesday.

Philip Green and the Chief Minister hoped for direct connectivity between Hyderabad and Australia will improve soon. The High Commissioner and CM Revanth discussed about education development programmes in Telangana, opportunities for the expansion of

**Philip Green and the Chief Minister hoped for direct connectivity between Hyderabad and Australia will improve soon**

eco-tourism and advanced technology in agriculture.

IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu, Forest Minister Konda Surekha and MLC Jeevan Reddy were also present.

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**  
**'E' PROCUREMENT SHORT TENDER NOTICE**  
NIT No. 31/IE-Div-29/SB2/GHMC/2023-24 Date: 30.01.2024  
The details can be seen by logging https://www.tender.telangana.gov.in. The date of events is detailed below: Name of the Work: (1) Attending Jungle cutting to muslim graveyard in view of Shabe Bharat (2) Painting to Compound wall, Jungle clearing for Muslim graveyard Painting to Compound wall, jungle clearing for Muslim graveyard in ward no.142, ward-143, ward-145, of Secunderabad Circle-29, SB2, GHMC. Estimate Amount / ECV: Rs. 10.38 Lakhs. Start date / Last date & Time for receipts of Bids: From 31-01-2024 @ 4.00 PM To 03-02-2024 @ 4.00 PM., Name & Address officer Cell. No.: Executive Engineer, Div-29, GHMC, Secbad, Cell No. 9963550657. Further details can be seen at e-Procurement @ https://www.tender.a procurement.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer, Div-29, Secbad, GHMC. R.O.No: 9886-PP/ELADVT/11/2023-24, Dt. 30-01-2024





# Karimnagar villagers seek drinking water schemes

PNS ■ MALYALA

The drinking water scheme built at a cost of Rs 4 crore about 35 years ago beside the Malyala-Tatipalli road remained useless. Moreover, there is a wild growth of weeds and bushes near the pump house and filter beds.

The Comprehensive Drinking Water Scheme (CPWS), intended to provide drinking water facility to 15 villages in Malyala and Kodimayala mandals was under operation for about two-and-a-half decades till Mission Bhagiradha drinking water scheme replaced the facility.

With the Mission Bhagiradha scheme not able to provide drinking water to nearly 50 per cent of the villages in the mandal and with the shelving of the CPWS, crores of rupees of public money was wasted.

According to reports, huge motors fixed in the pump house disappeared.

In another case, protected drinking water scheme was



developed at a cost of Rs 2.17 crore about 10 years ago on a site belonging to the Residential School for Girls at Tatipalli to quench the thirst of the pilgrims visiting Kondagattu Anjaneya Swamy temple and to fill the temple pond with water.

Use of substandard pipes has rendered the drinking water scheme useless and crores of rupees of public funds have been misused.

The drinking water scheme failed to serve the people not even for two months. There were allegations of misappropriation of funds in implementing the scheme. The sand used in filter beds was reported missing.

As the drinking water scheme totally failed, the State government six months ago kicked off another drinking water scheme to supply water to the temple at a cost

**With the Mission Bhagiradha scheme not able to provide drinking water to nearly 50 per cent of the villages in the mandal and with the shelving of the CPWS, crores of rupees of public money was wasted**

of Rs 13-14 crore from the flood canal.

With MLC Jeevan Reddy offering to take measures to revive the old drinking water schemes, the residents of the mandal pinned hopes on the restoration of the two drinking water schemes. The people have been appealing to authorities to supply drinking water to the villages which did not get drinking water supply through the Mission Bhagiradha.

# Rajya Sabha elections turn crucial for both Telugu states

SNCN ACHARYULU  
■ HYDERABAD

The coming Rajya Sabha elections in both Telugu states are creating interest. Whether six seats for the Rayya Sabha elections in the Telugu states will be elected unanimously or elections will become inevitable is dependent on the decision of main opposition parties in the both the states. Going through the present strength of ruling and main opposition parties, the Congress will win two seats and BRS will win one seat in Telangana. Regarding Andhra Pradesh all the three seats will be won by the YSR Congress.

To win the Rajya Sabha elections in Telangana, each candidate requires support of 30 MLAs. The Congress has 64 plus one CPI MLA's support. That means the Congress will have five surplus votes. The BRS has 39 MLAs and it will have 9 surplus votes. If the AIMIM supports the BRS it will have 16 surplus votes. To win the second Rajya Sabha seat, the BRS requires the support of another 14 MLAs. In the same way to win the third seat, the

Congress requires the support of 25 MLAs. In the present circumstances there will be no chance for cross voting in both the Congress and the BRS.

However, to make the Rajya Sabha elections complicated and to create fear in the Congress, BRS will contest elections for two Rajya Sabha seats. If the AIMIM decides to support the Congress, the BRS may contest for only one seat and the Congress will contest for two seats and the three candidates will be elected unanimously.

In the wake five BRS MLAs meeting Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy recently, the BRS leadership may not dare to contest for the second seat, political observers feel.

Regarding Andhra Pradesh, according to present effective strength of Andhra Pradesh Assembly, each Rajya Sabha candidate requires the support of 44 MLAs. At present the ruling YSR Congress has 145 MLAs and five other MLAs are from the TDP and the Jana Sena. To win three Rajya Sabha seats, the YSR Congress requires 132 MLAs. The TDP has 18

MLAs and the support of four other MLAs of YSR Congress who were suspended. That means the TDP has 22 MLAs and to win one Rajya Sabha seat it still requires support of 22 MLAs.

In the 175 members strength AP assembly, the Speaker recently accepted the resignation of TDP MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao and with that the total effective strength of Assembly has come down to 174.

Meanwhile, the Speaker sent notices to four defected MLAs of TDP and four defected MLAs of YSR Congress. YSR Congress MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy recently sent his resignation to the Speaker.

If the Speaker disqualifies the eight defected MLAs and accepts the resignation of MLA Ramakrishna Reddy the effective strength of AP Assembly will further come down to 165.

Than the YSR Congress will have 146 and TDP will have 18 MLAs. At the same time, the required support of MLAs for each Rajya Sabha candidate will come down to 41 from 44.

# Inter-City Express to halt at Nekkonda

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The department of railways has given its green signal to halt the Guntur-Secunderabad Inter-City Express at Nekkonda railway station in the district for the benefit of the people commuting towards Guntur and also Secunderabad.

The residents of Nekkonda have been demanding the authorities for a halt to the Inter-City Express train at Nekkonda to meet the travel needs of those travelling in both the directions.

When the people brought this to the notice of the Union Minister G Kishan Reddy, the Minister took it to the notice of the railway authorities who agreed to halt the train at Nekkonda railway station for one minute.

Kishan Reddy asked the residents of Nekkonda to use the facility.

They thanked the Union minister for his gesture towards them and also the Railway Minister Aswini Vaishnav.

# Inter students ends life by hanging

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

The first-year student of Kasturba Gandhi College allegedly committed suicide by hanging by hanging, reports reaching here said on Tuesday.

She was identified as Akshita.

On a tip off by the college management, the police reached the spot and recovered a suicide-note purported to be written by her. They took measures to shift her body to the Government Hospital here for autopsy.

However, her parents allege that the college management is responsible for the death of their daughter. They alleged that Akshita was forced to take the extreme step due to lack of proper care by the management.

The police are investigating the case.

# Strengthen your political voice

## Asaduddin Owaisi tells Biharis

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi on Tuesday asked people of Bihar to choose between strengthening their political voice and political helplessness.

Owaisi's statement comes in reaction to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's latest alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The AIMIM chief took to X (formerly Twitter) and said, 'Since 2015, I have been getting abused by many 'intellectuals' and 'leaders' because I did not support the Grand Alliance in Bihar. Even then and in 2022, I had said that Nitish will go back to BJP. This is a clear proof of the political under-



standing of these people that they have been proved wrong every time. The people of Bihar will now have to decide: either strengthen your political voice, or make political helplessness your destiny. It is no longer possible to live in illusion. These Chaudharys of secularism made BJP win twice, but @AIMIM is abused for it."

# Yadadri temple receives Rs 2.32 crore hundi offerings in 25 days

PNS ■ YADADRI

The Yadadri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple earned Rs 2.32 crore revenue in 25 days by ways of contributions to the temple hundi made by devotees.

The temple authorities counted the contributions made to the temple hundi from Jan 4 to 28.

The hundi received Rs 2,32,22,689 from devotees in cash, 230 grams of gold (not 24 carat), 4,420 kg of gold and silver, 593 US dollars, 65 UAE Dirhams, 65 Australian dollars, 220 Canadian Dollars, 10 Singapore dollars, 10 British Pounds, 112 South African Rands, 15 Euros, 400 Omani Riyals, 2 Malaysian Ringgits, 23 Qatari Riyals, 100 Thai Baht, 5 NZ dollars, 100 Denmark Kroner and 10,00,000 Vietnamese Dongs, according to Temple Executive Officer Ramakrishna Rao.



On Monday, special pujas were performed to the deities at the pilgrimage Centre of Yadadri. The deities were worshipped using Panchamru tamand basil leaves. The temple priests decorated the deities to the delight of one and all and conducted the daily Tirukalyanotsavam rituals in tune with the Vedic traditions. Other special pujas, including Sahasranamarchana, were performed. At the Ramalingeswara temple atop the Yadari Hills, daily rituals were conducted as per the Saiva Agama traditions.

# BRS leaders meet DGP over Congress attacks

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A group of BRS leaders met DGP Ravi Gupta and complained against attacks by the Congress leaders on BRS workers across the State.

They brought to the notice of the DGP the attacks and killings of BRS workers in Huzurnagar, Manakondur, Bhupalapalli and Kolhapur constituencies.

In the presence of Minister

Komati Reddy, BRS leaders explained to the DGP the attack on Bhuvanagiri ZP Chairman Sandeep Reddy by Congress workers and police at his instigation. The leaders appealed to the DGP to immediately stop the biased police from filing illegal cases against BRS activists.

BRS leaders asked the DGP to issue clear instructions to the police to act impartially without favouring the

Congress leaders. Among those who met the DGP were MP Badugula Lingaya Yadav, MLC L Ramana, former MLAs Sanampudi Saidi Reddy, Nallamotu Bhaskar Rao, Korukanti Chander, Bhuvanagiri ZP Chairman Sandeep Reddy, Suryapet ZP Chairperson Deepika, BRSV President Gellu Srinivas Yadav, former corporation chairmen Ravula Sridhar Reddy and Rakesh Kumar.



# Constable breathes life into collapsed visitor at Medaram

PNS ■ MULUGU

Netizens have been appreciating the heroic deeds of a police constable who performed CPR on a patient who collapsed due to a heart complaint and revived him.

The constable was identified as Nagamutyam belonging to Pakalagudem village of Aswaraopetamandal of Bhadradri-Kothagudem district. He was posted at Medaram for security duty for the Sammakka-Saralamma tribal festival. A devotee along with his family members visited Medaram fair to fulfill his vows. Having visited the Sammakka-Saralamma temple, he was walking to return home when he collapsed at once shocking the family members. The other devotees and family members were at a loss of comprehension how they should respond in such a situation.

Constable Nagamutyam who was regulating the crowd immediately came to the rescue of the collapsed patient and revived him by performing CPR on the person.

The collapsed person responded to the CPR and opened his eyes, bringing relief to one and all. He was immediately rushed to the neighbouring hospital, where doctors declared his condition to be stable.

Several devotees and the locals appreciated the efforts of Nagamutyam in reviving the patient. Higher authorities in police department have been lauding the efforts made by Nagamutyam to revive the patient. Meanwhile, a video of how the constable revived the collapsed patient went viral on the Internet and social media.

Netizens have been posting comments on the Internet describing him as a real hero.

# 50,000 chilli bags brought in single day in Khammam

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

On a single day on Monday, farmers brought over 50,000 red chilli bags to the agricultural market yard here occupying the whole of the market yard area here.

The farmers from undivided Khammam district, Mahabubabad, Warangal, Nalgonda, Suryapeta and some districts in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh brought the red chilli bags to the market yard here.

As the market yard was closed for three days because of holidays, the farmers brought record level red chilli bags to the market yard here on Monday.

Though the market yards at Mahabubabad and K Samudram commenced pro-

curement of red chillis, farmers inclined to bring their produce to the market yard at Khammam.

Serpentine queues of vehicles transporting the red chilli bags were noticed from the early hours of Sunday. The market secretaries took measures to rule out any inconvenience to the farmers. They supervised that the procurement would be smoothy and ensured availability of sufficient number of scales.

Depending on the quality, the maximum price commanded by the commodity was Rs 21,300 per quintal and minimum price quoted was Rs 14,000 per quintal.

Empty pods were sold at Rs 12,000 maximum price, while the minimum price was put at Rs 7500 a quintal.

The quality of the red chilli crop has been affected under the impact of the recent cyclone in Khammam district. There are big traders who export red chilli crop to overseas. But compared to earlier, this year there is no demand for the commodity from overseas.

If China and other countries place orders for the supply of red chilli, the demand for the crop would be more.

The procured red chilli is being used to meet the domestic needs. The Khammam Chamber of Commerce general secretary M Srisailam said that the procured red chilli is being sent to the markets in Maharashtra, Delhi, Lucknow, Ghaziabad, Kolkata, Bihar and Kanpur.

# NEWS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

## Rs 22,302 crore investments cleared for AP power sector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB) convened under the leadership of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday, clearing a series of investment proposals totalling Rs 22,302 crore. These investments are earmarked for the establishment of energy industries, promising to generate 5,300 job opportunities.

JSW Neo Energy Ltd's proposal to set up four solar power projects across the

state, with an investment of Rs 12,065 crore, was given the green light during the SIPB meeting. These projects, located in Chakrayapet (YSR District), Mudigubba (Sri Satya Sai District), Rapthadu (and Kanaganapalli), and D Hirehal (and Bommaal) in Anantapur District, will collectively produce 3,350 MW of power and create employment for 3,300 individuals.

Additionally, JSW will initiate 1,71.60 MW wind power projects at Kunukuntla (Omk mandal of Nandyal district) and Jaladurgam (Peapully

Mandal of Kurnool district) with a Rs.1,287 crore investment, offering employment to 200 persons. Aqua Green Engineering Management Pvt Ltd is set to establish a 1,000 MW solar power unit at Puli Gundlapally in Talupula mandal of Sri Satya Sai District, investing Rs.4,000 crore and creating jobs for 1,000 individuals.

Ecoren Energy India Pvt Ltd has been approved to establish a 200 MW wind power unit at Aspari in Kurnool district with a Rs.1,350 crore investment, employing 200 people.

# Why delay in introducing Bhumatha: Raghunandan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former MLA from BJP M Raghunandan Rao questioned the Congress government to tell as to why it is maintaining silence now though the Congress party assured during elections that it will bring Bhumatha portal in place Dharani portal immediately after coming to power. Raghunandan Rao alleged that the lives of farmers were disturbed due to the Dharani portal.

While speaking to the media on Tuesday, Raghunandan Rao said that the Congress stated that it will do something in regard to former DGP M Mahender Reddy. However, it made him TSPSC chairman. Why is the



Congress government is hesitating to initiate action against former Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar though the Congress leaders spoke a lot before elections, he asked.

Raghunandan Rao alleged that 25 acres of land was registered in the name of Somesh Kumar and there is no case filed in this regard and also there is no action on allocation of lands to Hetero drugs firm. He alleged that the Congress made several allegations before coming to power.

# Shabbir asks KTR to make KCR tell why he contested from Kamareddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Slamming that the BRS working president and former Minister KT Rama Rao was showing fake love towards minorities, Adviser to the Telangana government on matters related to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Backward Classes (BC) and Minority communities, Shabbir Ali asked KTR to tell as to what they did when they were in power? Why did your father contest from Kamareddy? How many attempts have you made to defeat one innocent person? Shabbir Ali asked.

While speaking to the media on Tuesday at Gandhi Bhavan, Shabbir Ali slammed KTR saying that KCR did



**Shabbir Ali slammed KTR saying that KCR did nothing to the Minorities when he was in power**

nothing to the Minorities when he was in power. However, the Congress government made him an Adviser, Shabbir Ali said.

While countering the KTR's comments that there was no Minister from Minorities in Congress government, Shabbir Ali asked KTR to tell what to do as no one won the elections? He said that the Congress will

give opportunities to Minorities. The government gave opportunities to Minorities in appointments in TSPSC and as Supreme Court AG.

Shabbir Ali made it clear that the Congress government will give opportunities even in future. He asked KTR to make his father KCR to tell first as to why he contested from Kamareddy.







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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Win some, lose some

Nitish switching sides leaves the INDIA bloc in confusion but limits his own bargaining power

In a move that did not leave many seasoned politicians flabbergasted, JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar has executed a somersault by rejoining the BJP alliance barely 18 months after he walked out of the NDA, spilling bad blood all around. Importantly, his latest move saw Nitish abandoning the plank of Opposition unity, which he was passionately championing until very recently. In fact, he was the de facto convener of the INDIA bloc, which has been cobbled together to take on the BJP's national might. As a prime mover of the INDIA bloc, Nitish's departure puts a cloud over the coalition's future, which may have to undergo a realignment, potentially impacting its cohesiveness and effectiveness. However, there is more to this development than meets the eye: While it certainly is a major setback for the Opposition, what with Mamata Banerjee and Bhagwant Mann already having announced to go it alone in their respective States of West Bengal and Punjab, it provides an obvious edge to



the BJP while straitjacketing Nitish from performing any more antics, at least till the Bihar Assembly elections next year.

The lack of communication between Bihar Chief Minister Nitish and his deputy, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, is said to have compounded their unease with each other. Matters did not help when Central agencies started questioning Tejashwi's mother and sister in the alleged land-for-jobs scam. The BJP's inclination towards a representative from an extremely backward caste or a prominent Other Backward Classes (OBC) group adds complexity to the situation. Nitish has the additional duty of ensuring that Bihar adds

handsomely to the NDA's kitty in the general elections. Nitish's decision to realign with the BJP has far-reaching consequences, influencing not only his political trajectory but also the future dynamics of the NDA and INDIA bloc. Interestingly, the Bihar developments coincide with Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra entering the State. It is sure to have a dampening effect on the Congress' campaign and lower its confidence considerably. However, nothing can be said with finality about Nitish. It will all depend on the understanding he has with the BJP and how the latter treats him. His switch was ostensibly prompted by the treatment he received from his INDIA partners. During alliance meetings, clashes of aspirations and perceived attempts by the RJD to expand its influence within the JD(U) hint at a shifting power dynamic. Nitish's political somersault and his realignment with the BJP have unleashed a series of ripple effects that extend far beyond the borders of Bihar. The departure of this seasoned politician from the INDIA bloc has injected an element of uncertainty into the political equations, casting shadows over the future cohesion and effectiveness of the coalition. The nation observes closely as this strategic realignment unfolds, shaping the future contours of Indian politics.

### PICTALK



Artistes perform during the presentation of the best tableau in the Republic Day parade, in New Delhi

# Masterstroke or political Harakiri?

Nitish Kumar has rejoined forces with the BJP, cementing his reputation as a leader known for frequent shifts in political alliances for personal benefit

On Sunday, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar threw a bombshell by leaving the ruling Mahagathbandhan in Bihar and returning to the NDA. He also quit the opposition coalition which he had built eight months ago. This dismantling of the bloc has dealt a significant blow to the INDIA bloc at the national level. They missed the slim chance of defeating the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. It is worth exploring how Bihar's politics may affect the national landscape. Kumar's decision to return to the NDA, fold could benefit the BJP but weaken the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Congress in Bihar. It could ultimately impact the opposition bloc at the national level. This BJP- J.D. (U) partnership could improve the chances of the BJP winning more seats in the upcoming 2024 general elections and help Modi achieve a hat trick.

The BJP tried to break the opposition coalition and partner with the J.D. (U) alliance. The Party sees Nitish Kumar as a critical ally in Bihar and believes their partnership can win in the 2024 elections. Kumar has only 45 seats in the current Assembly, while the RJD and BJP have 78 and 79 seats, respectively. Despite this, Nitish managed to continue as the chief minister. Did the Congress party have a hand in Nitish Kumar's departure from the INDIA opposition bloc? The reason behind this setback was the decision to sideline Nitish and promote Congress. Kumar accused the Party of being responsible for the failed alliance, arguing that the situation arose due to poor communication.

KC Tyagi of the Janata Dal United (JDU) has levelled accusations against the Congress party that it conspired to dominate the Opposition bloc. On January 13th in Mumbai, the Chief (CPI-M) Sitaram Yechori proposed Nitish Kumar as the convener of the bloc. This suggestion was supported by most of the other leaders present. However, Rahul Gandhi voiced his disagreement. Mamata



Banerjee subsequently proposed the name of Congress chief Kharge as the coalition chief, a move Tyagi claims was part of a broader conspiracy. Tyagi stated that Nitish Kumar mobilised an alliance that united all non-Congress parties.

However, it is now disintegrating. The situation in Punjab and Bihar is on the verge of collapse, and the coalition in West Bengal is also falling apart. Nitish confirmed that he left the INDIA alliance because it didn't meet his expectations. He felt he was the only one working towards the coalition's goals. Although the partnership has brought together all non-Congress parties, the alliance disintegrated in West Bengal and almost collapsed in Bihar and Punjab.

There is also an untold story. Lalu Yadav, the leader of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), encouraged Nitish Kumar to form an opposition coalition at the national level to aim for the position of Prime Ministerial candidate. The purpose of this plan was to pave the way for Lalu Yadav's son to become the Chief Minister. However, the plan

LALU YADAV, THE LEADER OF THE RASHTRIYA JANATA DAL (RJD), ENCOURAGED NITISH KUMAR TO FORM AN OPPOSITION COALITION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL TO AIM FOR PRIME MINISTERSHIP

failed when Mallikarjun Kharge was chosen as the leader of the new coalition. Consequently, Nitish Kumar sided with the (BJP).

Kumar's credibility has been tarnished because of his unwavering desire to hold power, regardless of the repercussions. He has changed political allegiances several times, always for his benefit, and currently holds the title of Chief Minister with the longest tenure. Nitish's track record shows that after exploring other options in 2013, Nitish Kumar left the BJP and allied with the RJD, and Congress. After the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, he aligned with the BJP again and became the Chief Minister in 2020. However, two years later, Kumar left the BJP and formed a new government with the RJD, and Congress. Now he has dumped the RJD. That is why he is called Palti Ram. Despite being an experienced politician, Nitish Kumar's frequent changes in stance have cost him the chance to be considered as a prime ministerial candidate for the opposition party, especially at

the age of 72. The BJP's dismantling of the INDIA bloc may facilitate Prime Minister Modi to win his third term. In Bihar, mobilising OBC votes to achieve electoral success is imperative. In November 2023, Bihar increased the reservation for Scheduled Castes and Extremely Backward Castes. It is unclear how long the Nitish and the BJP partnership will last.

They may work together until the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, but what will happen afterwards is uncertain. The Bharatiya Janata Party may support Nitish only until the Lok Sabha polls and their support could decrease afterwards-some question whether the alliance will continue until the 2025 Bihar Assembly polls. Nitish has shown that it's possible to retain power by using clever bargaining skills and winning a few seats, even if only 4% of the electorate belongs to their caste. But one thing is sure: Given Nitish's track record, there could be other flip-flops.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

## A father's courageous fight against girl's sexual assault

Despite threats and coercion, Ranjit, supported by his resilient daughter, pursued justice with unwavering courage

When Ranjit took on the might of the powerful in his tribal village in Ranchi district, Jharkhand, to pursue action against rapists of his 13-year-old daughter, he didn't think he would get justice. But he was still determined to go ahead. So, even though the village mukhiya was unsupportive and the police inspector on duty refused to file an FIR, Ranjit didn't give up. Having made up his mind to fight to the bitter end, he called up the Superintendent of police who came to station to help him file the case under POCSO Act and the three perpetrators were arrested. Thereafter began the real battle. There was pressure from all sides to compromise including money to withdraw the case and, marriage to one of the perpetrators. Threats were made to burn their home, kill Ranjit and cause other physical harm to the family. Somehow they braved the storm, riding on the extraordinary and unwavering courage of his daughter, who stood firm on her fight for justice. After a year of struggle,



including withstanding humiliation in court from the public prosecutor, Ranjit and his daughter were vindicated when the verdict came in their favour. In a country where a rape is reported every 20 minutes and conviction rates are less than 30%, this success inspired filmmaker Nisha Pahuja to document Ranjit and his daughter's dogged journey for justice. To Kill A Tiger, which took eight years to film, has been nominated for the Best Documentary Feature for the 2024 Oscar awards.

The survivor, who is now 20, went on to complete schooling and college. She hopes to show other survivors like her, that girls are not to blame for sexual assaults and that is why she agreed to reveal her face in the film.

She admits that had her father Ranjit not stood up for her, she may have remained just another statistic in crime records. Ranjit attributes his ability to withstand all pressures to the training he received through an intervention engaging men as responsible partners and caring fathers, in the context of gender equality and child rights. Initiated by the Centre for Health and Social Justice (CHSJ) in Jharkhand in 2015, this programme developed innovative ways to work with men and boys on issues of masculinities. Implemented in three districts in partnership with NGOs Srijan in Ranchi, Chotanagpur Sanskritik Sangh (CSS) in Gumla and Sahyogini in Bokaro, the intervention was able to reduce gender differences in burden of household and care work and reduce gender disparities in education. Importantly, it reduced gender-based violence in participant families and in intervention villages (including child marriage and sexual harassment of women/girls) and in policing of sisters/daughters by brothers

and daughters according to an independent assessment of the programme. Male members of the programme questioned their violent masculinities, began exercising less 'power over' their women relatives and support them more, and challenged norms on masculinities.

This programme, coupled with government and other NGO interventions, has helped to change two important community norms. It now believes that investment in education, especially girls education and increase in age at marriage is necessary. Initiatives like these engaging men and boys has shown that the journey towards more gender transformative masculinities is possible. What makes it imperative to scale such interventions is the increase in the incidence of rape between 2020 and 2022. In Ranchi district specifically, figures suggest that approximately every 1.75 days there is an incident of rape.

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



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THE BEHAVIOUR OF BUREAUCRATS

Sir — The idea of bureaucrats embodying exemplary conduct for the public takes a blow when incidents like the Singrauli SDM episode surface. His act of having a female employee tie his shoelace in public triggered outrage, highlighting the stark contrast between expected behaviour and reality. The swift transfer in response to public outcry via social media underscores the need for greater accountability and sensitivity among those entrusted with positions of power.

Such blatant abuse of authority cannot be tolerated, especially in public spaces. Moving forward, the government must prioritize not only competence but also ethical conduct when selecting officials for crucial roles. Common courtesy and respect for basic human dignity should be non-negotiable, forming the bedrock of every bureaucrat's interaction with the public. Only then can we rebuild trust and pave the way for a government that truly serves its people.

N Mateeni | Mumbai

### DILAPIDATED POST OFFICES

Sir — People are infuriated over the lackadaisical attitude of authorities towards improving the condition of the post offices in the country which has been lying in a dilapidated condition for a long. Residents have complained that even the name of the post office has not been displayed properly at most of the places. Moreover, the internet services fail to provide connectivity during peak hours. A member of the grievances redressal committee said higher authorities of the postal department had not shown any interest in improving the condition of the post office. The infrastructure of the post office needs to be improved.

There is a need to beautify the staff counters to give a neat and clean look to these counters. There is also a need to provide better seating arrangements. There was also a need to recruit more staff at the post offices. Retirees invest their hard-earned money, wait for hours and then become

## IMD completes 150 years



Recently, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) celebrated its 150th year of establishment and service to the nation. On this memorable occasion, the IMD has launched several initiatives, such as 'The Weather Analysis and Forecast Enabling System

(WAFES) Framework of Climate Services (NFCS). Over the years, the IMD has been playing a significant role in weather forecasting and monsoon predictions. It plays a multidimensional role in the country's major affairs, conducting general elections, the launch of ISRO missions, and the growth of infrastructural and agricultural sectors.

The IMD faces a lot of challenges posed by changing climates and the ever-increasing demand for accurate and timely weather information. As the country navigates the complexities of its diverse weather patterns, perhaps the fusion of AI and traditional meteorological methods may well be the key to a more adaptive and efficient forecasting system, ultimately safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of the people of the country.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

disappointed without getting their hard-earned money. It is high time to heed the fact that the residents living in pensioner's paradise are put to the test every time they go to pick up their monthly earnings. It is time to have better working conditions in Post Offices.

C K Subramaniam | Chennai

### UGC DEGREE IN MARATHI

Sir — The University Grants Commission has taken major steps to provide degree and post-graduate education in other languages along with the Marathi language. Accordingly, a master's training program has been organized next month for professors to create educational materials. As a result of this, students will get a great opportunity to learn the local language in the coming academic years. Local language has been given priority in the national education policy. But the necessary educational materials are not available. As a result, many rural students are unable to study in the local language. Even during the three years of implementation of NEP, many course materials are not available in the

Marathi language. It will also be given. The support of the Indian Language Committee will be taken for this. Overall, this is good news in the background of the strangulation of the Marathi language going on in all areas. Today, children are not given education in their mother tongue in many places. If education is given in the mother tongue, children understand quickly and they understand anything immediately. Recently the volume of English has increased in all areas. In many places, Marathi schools are on the verge of closure. Even today, despite fulfilling all the conditions, the Marathi language does not get the status of the Abhijit language from the Centre. For that, it is necessary to try at all levels. Overall, it is necessary to give priority to Marathi in all fields. It is good news that Marathi is being included in degree and post-graduate education. It is expected to be implemented as soon as possible.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

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FIRST COLUMN

AHIMSA: THE PATH TO PEACEFUL EXISTENCE

Buddhism’s essence lies in non-violence, compassion and enlightenment



BHIKKHU SIRI SIVALI **ABHASARO**

Buddhism, founded by Siddhartha Gautama, commonly known as the Buddha, is a philosophy and way of life that places great emphasis on the alleviation of suffering and the pursuit of enlightenment. Central to the teachings of Buddhism is the principle of non-violence, or “ahimsa,” which holds a profound and essential role in shaping the ethical framework of this ancient spiritual tradition.

The Essence of Non-Violence in Buddhism:

- **Compassion and Interconnectedness:** Buddhism teaches that all beings are interconnected and share a common desire for happiness while seeking to avoid suffering. Non-violence stems from the understanding that causing harm to others ultimately results in harm to oneself. Compassion, a key tenet of Buddhism, encourages followers to cultivate empathy and extend benevolence to all living beings.
- **The First Precept:** The Five Precepts form the ethical guidelines for Buddhist practitioners, with the first precept explicitly stating, “I undertake the precept to refrain from taking life.” This foundational principle underscores the sanctity of all life and emphasizes the commitment to non-violence as a fundamental aspect of ethical conduct.
- **Karma and Consequences:** Buddhism teaches the concept of karma, the law of cause and effect. Engaging in violent or harmful actions generates negative karma, which can have repercussions in this life or future lives. By practicing non-violence, individuals seek to break the cycle of negative karma, promoting a path towards enlightenment and liberation from suffering.



- **Mindfulness and Contemplation:** Buddhist practices, such as mindfulness meditation, cultivate awareness and self-reflection. Non-violence is not only manifested in physical actions but also in the thoughts and intentions of individuals. By developing mindfulness, practitioners strive to eliminate harmful thoughts and cultivate a mindset of kindness and non-harming.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Non-violence plays a crucial role in conflict resolution within Buddhist communities. Rather than resorting to aggression or retaliation, followers are encouraged to seek peaceful solutions through dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation. This approach aligns with the Buddha's teachings on skillful means to address conflicts without causing harm.
- **Example of the Buddha:** The life of the Buddha serves as a profound example of non-violence. From his renunciation of the royal life to his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, the Buddha consistently demonstrated compassion and refrained from causing harm to any being, even in the face of adversity.

Non-violence, deeply rooted in the core principles of Buddhism, is a guiding force that shapes the ethical conduct of its followers. Through the practice of compassion, mindfulness, and the observance of the Five Precepts, Buddhists strive to create a world free from violence and suffering. By embracing the philosophy of non-violence, individuals embark on a transformative journey towards personal well-being, social harmony, and the ultimate goal of enlightenment.

*(The writer is a Buddhist monk and spiritual guide, views are personal)*

# Drones can revolutionise the agriculture sector



AS **MITTAL**

The Government’s inclination towards precision agriculture implies that drones are poised to become an integral component of cultivation practices



In Punjab, where drones remain associated mostly with dropping drugs and arms from Pakistan in border areas, now they are poised to gain a new skyline to revolutionise the agriculture sector.

Kiranpal Kaur of Sekha village in Barnala district, who has only completed her education up to class 10 and has never travelled in a plane, is now a trained drone pilot. She travels across the district to provide rental services for spraying fertilisers and pesticides and undertaking surveys to check for any crop damage in the fields. These Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) are the cutting-edge solution for driving agriculture towards higher efficiency, sustainability and profitability. To further empower rural women Self Help Groups (SHGs), the subsidised ‘Namo Drone Didi’ Scheme was launched in December last year with an outlay of Rs.1261 Crore for the period from 2024-25 to 2025-26. The scheme aims to equip and train at least 15,000 women SHGs. Kiranpal is among the first batch of 22 rural women SHGs in Punjab, out of 300 women SHGs across the country, to be equipped with Kisan drones.

**Potential:** The market cost of a high-end drone that can perform multiple tasks is approximately Rs 15 lakh. However, the government has introduced subsidised schemes that offer subsidies of Rs 4-8 lakh on each drone and a 3% interest subvention on loans. This initiative is expected to have a significant impact on the Indian agriculture drone market, which is projected to grow at an annual average rate of over 25% from 2024 to 2028. Additionally, the global market for agricultural drones is expected to reach USD 4.7 billion by the end of 2026, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 31.3% during the forecast period of 2024 to 2026. The increasing demand for agricultural drones, which have several applications such as field mapping, automated seeding, fertilizer sprayers, crop analysis, and imaging, is expected to propel market growth in the coming years.

The adoption of drone technology serves as an advanced decision support system



THE USE OF DRONES, EQUIPPED WITH HYPERSPECTRAL IMAGING TECHNOLOGY, HAS BROUGHT ABOUT A REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE IN HOW WE PERCEIVE CROP HEALTH

that facilitates targeted intervention and reduces the wastage of critical resources such as water, chemicals, and fertilizers. The high-resolution imagery obtained from drones can provide valuable insights that enable targeted intervention and prevent the unnecessary application of treatments across the entire field. Moreover, drones can help convert the abstract concept of precision agriculture into multifaceted approaches through compelling data and actionable insights.

**Remote sensing and monitoring:** Effective monitoring of crop health is crucial for farmers to achieve maximum yield and profits. The use of drones equipped with hyperspectral imaging technology has brought a revolutionary change in how we perceive crop health. In a recent study, it was revealed that drones can detect pest infestations up to 2 weeks earlier than traditional monitoring methods. This early detection can potentially save up to 30% of the harvest that might otherwise be lost.

**Precision crop management:** Finding a balance between agricultural production and environmental preservation is crucial. The excessive use of chemicals and water scarcity can lead to environmental degradation, which is a pressing concern that the agriculture sector must address. Drones can play a vital role in solving these issues by accurately identifying areas that require water. By doing so, farmers can reduce water usage by approximately 25%, thereby promoting sustainable agriculture.

Drones are not only useful for surveillance purposes, but when equipped with the right analytical capabilities, they can also provide actionable insights for real-time crop management. For example, by utilizing data collected and analyzed by drones, farmers can reduce fer-

tizer usage by an average of 26% by applying it only where needed. This is not only beneficial from a financial perspective but also contributes to sustainable agriculture that reduces environmental impact. Efficient field scouting: Given India's vast geographical expanse, monitoring remote or hard-to-reach farms is a unique challenge. Here, drones are an asset, reducing the hours of manual labour involved in field scouting to mere minutes. According to recent estimates, drones can cover 200 acres in just 30 minutes, offering timely and accurate data. It is valuable for smallholder farmers, who make up close to 68% of the Indian farming community, enabling them to act before a problem like a pest infestation becomes economically damaging. This efficiency in field scouting allows farmers to stay ahead of potential issues, even in remote or less accessible parts of their farms. Instead of labour-intensive, time-consuming manual inspections, drones provide a cost-effective and timely alternative. According to the estimates prepared by IFFCO, a drone takes just around 8-10 minutes to spray one acre.

Data-driven decision-making: We are in an era where data-driven strategies are not the exception but the rule, and agriculture is keeping pace. Drones generate extensive datasets that offer an in-depth look into crop health, growth patterns, and other variables. For example, a farmer can now optimise planting densities of sugarcane-based on drone-collected data, potentially increasing yields by up to 10%. Imagine a farmer in the heart of Punjab who can now use drone-acquired data to optimise planting densities, manage nutrients effectively, and plan their harvest with precision. Such data-driven decisions can lead to higher yields and, consequently, better profits.

Cost savings: In a sector where profit margins can be wafer-thin, drones serve as a cost-effective ally. Early detection of potential issues allows for timely and, therefore, less costly interventions. By helping farmers make data-backed decisions, drones help avert financial setbacks. By advising on agri-input use before visible crop issues occur, they can prevent the need for expensive interventions later during the crop cycle.

Weather forecasting: For a good yield, optimum weather remains crucial. Equipped with weather monitoring technology, drones can serve as weather stations in the sky, providing real-time data on the weather. This information is invaluable for planning farm operations and responding to changing weather patterns. In India, where monsoons can be a farmer's best friend or worst enemy, having up-to-the-minute weather data is a game-changer. It allows farmers to make informed decisions about when to plant, irrigate, or harvest, ultimately improving farm resilience.

**Conclusion:** The government's shows a growing affinity for precision agriculture suggests that drones are set to become an integral part of crop cultivation practices. By blending traditional farming expertise with advanced technology, farmers can anticipate a more optimistic and fruitful future. Moreover, the government can offset the 80% cost of drone adoption through significant savings on fertilizers and pesticides subsidies, as the use of drone technology leads to reduced consumption.

*(The Author is vice-chairman of Sonalika Group and vice-chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are personal)*

# Charting a course for India’s maritime security

To strengthen its standing as a global leader in maritime security, it is imperative to adopt a robust Maritime Domain Awareness framework

The adoption of a robust Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) framework is crucial for addressing the challenges faced by maritime-dependent industries and nations worldwide. In order to demonstrate the necessary commitment towards the protection of marine infrastructure and maritime domains, India must strengthen its maritime security programmes by keeping the rapidly changing maritime geopolitics and emergence of diverse threats in attention. By prioritising research and development funding and promoting international MDA partnerships, India can position itself as the global leader in maritime security.

India's Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) concepts



PADMALOCHAN **DASH**

must undergo a significant transformation, shifting from traditional water surface-centric initiatives to embrace space-based monitoring and AI-driven Operational Technology (OT) systems. The focus on maritime security needs to extend beyond territorial limitations to encompass regional and global perspectives, recognizing the heightened competition in seas. Given India's substantial glob-

al role in maritime affairs, effective MDA models must be prioritized as a fundamental component of the maritime security outlook. This evolution is essential to proactively address emerging threats, enhance surveillance capabilities, and foster international collaboration in securing maritime interests.

In the context of multilateral Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) cooperation, the Maldives' geographical proximity to China's expansion goals and the rising maritime incidents underscore the critical need for vigilant maritime monitoring. Proactively addressing China's increasing influence in the South China Sea is imperative. Given its status as the largest stakeholder and the key actor in the Indian

Ocean Region, India must take the lead in institutionalizing MDA. Recognising the inadequacy of limited national capacity to protect vast water expanses, this necessitates fostering multilateral cooperation, promoting inclusivity, and leveraging sophisticated technologies. As one of the largest maritime operators strategically positioned in the region, India should formalize a framework for multilateral MDA cooperation involving relevant parties. This initiative can facilitate access to robust yet affordable MDA resources, while also fostering intelligence sharing and joint exercises to collectively address diverse maritime security challenges. India has demonstrated a strong commitment to

enhancing its Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) capabilities, particularly in the aftermath of the "26/11" attacks. Notable initiatives, such as the National Marine Domain Awareness (NMDA) project and the collaboration with France on the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) satellite constellation, highlight India's proactive efforts to create an integrated MDA network. To ensure a cohesive and successful MDA approach, there must be a focus on establishing a specialised coordination body, conducting regular audits, and evaluating past initiatives. Recognizing the dynamic nature of maritime threats, the involvement of multiple stakeholders and adaptability to evolving scenarios are emphasized, contributing to the

resilience and effectiveness of the MDA framework. Integrating current unmanned technology with human intelligence transforms marine security. India can lead maritime security by integrating these technology into marine plans faster. Real-time threat identification, thorough monitoring, vessel vetting, due diligence, and AI insights to optimise the MDA framework are required. Technology, especially AI, improves Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) for countries like India. For early threat detection, deliberate investments in cutting-edge surveillance and intelligence technology like ASVs, UAVs, and UUVs are necessary. Autonomous systems like ASVs, UAVs, and UUVs improve reaction and marine

security. Initiatives such as the National Command, Control, Communication, and Intelligence (NC3I) network demonstrate the scope of MDA operations. Succinct and adaptable MDA is the result of periodic revisions in response to emerging threats and the active participation of experts from diverse disciplines. For autonomous system integration and preparation against emerging threats, a specialised task force, learning processes, and technology infrastructure updates are essential. It is imperative that collaborations be formed with academic institutions, research centres, and technological firms. Cybersecurity and interoperability assure MDA unmanned system security

and efficiency. Regular cybersecurity audits strengthen MDA systems against evolving cyber threats. India must modernise its technology and form new cybersecurity alliances to handle marine security issues. Since the "26/11" event, India's Navy and MDA have increased maritime security initiatives, demonstrating a commitment to securing the whole maritime domain. Recent successes in right-time detection and fast eradication of varied marine threats highlight MDA's naval operating concept evolution. Investment in naval personnel training and cutting-edge technology would help the Indian Navy meet MDA goals.

*(The Author is working with an Independent Think Tank; views are personal)*



MONEY MATTERS

## CM Stalin visits Spain, showcases TN for investments

Chief Minister M K Stalin, in his visit to Spain to attract investments, has urged investors of the European nation to pick Tamil Nadu for their investments in areas including biotechnology, life sciences and pharmaceuticals. Addressing a meet of business leaders in Madrid on January 29, Stalin outlined the similarities between the south Indian state and Spain. Similar to the bullfight in Spain, Jallikattu is a very popular bull taming sport in Tamil Nadu, an official release here quoted him as saying. Spanish companies including Rocca, Gestamp, Gamesa and Urbaser were operating out of Tamil Nadu. Over 130 Fortune 500 companies establishing their projects in the state is proof of Tamil Nadu's investment friendly environment. Tamil Nadu is a leading state in India in various sectors, including manufacture of vehicles, e-vehicles, electronics and leather products. The state is also a leader in Information technology, renewable energy, and healthcare services.



## Sebi bans agri-investment platform Growpital

Cracking the whip on unauthorised investment schemes by an agricultural investment platform, Sebi has barred Farm Tech Silo LLP, also known as Growpital, related entities and their directors from collecting money from investors and prohibited them from the securities market till further directions. Also, they have been directed to "cease and desist" from floating any collective investment scheme (CIS) directly or indirectly in any manner. Additionally, they have been stopped from collecting money from partners or investors through existing schemes. These directions will be in force until further orders, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in an interim order passed on Monday. In its probe, the regulator found that Growpital is a platform that is offering various investment plans to the public in the agricultural sector.



## Dr Reddy's Lab reports 11% rise profit at Rs 1,379 crore

Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Tuesday posted an 11 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 1,379 crore for the third quarter ended December 2023, driven by higher market share in existing products in North America and growth in Europe. The Hyderabad-based drug major had reported a net profit of Rs 1,247 crore for the October-December quarter of the last fiscal. Consolidated revenue rose to Rs 7,215 crore in the third quarter of the current financial year as against Rs 6,770 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing. "We delivered another quarter of highest ever sales and robust financial performance aided by new products performance and base business market share gain in the US, new products launch momentum and strong performance in Europe," Dr Reddy's Co-Chairman and MD GV Prasad said.



# India seeks investment assurance from Switzerland

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has sought investment commitments from Switzerland under the proposed free trade agreement with the four-nation EFTA bloc, a top government official said on Tuesday. The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. The official also said negotiations for the pact are at an advanced stage and both sides are trying to conclude it fast. The investment commitment would help India balance Switzerland's decision to remove customs duties on most of its goods. When asked if this move would have an implication on the agreement, the official said that it can be bargained against many other things. "We have told them that we will be requiring commitments on investments so that this zero duty on goods can balance more investments and more



manufacturing in the country," the official said. The Indian negotiators are also trying to see how the Swiss companies can come and manufacture in India so that it gives a boost to Make in India programme and also helps in raising the domestic manufacturing power. When asked about the demand for duty cut in gold by some EFTA members, the official said "that is part of it, but our major focus is on non-gold issues". Switzerland is the largest source of gold imports, with

about 41 per cent share during April-October this fiscal, followed by the UAE (about 13 per cent) and South Africa (about 10 per cent). The precious metal accounts for over 5 per cent of the country's total imports. Switzerland has large historical accumulations of gold and it primarily refines imported gold. In 2022-23, India's imports from Switzerland stood at US\$ 15.79 billion, in stark contrast to its exports of US\$ 1.34 billion, leading to a substantial trade deficit of US\$

14.45 billion. India received about US\$ 10 billion foreign direct investments from Switzerland during April 2000 and September 2023. India and EFTA have been negotiating the pact, officially dubbed as Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), since January 2008 to boost economic ties. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal recently held a meeting with Swiss Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin in Mumbai. Parmelin, in a social media post on X, had said that officials are working round the clock to settle last details so that it can be signed as soon as possible. "At the last-minute invitation of my Indian counterpart @PiyushGoyal, I travelled directly from the WEF in Davos to Mumbai/India. After 16 years of negotiations, we found balanced solutions to the main open issues of the EFTA-India trade agreement," Parmelin had said.

## Tata Motors races past Maruti to become most valuable auto firm by mcap

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors on Tuesday became the country's most valuable auto company by market capitalisation, combining the company's valuation as well as the DVR shares, racing past Maruti Suzuki India. Shares of Tata Motors climbed 2.19 per cent to settle at Rs 859.25 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it jumped 5.40 per cent to reach its 52-week high of Rs 886.30. Tata Motors Ltd - DVR stock gained 1.63 per cent to Rs 572.65. However, shares of Maruti dipped 0.36 per cent to Rs 9,957.25. The combined market valuation of Tata Motors (Rs 2,85,515.64 crore) and Tata Motors Ltd - DVR (Rs 29,119.42 crore) stood at Rs 3,14,635.06 crore. This was Rs 1,576.56 crore more than Maruti's Rs 3,13,058.50 crore valuation. Tata Motors was the biggest gainer among the Sensex and Nifty firms. DVR (Differential Voting Rights) shares are like ordinary equity shares but with differential voting rights. Companies issue DVRs for several reasons such as prevention of a hostile takeover and to bring in retail investors.

## Will share PM GatiShakti with neighbouring countries: DPIIT Secretary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will share the PM GatiShakti initiative with some of the neighbouring countries free of cost as the infrastructure planning tool is helping in effective planning and implementation of projects, a top government official said on Tuesday. The initiative was launched to develop an integrated infrastructure to reduce logistics costs. Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh said that as India has rolled out the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in seven countries, the country similarly wants to showcase and integrate the PM GatiShakti initiative also. "We want to showcase it and roll out and integrate and provide it free of cost to some of our neighbouring countries and eventually to other countries in the global south as a part of India's commitment to the global south," Singh said here at a function. Over 1,400 layers of data,



including those related to land, ports, forests, and highways, are available on the PM GatiShakti portal. He also said that the department is working to enhance the usage of the portal for area planning in all the districts of India. Area planning includes development of certain types of infrastructure around projects like a dam or a port. "The idea is to ensure some kind of planning of infrastructure for that entire hinterland linked to that investment. That is an exercise we have just started. We intend to roll it out across the districts so that all the District Collectors have access to these data of this platform," Singh said.

## Modi to address auto sector players on Feb 2

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the participants of Bharat Mobility global exhibition on February 2, a senior official said on Tuesday. The three-day show will begin on February 1 at Bharat Mandapam here. The exhibition aims to showcase India's strengths to the global market and position the country as an international player across industries. With over 800 exhibitors from 50 countries, the expo will highlight cutting-edge technologies and breakthroughs in mobility. The 28 leading vehicle OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) that would participate include Ashok Leyland, Ather Energy, Honda, Hyundai, and BMW. The features of the expo will include specialised exhibitions such as auto show (including electric and hybrid vehicles), ACMA Automechanika, large-scale tyre exhibition, urban mobility solutions (two wheelers/e-bikes, drones), EV Infra Pavilion (including charging stations and battery swapping) and other energy sources like hydrogen in the mobility landscape.

## Sensex declines over 1% on heavy selling in Reliance, others

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices declined on Tuesday, a day after recording sharp gains, with the BSE Sensex falling over 1 per cent due to selling in Reliance Industries, ITC and Bajaj Finance. The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 801.67 points or 1.11 per cent to settle at 71,139.90. During the day, it plummeted 865.85 points or 1.20 per cent to 71,075.72. The Nifty declined 215.50 points or 0.99 per cent to 21,522.10. Among the Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance fell by 5.03 per cent after its December quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.



Titan, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, Reliance Industries, ITC and NTPC were among the other major laggards. Tata Motors, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, Power Grid, Tech Mahindra and Tata Consultancy Services were the gainers. "Selling intensified towards the fag end as investors further

slashed their positions in key stocks ahead of the Budget while weakness in several Asian indices also contributed to the overall fall. "With just one day left for the Budget, investors want to play it safe although there would not be any big-bang announcements by the government in this budget. Focus would rather shift to US Fed policy but indications are that it may maintain the status quo on interest rates, which could unsettle investors further," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.53 per cent while smallcap index climbed 0.18 per cent.

## KP Green Engineering files draft papers for SME IPO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

KP Green Engineering Ltd, part of the Gujarat-based KP Group, has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise about Rs 175 crore through an initial public offering (IPO). This could be the largest IPO by a small and medium enterprise since the SME platform was launched by exchanges in 2012. The issue also marks the second offering from the KP Group after KP Energy Ltd came out with its maiden public issue in 2016. The IPO of KP Green Engineering is entirely a fresh issue of up to 1.31 crore shares with no offer of sale component, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP)

filed last week. Post-IPO, the company's shares will be listed on the BSE SME platform. Proceeds from the fresh issuance worth Rs 156.14 crore will be utilised to partially finance the capital expenditure towards setting up a new manufacturing unit to expand its current production capabilities, expand the current product portfolio, and for general corporate purposes. According to market sources, the issue size of KP Green Engineering is expected to be anywhere between Rs 150 crore and Rs 175 crore. Before this, Spectrum Talent Management Ltd, with an issue size of Rs 105.14 crore hit the capital markets in June 2023.

## Amit Shah launches Rs 225 crore projects to computerise ARDBs, RCSs in cooperative sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday launched computerisation programmes for agriculture and rural development banks and Registrar of Cooperative Societies at an estimated cost of Rs 225 crore and said the digitisation efforts will help improve efficiency, transparency and accountability in their working. The launch of computerisation projects for Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs) and Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCSs) of states and Union Territories was organised by Ministry of Cooperation in collaboration with National Cooperative



Development Corporation (NCDC). Shah said the projects will modernise and enhance the efficiency of the cooperative sector by bringing the entire cooperative ecosystem on a digital platform. "This will help in improving transparency and accountability in the cooperative sector," the minister said. Shah said the total cost of

computerisation will be Rs 225 crore, of which Rs 95 crore would be spent on computerisation of RCSs. The computerisation of ARDBs will help farmers get medium and long-term loans, the minister said, adding the long-term finance was necessary to modernise the agriculture sector. Shah said the plan is to link these ARDBs to PACSs to facilitate long-term loans to farmers smoothly. Under the first initiative, as many as 1,851 units of ARDBs in 13 states/UTs will be computerised and linked to National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) through a common national software.

## Construction equipment sales rise 30% to 36,055 units: ICEMA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's construction equipment industry has witnessed a 30 per cent rise in sales to 36,055 units in the third quarter of the current fiscal, a report said on Monday. As per the data released by Indian Construction Equipment Manufacturers Association (ICEMA), the construction equipment (CE) industry had sold 27,817 units in the third quarter of the previous fiscal.

"Of the overall sales for Q3 FY24, 33,135 units were sold domestically and 2,920 units were exported," it said. Sales of material handling equipment rose 46 per cent to 4,482 units and concrete equipment sales grew 43 per cent to 3,840 units during the period. Road construction and material processing equipment sales stood at 1,958 and 688 units, registering an increase of 38 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively.

## Steel makers expect focus on infra spend, imports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Steel makers expect continued focus on the infrastructure spending, push to domestic manufacturing, and measures to check rising imports in the upcoming 2024-25 Union Budget. In the 2023-24 Budget, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a capex of Rs 10 lakh crore for infrastructure development. "The government should continue the focus on increasing the spend on infrastruc-

ture. It should also work on further improving the cost of doing business and the ease of doing business," Tata Steel CEO & MD T V Narendran said. The industry also expects the government to take some measures to check rising imports as dumping of steel in India can hurt the profitability of players and the investment plans of the steel industry, he said. Dilip Oommen, CEO, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India, said the industry expects the Budget to reflect the gov-



ernment's continued dedication to economic growth. "We urge a stronger focus on fair trade policies such as anti-dumping measures, raw material security, infrastructure investment, competitive financial ecosystem, R&D incen-

tives, export promotion, skill development, and environmental sustainability," Oommen said. Rationalising the taxation on key inputs like natural gas, coking coal, electricity, and iron ore can help the Indian steel industry to be more sustainable. Further push to domestic manufacturing will not only provide a clear advantage to attract investment and create jobs but also make India globally competitive in the long run to emerge as a viable alternative to China, he said.

# Time is right to invest in Indian aviation sector: Experts

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

This is the right time to enter the Indian aviation sector as the industry ecosystem is developing, Singapore-based consultants said. Joshua Ng, a director at the Singapore-based Alton Aviation Consultancy, along with fellow director and aviation consultant Alan Lim, told PTI that the aviation sector in India was abuzz with expansion activities. "There are a lot of tailwinds in the Indian aviation sector. We do see a lot of activities and it is just a start," said Ng, highlighting

the Indian government's USD 24 billion in incentives being provided for over a dozen industries in the coming years. Ng and Lim spoke with PTI on Monday following the recent Airbus-Tata Group partnership to manufacture helicopters, along with other expansion activities such as manufacturing plants and airports. "A lot of investment is required in India and FDI is flowing in," said the Singaporean aviation expert, citing the progress of Singapore Airlines and Tata Group joint programme to rebuild Air India.



The Indian private sector is also putting in money in the aviation sector. "India has a lot of congested cities and Urban Air

Mobility (UAM) has the potential to succeed in those areas. Transportation demand is going to grow and intra-city trips are going to

create sufficient demand to build a UAM market. Overall, it is a very exciting growth story for both traditional and new technologies in aviation," Lim said during the interaction on Monday. American and European Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are seeking partnerships and contract manufacturing in Asia that offer lower cost factories and manpower, which India can supply, according to the consultants. India produces 1.5 million engineers every year and the country has a lot of "excellent engineering centres", widely

preferred by OEMs. However, both consultants said they feel a lot of Indian industries will start from the basics. "The aviation industry is complex with a high-level of safety. There is a long-drawn learning phase to overcome the challenge of designing and manufacturing parts to aviation quality and standards. The industry needs to start from basics like contract manufacturing," Lim said. "However, India has the right ingredients to make things happen and they are going in the right direction," added Ng.

## FM to address RBI board on Feb 12

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to address the Reserve Bank of India's central board on February 12 and highlight key points of the interim Union Budget. Sitharaman will present the sixth Budget on February 1, where she will outline the roadmap for 2024-25. In the post-budget meeting, the finance minister will address the board members and talk about announcements made in the interim Budget 2024-25. The meeting is being held shortly after the Budget session, as well as the last session of the 17th Lok Sabha, which comes to an end on February 9.

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA**  
Dist. Panchayat Raj Engineer, Medak  
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NIT No: HD/Tender/251-296/2023-24, Dt.29.01.2024.  
Out of the total (46) works; Buildings, DC Roads, Compound Wall and other civil works under DMF, GADA and MPLADS grants in undesignated With total estimate cost of Rs.387.51 Lakhs. Tender schedules can be had from 05.02.2024 to 07.02.2024 and Bid Submission and open on 09.02.2024. Other details can be had from Division Office at Medak. Email Id: esppriv602110@gmail.com. Office Land Line number: 08452-222595  
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**e-Procurement Tender Notice**  
MT No. 323-SER/RO PR/2023-24, Date:29.01.2024  
No. of Works (06): Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the works (06 No.s) sanctioned under PMGSY, CDP Akshad AC 2023-24, MPR 2022-23 in PR Region, Adilabad. Total Est Cost Rs 824.06 Lakhs. Tender Documents will be available in e-procurement market place from 01.02.2024 and will be available for (07) days from the date of Publishing. Further details can be obtained from e-procurement market place on www.tender.telangana.gov.in  
DPR R.O. No.: 811-SPCL-AGENCY/NDVT/12023-24 Sd/- Regional Officer, PR Region Office, Adilabad

**SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF T.S. LTD.**  
Tender Notice No. 03/2023-24 (Paper Notification).  
Tenders are invited from experienced contractors for the following works: 1. Extension of supply to 40 Nos. C&I 11kV, last date of submission of 258-KV Changanacherry in Kasam Division of Habsguda Circle. (Spec.No:04/23-24) General Category; 2. Extension of supply to 70 Nos. C&I, 7 Nos. C&I, 3 Nos. Cat-VI and 1 No. Cat-VII for electrification of 2BHK Boudipal in Habsguda Division of Habsguda Circle. (Spec.No:05/23-24) General Category. Issue of tender from Dt: 31.01.2024 from 10:30 hrs, last date of issue tender Dt: 07.02.2024 up to 17:00 hrs, Last date of receipt tender on Dt: 08.02.2024 up to 13:00 hrs and opening of tender on Dt: 08.02.2024 at 15:30 hrs. For further details, please visit www.spsouthernpower.com. Sd/- Divisional Engineer, R.O. No.: 9879-PRCL-AGENCY/NDVT/12023-24 Dt: 30.01.2024 Construction, Habsguda Circle.



# ‘Hrithik’s first movie convinced me to try my hand at this business’

SHIKHA DUGGAL

**F**ighter is a movie about loving your country. It boasts remarkable visual authenticity, skillfully fusing real-world aircrafts with what must be computer-generated models in the most difficult parts. Actor Akshay Oberoi tells us

Actor Akshay Oberoi, who is currently gaining much accolades for his recent project *Fighter*, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about working with A-list celebrities like Hrithik and Deepika, observations of the high-budget film, and more.

all about the glossy armor in the movie and more, so read it to get more such little tidbits.

“They are big stars for a reason,” Akshay, the *Piku* star, said in response to *The Pioneer’s* question regarding his collaborations with A-list celebrities like Hrithik and Deepika. “Personally, I have been a fan of Hrithik Roshan since I was a young child. When I was twelve years old, I had a dream of becoming an actor but I didn’t know how to pursue it because I was living in America. Actually, Hrithik’s first movie convinced me to try my hand at this business. When I travelled to India, Hrithik had a big impact on me.”

Conversely, he was co-starring with Deepika Padukone, a stunning woman, and he recounted a fond moment with her from the fighter sets, stating, “Deepika and I had shared screen time before. It was in *Piku*! I was acting with Deepika even though I was only there for a minute. Thus, in addition to Deepika, I have appeared on films alongside even greater celebrities like Anil Kapoor. Thus, it was destined that I would have had a significant part in the film *Fighter* alongside celebrities that I have already met. This movie also stars Anil Kapoor. You know what I mean?”

He went on, “Although I’m not sure how much of an impact my film will actually have, I believe that by creating an aerial actioner centered around air force fighters, we have raised the profile of Indian cinema. My director has shown me that this is not the case. Outsiders usually say, ‘Look at

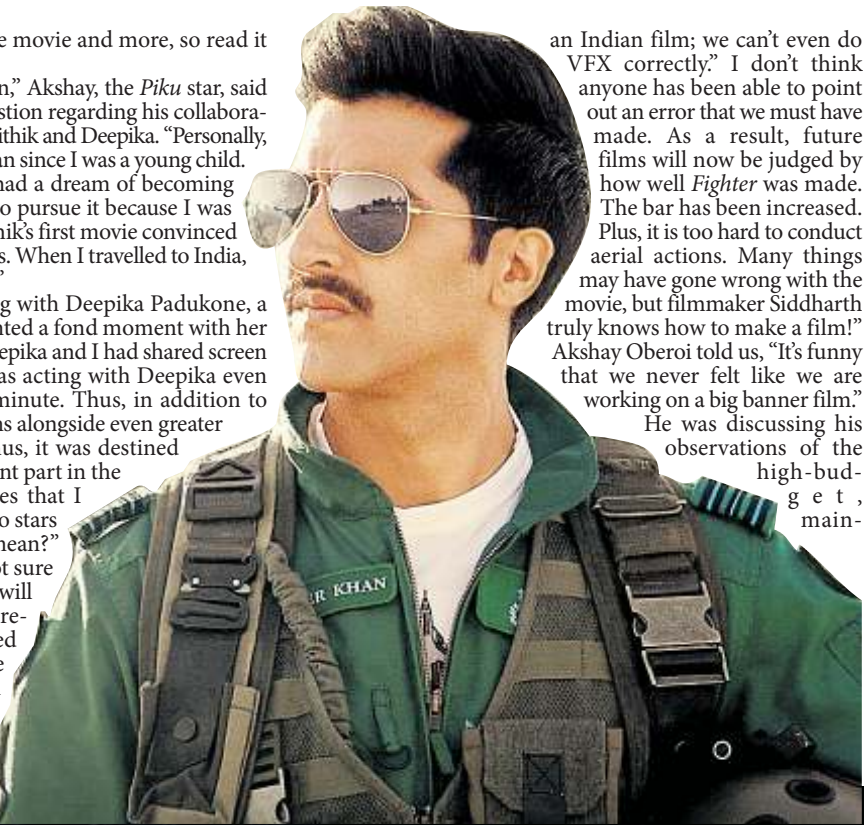
an Indian film; we can’t even do VFX correctly.’ I don’t think anyone has been able to point out an error that we must have made. As a result, future films will now be judged by how well *Fighter* was made. The bar has been increased. Plus, it is too hard to conduct aerial actions. Many things may have gone wrong with the movie, but filmmaker Siddharth truly knows how to make a film!”

Akshay Oberoi told us, “It’s funny that we never felt like we are working on a big banner film.” He was discussing his observations of the high-budget main-

stream extravaganza film like this as well as what it feels like to be surrounded by a grandeur of this magnitude. “The director’s idea was undoubtedly grand, but he also managed to make everyone on the sets feel completely at ease, even our starring leads. My co-star Karan Singh Grover and I were kidding the other day about how we couldn’t even remember when we shot this movie! Siddharth should be credited with making the film a financial hit. Additionally, it was really cool to visit the airports, have pictures taken with the air force personnel, and act like a pilot—for me, it was like living out a dream. But I never experienced the weight of a major motion picture! Since Hrithik and Deepika are such modest people, there was never any tension between their egos. Because of their very modest approaches, the movie came across as a serious endeavor.”

Following up on his earlier response, he said, “We shot it at the airport as much as we could. Our guidance was excellent! The air force was continually keeping a watch on us. We were nicely photographed by the DOP. The script writer couldn’t have made a mistake on this one either, since the screenwriter’s father was an Air Force member. He was an expert on this planet. If not, it’s hard to act like I’m piloting a fighter jet. Or circling the jet cockpit while in midair. It was not an ordinary deed, especially with a helmet on.”

Finally, he said, “It would have been incredibly devastating for us if the Indian Air Force hadn’t enjoyed this movie. I recall how they were all able to relate to the movie so well at its initial premiere and thought it was so real. They were moved, and they were able to remember, through my character, what had actually occurred to their squadron leader in real life.”



# ‘Whatever I am today is because of Mahesh Bhatt’

Actor Imran Zahid, who is all set to portray the character of IPS officer Dr. Ram Gopal Naik in his biopic, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about playing a real-life character, his admiration for filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt, and more.

TEJAL SINHA

**N**o one, especially an outsider, would have ever imagined being noticed by one of the most legendary filmmakers of all time—Mahesh Bhatt. And it was the same with actor Imran Zahid.

Hailing from Bokaro Steel City in Jharkhand, having the privilege of being associated with the filmmaker has been no less than a lifetime-cherished moment for him. Always keen on art and having aspirations, Imran came down to Delhi and did theatre with some renowned personalities. But the twist to his journey came when he met Mahesh Bhatt in Dubai, and to his surprise, the *Dil Hai Ki Maanta Nah* filmmaker told him, “You should become an actor”. Damn! And once he was back in Bombay, he recalls, “Mahesh *Sahab* asked me to send a few of my pictures. I called a friend who had earlier worked with the Times of India. When I sent him the pictures, he said he didn’t want any pose pictures but natural ones. Later, we talked about something that he wanted to work on. There was a JNU leader, Chandrashekhar Prasad. He was known as Chandu. We were supposed to do a film on him, who was killed, and we announced that film. It became the talk of the town, and I was also featured in many publications stating the upcoming new face, but unfortunately, the film got so controversial that his own party people were like, ‘Stop this film’, and we had to drop it. And Mahesh Ji was like, ‘You’ll have to face it all in life; you reach your destination, and things change. And this industry is all about it.’”

So undeniably, it was Mahesh Bhatt who played a major role in shaping his journey as an actor. And then recently, it was *Ab Dilli Durr Nah* that turned out to be a big dream for both Imran Zahid and Mahesh Bhatt.

Well, now the actor is all set to portray the character of IPS officer Dr. Ram Gopal Naik in his biopic. The film will high-

light his pivotal role in apprehending criminals, his receipt of a gallantry award for rescuing a kidnapped child, and his involvement in high-profile cases such as the CBSE Paper leak and the extradition of Sanjeev Chawla, a cricket bookie who had been a fugitive for two decades,



to India from the United Kingdom.

Sharing his feelings on playing Dr. Ram Gopal on-screen, the actor gushes, “It’s not inspiring to do a film that people know but, most importantly to do a film that people need to be aware

of. And it is intriguing to hear such real stories. His simplicity was something we thought would be interesting.”

Inspired by the IPS officer’s life, the film also tries to emphasise Naik’s investigative process and dedication to law enforcement by showcasing his tactics and impactful work in a variety of hard cases. His journey from an MBBS graduate to joining the police force in 2002 will be the main focus.

Basically, according to him, “Whenever you portray a living person in a performance, it becomes an authentic portrayal of their experiences: their motivations, the challenges they confronted, and how they overcame their individual struggles.”

Acclaimed for his performances in notable plays such as *The Last Salute*, based on Iraqi journalist Muntadhar Al-Zaidi’s book, and several adaptations of Mahesh Bhatt’s films, Imran, as we head towards the end of the chat, grateful to Mahesh Bhatt for his journey, states, “He was the one *jin-hone meri ungli pakadke mujhe aaj yahan tak leke aaya hai* (who has brought me here today by holding my finger). Whatever I am today is because of Mahesh Bhatt. Who would have ever dreamt of a person from Bokaro getting to work with the man behind *Aashiqui*? We only used to listen to words like Bollywood’s godfather and a person like him took me under my wing. Mahesh Bhatt *mere harr Kadam mai mere saath hai* (He is with me every step of the way). Even in *Ab Dilli durr nah*, he made a special appearance.”

## Colour analysis theory and how does it affect Indian Skin

**I**n the sphere of beauty and fashion, the concept of colour analysis plays a pivotal role in helping individuals make informed choices about their clothing, makeup, and overall aesthetic. While this theory has gained widespread recognition, understanding its nuances, especially in the context of Indian skin tones, showcases a fascinating journey of self-discovery and empowerment.

### COLOUR ANALYSIS THEORY DEMYSTIFIED:

At its core, color analysis theory is about identifying the undertones in an individual’s skin and using that knowledge to enhance their natural beauty through complementary color choices. It revolves around the three main undertones: cool, warm, and neutral. These undertones influence the way colors interact with one’s skin, hair, and eyes, determining which shades harmonize best with individual tones.

### INDIAN SKIN TONES AND COLOUR HARMONY:

India, with its rich diversity, boasts a spectrum of skin tones, making color analysis an invaluable tool for every individual. Understanding the undertones prevalent in Indian skin—which can range from warm golden to cool olive—is essential to curating a wardrobe and beauty regimen that complements, rather than clashes.

For warmer undertones commonly found in Indian skin, earthy hues, warm reds, and vibrant oranges tend to be more harmonious. On the other hand, cooler undertones may find jewel tones, blues, and purples, more flattering. The key is not just to follow trends but to tailor them to individual undertones, allowing the true essence of one’s beauty to shine through.

### THE ROLE OF CONCEALER IN COLOUR THEORY:

Among the myriad beauty products available, concealer takes center stage in the realm of color theory. It’s not just about hiding imperfections; it’s about using the right tones to balance and enhance facial features.

### HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT CONCEALER FOR YOU?

Concealers need to be selected

according to their use case—for instance, to cover pigmentation, a concealer should match your skin tone exactly. But if you wish to highlight certain areas, a concealer that’s a shade lighter than your natural skin tone would be preferable. For contouring, pick a shade or two darker than your natural skin tone. But most importantly, the concealer should always match your skin’s undertone. This is why the selection of an appropriate shade becomes instrumental in neutralizing any discoloration or addressing the challenge of dark circles, thereby establishing a flawless canvas for a smooth makeup look.

Look for concealers made for specific Indian skin undertones and not just classified according to fair, light, or deep. Many makeup brands, especially homegrown ones, are now formulating concealers that specifically target different undertones.

Using a concealer with the wrong undertone can lead to a less-than-ideal result in your makeup application. The undertone of a concealer is crucial in achieving a natural and seamless look, as it can impact how well the product blends with your skin tone. There are generally three undertones: warm (yellow or golden), cool (pink or blue), and neutral.

### IF YOU USE A CONCEALER WITH THE WRONG UNDERTONE:

**Color mismatch:** The concealer may not blend seamlessly with your skin, resulting in a noticeable difference in color between the concealed area and the rest of your complexion. This can draw attention to the blemish or under-eye area instead of camouflaging it.

**Unnatural appearance:** A concealer with the wrong undertone may create an unnatural or ashy appearance on the skin. For example, using a concealer with a cool undertone on warm-toned skin can make the concealed area look overly pale or gray. Similarly, applying a warm-toned con-

cealer on a cool-toned person will make them look orange.

**Highlighting rather than concealing:** The purpose of concealer is to conceal imperfections or dark circles by matching your skin tone. Using the wrong undertone may draw attention to the area you intended to conceal, making it more noticeable instead.

In this context, the significance of concealer extends beyond its cosmetic function, becoming an essential component in the larger narrative of color theory. It’s not just about achieving a seamless complexion but about leveraging the power of color to accentuate and complement individual beauty. The right concealer, chosen with an understanding of one’s undertones, becomes a transformative tool, contributing to a refined and enhanced appearance.

### EMBRACING INDIVIDUALITY AND BREAKING BEAUTY NORMS:

Color analysis, along with the careful selection of the right concealer, encourages a departure from one-size-fits-all beauty standards. Embracing individuality becomes a celebration of diversity rather than a deviation from the norm. Getting your base right is crucial in makeup application, as it sets the tone for the entire look. Applying the principles of color theory to your concealer choice is paramount to achieving a flawless, no-makeup makeup look. If this aspect goes wrong, the entire makeup can look off, emphasizing the importance of selecting concealers with the correct undertones for your skin.

As the color analysis theory continues to gain prominence in the beauty sphere, its impact on diverse skin tones is unmistakable. By understanding undertones and thoughtfully choosing products like concealer, individuals can not only enhance their natural beauty but also contribute to a more inclusive and diverse beauty landscape. This can also be relevant in the context of the no-makeup makeup trend, where the goal is to create a subtle, natural look that enhances one’s features without appearing overly done. Achieving this look relies heavily on choosing products that seamlessly blend with the skin, and the right concealer plays a pivotal role in achieving a fresh, radiant complexion that appears effortlessly natural. Beauty, after all, is not confined to a specific standard – it is an ever-evolving, diverse spectrum that deserves to be celebrated in all its vibrant hues.

(The author, Harlin Sachdeva, is founder of House of Makeup.)







Srivani



Vyshnavi





Komal



Sonika



Tanusha



Amisha





Phanith,Vyshnavi,Renuka Chowdhury,Sravani and Vamsi



Former union minister Renuka Chowdhury, inaugurated the Mangala Gowri showroom at Jubilee Hills in Hyderabad. The interiors of the store follow the same philosophy and the stunning idol of Mangala Gowri adds to the spiritual charm of the space.

PHOTO: SV CHARY

Indel Money Limited, one of the fastest growing NBFC in the gold loan sector, announced the 4th public issue of Secured NCDs of face value of Rs.1,000 each. The Issue opens today, January 30, 2024 and closes on Monday, February 12, 2024. The issue includes a Base Issue Size for an amount of up to Rs.100 crores with an option to retain over-subscription up to Rs.100 crores aggregating up to Rs.200 crores. The Lead Manager to the Issue is Vivro Financial Services Private Limited. The funds raised through this issue will be used for the purpose of onward lending, financing and for repayment/prepayment of principal and interest on borrowings of the Company.



PHOTO: SV CHARY



Former Indian Women's cricket team captain Mithali Raj, along with producer Dil Raju, and actors Srikanth, Tharun, Nikhil, and Sudheer Babu, among the rest graced the curtain raiser event of the Celebrity Cricket Carnival Season-1 Australia, held at Hotel Dasappa, in Jubilee Hills.





PHOTO: SV CHARY

CareEdge Ratings unveils its Sovereign Rating Methodology for Public Consultation

CareEdge Ratings unveiled its detailed Sovereign Rating Methodology, which will be used to assess the credit profile of sovereign debt issuers on a global rating scale. A sovereign rating is an assessment of the sovereign's ability and willingness to service its debt in full and in a timely manner. CareEdge Sovereign Ratings methodology involves analysis under five broad pillars to determine a sovereign's creditworthiness. These pillars are Economic Structure & Resilience (25% weightage), Fiscal Strength (25% weightage), External Position & Linkages (16.67% weightage), Monetary & Financial Stability (16.67% weightage), and Institutions & Quality of Governance (16.67% weightage). The assessment of each of these pillars is based on the consideration of historical, current as well as expected future trends.

SAUDI TOURISM LAUNCHES LATEST 'SAUDI, WELCOME TO ARABIA' CAMPAIGN STARRING LIONEL MESSI

Saudi's national tourism brand 'Saudi Welcome To Arabia' has kicked off another global marketing campaign featuring football legend and Saudi Tourism Ambassador, Lionel Messi. Launching across key target markets in Europe, India and China, the "Go Beyond What You Think" campaign is anchored on consumer insights, which revealed there are still common misconceptions about the destination and invites audiences to experience the incredible and vibrant cultural transformation taking place across Saudi. Those that know Saudi are encouraged to share positive experiences and memories on TikTok and social channels using the bi-lingual hashtags #ShareYourSaudi.

Goodeebag Partners with VNR Vignana Jyothi Institute to advance sustainable waste management initiatives

Goodeebag Waste Management Pvt Ltd (Goodeebag) and VNR Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering & Technology have partnered to foster sustainable waste management practices on the college campus. Under the MOU, Goodeebag, a pioneer in promoting eco-friendly waste management solutions, will provide waste management services to VNR Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering & Technology for the effective management of dry waste on the campus. In turn, the institute will grant Goodeebag access to the dry waste generated within premises. Recognizing the significance of environmental awareness, both parties will collaborate on designing and implementing creative campaigns to educate students about the importance of sustainable waste management practices.

Samsung to make Galaxy AI available across 100 mn Galaxy devices

Samsung's flagship smartphones have done really well in India, where the premium segment is witnessing double-digit growth. Galaxy S23 series sales in India was 1.4 times compared to Galaxy S22 series, thanks to S23's powerful performance and epic camera capabilities. Galaxy S24 series takes a Hybrid approach to optimizing the AI user experience whether on-device or in the cloud, to provide a meaningful user experience with tangible benefits. With Galaxy S24, our first AI phone, we have opened a new era of AI phones and Galaxy AI enables users to break communication barriers, enhance their productivity, and unleash creativity like never before. Including Galaxy S24 series, they plan to bring Galaxy AI to approximately 100 million Galaxy mobile devices worldwide this year. This will also amplify mobile AI usage and bring benefits to Galaxy customers that cannot be found anywhere else.

Samsung R&D Institute, Noida signs MoU with IIT Kanpur

Samsung R&D Institute, Noida (SRI-Noida) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK) for a period of five years to focus on key growth areas that will include joint research projects by IIT Kanpur students, faculty and Samsung engineers, helping students become industry-ready. These research projects will span areas such as health, visual, framework and B2B security, and cutting-edge technology areas such as Generative AI and Cloud. Apart from research projects, the MoU seeks to provide opportunities for upskilling Samsung engineers in key technology areas such as AI, Cloud and other emerging technologies.

PHOTO: SV CHARY

ARCHIE



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

1	2		3	4	5
				6	
7			8		
			9		
10					
11				12	
			13		
14					15
16				17	
18				19	

ACROSS

1 Thief  
3 Tidy your hair with this  
7 Young woman  
8 A dairy product  
10 To turn round and round  
13 Gleam  
16 Truthful  
17 Bitter-tasting  
18 Thick cord  
19 Defeated

DOWN

1 Great anger  
2 A round wooden container with flat ends  
4 Above

SOLUTION

R	E	C	T	A	N	G	L	E		
A	P	R	I	L	E	G	R	O	U	P
N	O	K	H	S	E	A				
T	U	R	N	S	T	R	E			
I	C	S								
G	U	I	V	E	R					
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A	S	S	E	M	B	L	E			



Seerat Kapoor unveils her upcoming psychological thriller officially

In an unexpected development, admirers were excited and interested when Seerat Kapoor, made a historic declaration on social media. She is well-known for her adaptable acting abilities. In fact, she has given memorable performances in the past, and her participation in this new movie should provide for an interesting film experience. The actress formally revealed her next major endeavor with the release of an exquisite and alluring photo of herself on the set of her future film. The post teased the intensity and suspense that Seerat's admirers might expect from her new endeavor, in addition to showcasing her gorgeous side. A trustworthy source close to the film's production crew claims that Seerat will appear in the movie as a lead character, costarring with JD Chakravarthy and Agastya. Seerat Kapoor has been cast in the main part, and her mysterious figure is the center of both the story and the mystery. "She has a very distinct persona and has a crucial part to perform," the source continued. In the upcoming week, Seerat will begin recording her second schedule. The film is a comprehensive psychological thriller with multiple narrative twists and an engrossing storyline that will keep you on the

edge of your seat. There will be a lot of drama and unexpected incidents because of Seerat's demeanor. Fans are now curious about Seerat's character and potential storyline twists as a result of this discovery. The excitement around the project is increased by the fact that JD Chakravarthy and Naresh Agastya play major roles in the Telugu movie, which still has no title. The group's teamwork suggests a strong blend of skill, offering viewers an engaging cinematic experience. The confirmation of Seerat Kapoor's involvement and the fascinating teaser that the actress posted on social media have set the stage for an exciting cinematic trip, even though more facts about the project are still being kept under wraps. In addition, *Bhramakalapam 2* will include Seerat Kapoor. the *Bhramakalapam* prequel. Additionally, Seerat Kapoor will be seen in Dil Raju's *Aakasam Didi Vasthava* movie in a very important part.



PNS| HYDERABAD

Suhas, the promising young actor of Telugu cinema, has been making waves with his performances in films like *Colour Photo* and *Writer Padmabhushan*. He is now ready to entertain the audience with his upcoming film *Ambajipeta Marriage Band*. The film produced jointly by GA2 Pictures and director Venkatesh Maha's Mahayana motion pictures, the film is coming also under the banner of Dheeraj Mogilineni Entertainment. The film is directed by Dushyanth Katikineni and stars Shivani Nagaram in female lead role. It also stars Saranya Pradeep, Nithin, Goparaju Ramana, Jagadeesh Prathap Bhandari in key roles. After completing all pre release programs, the film is releasing on February 2nd.

Speaking to the media on Tuesday, actor Suhas shared, "Writer Padmabhushan's release in February last year received good success. We believe that this film will be successful. My son was born recently. It looks like it's going well. We prepared for the movie for many days, learning to play in a band. We practiced the scenes that we wanted to connect well in the story, even shaving my head twice

for it. We believed in this project for two years and worked hard. We believe and hope that two years of hard work will yield good results in the form of success. We shot in Amalapuram and Ambajipeta, areas I am familiar with due to the atmosphere and the slang. I have friends there, and I visit those areas with them when I have time. Dushyanth's story moved me. During the lockdown, we read the script many times and discussed which points were good. Believing in the story, I agreed to shave my head. Our entire team worked on the script with confidence."

The story of the film is inspired by what the director has witnessed in his life, with the rest being a result of cinematic liberty. The movie is set in 2007. The story of this movie is fun until twenty minutes before the interval, reveals Suhas, after which it intensifies.

"After watching until the interval, you will feel that the movie is well made. After that, the movie continues with an emotional tone. The films I have done so far are fun, but this movie runs on high emotions. When you watch the movie, you will wonder how I managed to act so emotionally. I have known director Dushyanth since I was acting in short films. He worked as an assistant director for *Dear Comrade* and movies. He had always said he would do a movie with me. My career as a comedian is good. I used to worry that my career would be ruined because I am not a traditional hero. He said, 'I have always thought that once the *Color Photo* movie comes out, you will be the hero with them.' Then we immediately started on this movie."

*Color photo* movie has no similarity or relation with *Ambajipeta Marriage Band*, clarifies the actor.

He further shares, "Although caste is mentioned in the movie, the actual theme of the movie is not about caste. The main point is the barriers created by ego between people. Sharanya and I are twins in the movie, and how events on our birthdays turn our lives around is a key aspect of this story. The audience will likely connect with most of the scenes, as some may feel like they have happened in their own lives too. My excitement for this script increased during production. Now, with Shekhar Chandra's BGM, it has reached another level. After seeing the final copy, I felt very satisfied. As the lead actor, I feel pressure during the release, especially when it's said that I carry the film on my shoulders. It's scary to hear that. The movie's title includes 'marriage band,' and though we consid-

Actor Suhas, who is coming up with his next film *Ambajipeta Marriage Band*, which is already making enough buzz in the filmy market, speaks to the Hyderabad media during the film's pre-release event, sharing more insights about the film.

ered different names for the town, we added Ambajipeta as it sounded good."

Recalling the experience of shooting in Amalapuram, he shares, "The local people treated us with incredible warmth. They refused to let us eat in a hotel even when we offered to pay, asking if they should charge us for shooting in their village. Their love left us speechless. Allu Aravind praised *Ambajipeta Marriage Band* as a good movie. When we met at the SIIMA celebrations, he appreciated my performance. His compliments made me very happy."

Suhas is confident that all the cast members will be receiving significant recognition from this movie. "Nitin is from Malayalam. Basically, I am shy about doing romantic scenes. Our directors often reprimand me. During this movie, when we were about to shoot a romantic scene, directors like Sandeep called Dushyanth, warning him that I might not perform well. 'Bro, when will you start doing romantic scenes properly in your career?' Dushyanth asked. The premiere of *Writer Padmabhushan* received positive feedback. Premieres are crucial for my movies. If early viewers like it, others will book tickets and go to the theaters. For actors like me, the response to premieres is very important. *Writer Padmabhushan* collected 400k in the US, marking my first US release. Now, *Ambajipeta Marriage Band* is releasing in 200 locations, and we are expecting good collections. I have known producer Dheeraj for a long time. He supported *Color Photo* and *Writer Padmabhushan* in time by providing theaters. My parents couldn't believe I was doing a film with Geetha Arts until they saw my name on the poster."

Suhas is currently focusing on selecting concepts that are new and different from the types of stories that he has done before. "I prefer to be known as an actor rather than just a hero. After my role as a villain in 'Hit 2', I received many similar offers, but I want to continue as a hero. It seems that when I get a bit older, I'll fit into more diverse characters. Right now, my youthful appearance limits the variety of roles I can take on," signs off the actor.



## 'Having such a big part as a heroine in my debut movie makes me happy'

PNS|HYDERABAD

Happy Ending is Yash Puri's next film. He gained recognition for his roles in ZEE5's web film *Alanti Sitrulu*, the comedy *Cheppalani Undhi*, and the newly released epic drama *Shaakuntalam*. With its intriguing promotional material, Kowshik Bheemidi's lighthearted coming-of-age story is creating a lot of attention. The movie is being financed by Yogesh Kumar, Sanjay Reddy, and Anil Pallala under the banners of Silly Monks Studios and Hamstech Films.

Apoorva Rao recently offered her thoughts on the film in an interview. "I was born and raised in Ongole, but my father worked for Reliance Oil Industries, thus our family relocated to Gujarat. I grew up there and then spent a few years living in Kuwait, where I finished my elementary schooling. I completed my degree and worked for a while after coming back to India, but I wasn't happy with my jobs. Despite my intense interest in movies, neither my parents nor friends encouraged me. My goal was to become an actor, so I enrolled in Hyderabad's Dadasaheb Phalke Film School a few years ago. I met a few assistant directors there who recommended me for *Happy Ending* auditions. They picked me as the heroine because they required a girl who could act and speak Telugu fluently," that was a fascinating discovery.

She went on, "I had tried out for a lot of movies before, but for whatever reasons, I never got offers. Despite being categorized as a youth pull

film, it is funny and enjoyable, providing a nice laugh about every ten minutes. The main theme of the movie is the hero's issue, which keeps him from achieving his goals. His attempts to resolve this issue are delightfully shown in the story, with fun additions from Jhansi and Ajay Ghosh."

She revealed the information while expressing her friendship with her co-star too, "Yash is a kind and amiable co-star. I had a great time working with him. His character in the film is cursed, causing issues for anyone who thinks about him. I pretend to be a girl, like Kamalini Mukherjee's character in *Anand*, who sympathizes with and encourages a boy. In the movie, I play a yoga instructor who is perceptive and mentally tough. Having such a big part as a heroine in my debut movie makes me happy."

Like Samantha, who selects diverse themes, or Srili, who is well-known for her dancing and performance, Apoorva also hopes to

bring her individuality to the screen as an actress. Her goal is to collaborate with filmmakers such as Shekhar Kammula and gain recognition as a talented performer. Sai Pallavi's career also serves as a motivation for her, driving her to create films that focus on content.

"Working on *Happy Ending* was a collaborative experience, as most of us were new to the industry," the actress continues. "Our recommendations were welcomed by Director Kaushik, thus it was a true joint effort. I dubbed because I think our voices make the characters come to life. But occasionally, voices like Chinmai's might work to your advantage."

Since Neeta Lulla is a guest lecturer at Yash's Hams Tech Institute, she designed their costumes. Neeta Lulla was brought in to help with the fashionable design since director Kaishik was inspired by Yash's portrayal of a modern makeup artist in the film.



## Arbaaz Khan roped in for Ashwin Babu's Telugu film

Ashwin Babu's new film with producer Maheshwar Reddy directed by debutant Apsar is Ganga Entertainment's Production no.1. While the movie is already on sets, Bollywood actor Arbaaz Khan of Chiranjeevi's *Jai Chiranjeeva* fame is onboard to play a key role in the movie. He joins the new schedule today. Arbaaz was last seen opposite Mollywood Superstar Mohan Lal in *Big Brother*. He is very excited about his comeback to Telugu with a crucial role in this project with Ashwin Babu.

Film producer Maheshwar Reddy recently said that the film is being made with a very

different story. "This is a new-age movie made with a peculiar story and screenplay. We're happy to associate with Arbaaz Khan garu in the first production. He plays a very crucial role in the film and joins the sets. Many talented actors and technicians are a part of our film. We shall reveal more details soon," he said.

Digangana Suryavanshi is playing the female lead beside Ashwin Babu and Hyper Adi will play a prominent role in this movie. Dasaradhi Shivendra, the cinematographer of *HanuMan* and *Mangalavaaram* is on board for this.

## 'It is my belief that Telugu cinema has never tried this idea of a psychological real-time game concept'

In the upcoming action thriller *Game On*, which is produced by Ravi Kasturi under the auspices of Kasturi Creations and Golden Wings Productions and presented by Sakshi Ravi, Geetanand and Neha Solanki will play substantial roles. The megaphone has been used by Dayanandh. The movie is scheduled to have a wide release on February 2. With the conclusion of all pre-release events, the movie is gaining traction and thanks to its positively received teaser, trailer, and songs. On Tuesday, producers Vivek Kuchibotla, actor Siva Balaji, and other guests graced the magnificent pre-game ceremony that the makers prepared.

Actor Kireeti declared, "I hold *Game On* in high regard. It was truly inspiring to work with Geetanand, Dayanadh, Neha Solanki, Kumar, and all the other actors and technicians. Dayanandh performed them flawlessly and with obvious references. I appreciate being a member of this incredible team. I hope this run of success continues because I was a gamer in popular movies like *Meeku Meere Maaku Meme*, *Zombie Reddy*, and now *Game On*."

"I'm so glad to be part of this beautiful film," actress Neha Solanki stated. "We appreciate Geetanand's kindness and wonderful co-starring role. We appreciate DOP Arvind for making us appear flawlessly flawed. I'm really pleased with each of us. The journey has been filled with many highs and lows."

"I would like to thank the guest Shiva Balaji and all the team members for coming here," said veteran actor Subhalekha Sudhakar. "Throughout our



lives, we are all engaged in some sort of game. I have a major part in the movie. Because the entire crew was so confident in the movie, I get worried when I watch the next generation. Bravo to them. God bless each and every one of you. We think *Game On* is a great movie, and we need your help. Visit theaters on February 2nd to see *Game On*."

"Many people told me that I needed support to get chances, and I literally faced a life-and-death situation," a tearful Geetanand remarked. "I asked God for one more opportunity, and now it's *Game On*. This is no low-budget movie; it is insanely good, and it features the flawless creations of 24 artisans. Many thanks to my producer Ravi Kasturi, who provided the team with unwavering support. He's always wanted our movie to be unique, and I think this will make him a success-

ful blockbuster producer. The cast of the movie is strong, and my brother and director Dayanandh achieved his goals with them unwavering. It is my belief that Telugu cinema has never tried this idea of a psychological real-time game. With its original storyline and numerous turns and turns, the movie will keep viewers interested all the way to the very end. We put a great deal of honesty, effort, and hard work into making the picture. When you watch *Game On*, I think you'll tell others about it."

Director Dayanandh goes on to conclude the media occasion saying, "Let me start by expressing my gratitude to everyone for the tremendous response. My parents also deserve some gratitude! I would want to express my gratitude to Ravi Kasturi Garu, my producer, for going above and beyond for the movie and allowing us to shoot in style. I have a lot of faith in the movie. I'm not sure why other filmmakers create movies; for me, it's always the audience and the material they enjoy. The storyline and story of the movie will be really original."

## Sundeep Kishan's Ooru Peru Bhairavakona releasing worldwide in theatres on Feb 16, 2024

The magical fantasy adventure film *Ooru Peru Bhairavakona*, starring the talented Sundeep Kishan is directed by VI Anand and produced on a lavish scale by Ramesh Danda under the Hasya Movies banner, while Anil Sunkara proudly presents it under AK Entertainments. Balaji Gutta is the co-producer of the film.

Respecting the decision of the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce and for the Welfare of the Telugu Film Industry, the makers opted out from the initially announced date.

*Ooru Peru Bhairavakona* will now hit the screens worldwide on February 16, 2024.

To announce the same the makers released a new poster in which Sundeep Kishan is seen holding a magic wand and the actresses are seen behind him. The film has generated an ample amount of buzz among the audience with the teaser, trailer and 2 chartbuster songs *Nijame Ne Chebuthunna*, and *Humma Humma*.

Kavya Thapar and Varsha Bollamma are the leading ladies in the film which has Raj Thota as the cinematographer. Chota K Prasad is the editor, while A Ramanjaneyulu is the art director. Dialogues are penned by Bhanu Bhogavarapu and Nandu Savirigana.





# Rohit is past his prime: Boycott

## India missed Kohli in Hyderabad Test

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England opener Geoffrey Boycott feels India skipper Rohit Sharma is "past his prime" and the hosts badly missed the peerless Virat Kohli in the series opener against England in Hyderabad. Despite enjoying a strong position after the first innings, India lost by 28 runs against England in the first Test to trail 0-1 in the five-match series. In the absence of Kohli, the onus was on Rohit to shoulder the responsibility in the batting department but he could only manage 24 and 39 in two innings as the Indian batting crumbled big time while chasing 231 on a fourth day pitch. And Boycott believes it is a golden chance for England to beat India in their own backyard after 12 years. "This India team are ripe for

the taking and England have a golden chance to be the first side to topple them on their own patch for 12 years," Boycott wrote in his column for "The Daily Telegraph." "India badly miss Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja has a hamstring injury and will not play the second Test. Their captain Rohit Sharma is nearly 37 and past his best. He makes pretty cameos but has scored only two Test hundreds at home in four years. They are also weak in the field. They dropped Ollie Pope on 110 and that cost them 86 runs. It lost them the match." The Indian spin trio of Ravichandran Ashwin, Jadeja and Axar Patel looked a pale shadow of themselves on a spin-friendly but not exactly dust-bowl of a Hyderabad wicket. The English batters came out with a perfect tactical ploy, using sweeps and reverse



sweeps to great effect to counter the threat. "England bamboozled India with their sweeps and reverse sweeps and to lose after taking a 190-run lead will be mind-blowing for India. It has never happened to them before on their own pitches where they thought they were invincible," Boycott wrote. India were dealt a big blow after the Hyderabad defeat as Jadeja and KL Rahul have been ruled out of the second Test starting in Visakhapatnam on February 2, due to injuries. While Jadeja sustained a hamstring injury during play on Day 4 of the first Test, Rahul complained of pain in his right quadriceps. Because of the balance that he brings into the playing, Jadeja's absence will be massive feels the legendary opener. "Jadeja is a huge blow. He is a great all-rounder, top bowler,

brilliant fielder and was their best batsman in the first Test. Kohli is their talisman. He is a magnificent batsman who averages 60 on Indian pitches but he also gives them great energy in the field. He is a big loss and England must make the most of it before he comes back for the third Test," Boycott wrote. He believes that England have India on the mat and could well be hosts' first series defeat in a dozen of years. "Once in a while a team are in the right place at the right time to clinch a big series win and England could be in that position right now in India. India are due a (series) defeat at home, the signs are good as they have lost Kohli, Jadeja, Mohammed Shami and Rishabh Pant and are playing opponents full of confidence after a remarkable win. England must take this rare opportunity," he further wrote.



## Deepti rises to joint second among bowlers in T20I rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India's Deepti Sharma rose one place to joint second while team-mate Renuka Singh also moved up a spot to 10th in the latest ICC women's T20I bowling rankings issued on Tuesday. Deepti's rise was largely due to South Africa spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba dropping three places from earlier second to fifth after one wicket from two games against Australia. Similarly, Pakistan's Sadia Iqbal took the joint second spot with Deepti after moving up one place. England's Sarah Glenn was at fourth after rising a rung. England spinner Sophie Ecclestone maintained a healthy lead at the top of the T20I rankings for bowlers. There was no change within the top 10 of the latest T20I rankings for all-rounders with Deepti retaining the fourth spot. Among batters, India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana remained at fourth to be the highest ranked Indian while Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma and Harmanpreet Kaur were unchanged at 13th, 16th and 17th respectively. Australia's Beth Mooney overtook compatriot Tahlia McGrath at the top of the T20I rankings for batters after a splendid innings against South Africa. Mooney has already scored two half centuries in the shortest format of the game in 2024, with her most impressive recent knock coming when she scored a brilliant 72 not out from just 57 deliveries in a Player of the Match performance against South Africa in Canberra.

# Selected spinners give us best opportunity to beat India: Stokes

PTI ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Long before debutant spinner Tom Hartley bowled England to a famous win in the first Test against India, skipper Ben Stokes had asserted that the tweekers picked for the series "give us the best opportunity" to humble the Asian giants in their own backyard. Playing in his first Test, left-arm spinner Hartley picked up seven wickets in the Indian second innings to script a 28-run victory for the tourists, who gambled with a lone specialist pacer in Mark Wood in Hyderabad. "I think sometimes inexperience can be looked at into a bit too much. There's no doubt that experience makes players feel more comfortable and settled, especially in this environment," Stokes said in an interview with 'JioCinema' when asked about his approach behind selecting spinners just before the start of the series opener. He added: "But the spinners we've selected on this tour are ones we think will give us the best opportunity to beat India. For me, it's not just about the spinners but understanding the talent they have and allowing them to go out there and express that talent and giving them the platform and the best



possible opportunity to not worry about the outcome too much and focus on what cricket actually is." In the run-up to the five-match series, there was a bit of chatter around the visitors' inexperienced spin unit, but Stokes is not one to read much into all these analysis. "As a bowler, your job is to think about taking wickets. As a batsman, it's about going out there and scoring runs. Anything more than that is overcomplicating it. I'm just taking away that fear and anxiety around the outcome." No team has beaten India in India since 2012, when England under

Alastair Cook emerged triumphant after losing the first Test, and that is not lost on Stokes. On the challenge of beating India in India, Stokes said, "India is a hard place to come and win a game, never mind a five-match series. It's been a mission for any team who've come here to turn over India. We understand that and respect that. "But again, it comes down to opportunity. We've got an amazing opportunity ahead of us. The squad we've picked from spinners to our seam bowlers to our batters, I think it's going to give us the best opportunity to win a series in India." Having led the country to some fines

wins since taking over Test captaincy from Joe Root, Stokes says he never aspired to be a leader. "It's something I never had any aspirations to do or really thought about too much, to be honest. I never really had too much responsibility around captaining or anything, either in age-group cricket or any other level. "I had a little taste of it with the Durham Academy. This opportunity presented itself to me and it was something I couldn't turn down. It's a role I have grown into, it's a role that I've really enjoyed. "I love everything that comes with it, the responsibility of looking after people from different types of angles. Whether it be out in the field or away from the field. Understanding different individuals and personalities, because in a team sport, you have got a lot of people and not everyone is the same. That's helped me mature as a person. When the discussion turned to 'bazball', he said the team tries to stay away from the term. "It's a phrase that was created by the media. Something that we try and stay away from. It just came from what we have managed to do over the last two years and how we've played.

## Injuries to Rahul, Jadeja cause major selection headache

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Untimely injuries to Ravindra Jadeja and K L Rahul have given a major selection headache to India as they seek to bounce back in the second Test against England, following a rare defeat at home. Both Jadeja and Rahul were among India's main performers in the first innings of the Hyderabad Test before England turned the tables on the formidable hosts. Jadeja sustained a hamstring injury while going for a quick single during the Hyderabad Test while Rahul has complained of pain in his right quadriceps. The duo's unavailability adds to the woes of the home side, which was clearly stunned by England's 'Bazball' strategy. Jadeja, with his exceptional all-round abilities, makes himself almost irreplaceable and Rahul too has been among India's standout batters across the ODI and Test format since returning from a surgery in September. Virat Kohli remains unavailable due to personal reasons and after a shock reverse in the series opener, the management will be missing him even more in Visakhapatnam where the second Test begins on Friday. Rohit Sharma and Rahul Dravid have enough options to choose from with selectors adding three players to the squad -- Sarfaraz Khan, Sourabh Kumar and Washington Sundar. A straightforward selection will be Rajat Patidar, who was also a part of the 15 in Hyderabad. He could take Rahul's place in the



middle-order with Kuldeep Yadav replacing Jadeja as the third spinner alongside R Ashwin and Axar Patel. Another option for India is to do what England did in the opener, play only one pacer for four spin choices. In that case, Mohammed Siraj could make way for Kuldeep and the team can accommodate either Sarfaraz Khan or Washington to solidify the middle-order. Sourabh, who also bowls left-arm spin like Jadeja and is a decent batter with a couple of first-class hundreds to his name, can be a dark horse in that race. The ACA-VDCA Stadium in Visakhapatnam has staged two Tests till date and the pitch is usually a batting friendly one at least in the first innings. Batting first at the venue back in 2019, India had racked up 502 in the first innings against South Africa with Mayank Agarwal getting a double hundred and Rohit scoring a brisk 176 in his first innings as a Test opener. Spin legend Anil Kumble feels wrist spinner Kuldeep's presence in the eleven will be helpful.

# Will not be afraid to play all spin attack in Vizag: England coach

PTI ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Tom Hartley has not only won the opening Test for England but more importantly dented the psyche of the Indian batters, who might have to face an all-spin attack in the second Test starting here on Friday. England beat India by 28 runs in the opening Test with debutant Tom Hartley bagging seven in the second innings having gone for plenty in the first. McCullum is eagerly waiting to have a look at the track and judge how it would behave. Although traditionally a high-scoring ground, it has seen domination by the spinners

lately, deeming that the conditions are likely to suit the latter. On the same note, McCullum warned that if the pitch indeed favours the spinners, the Three Lions would not be afraid to field an all-spin attack, hinting that uncapped spinner Shoaib Bashir, who missed out on Hyderabad due to visa delay, could be handed his debut. However senior most spinner Jack Leach's knee injury will be a concern. However in Hartley, Joe Root, Rehan Ahmed and Shoaib Bashir, he would still have four spinners and he can replace Mark Wood with an extra batter. "If the wickets continue to spin



as much as what we saw in the first Test as the series goes on, look, we won't be afraid to play all spinners or a balance of what we've got," the former New Zealand skipper was quoted as saying to SEN Radio. "Bash (Bashir), he was obviously with us during our

camp in Abu Dhabi, and he really impressed with his skill set. He fitted in seamlessly within the group, and he's a guy who's got an immense amount of enthusiasm, albeit at a young age and pretty limited in his first-class experience." "When he arrived, boys gave him a huge cheer, and he got to witness something pretty special with the fellas bowling us to a Test win. He comes into calculations for the next Test match," added McCullum. McCullum was all praise for the manner in which Ben Stokes handled a relatively inexperienced spin attack with such ease. Hartley managed to grab nine

wickets in his debut Test, including mesmerising figures of seven for 62 in the second innings. Although the 24-year-old was hammered for 131 in the first innings, especially by young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, he overcame the obstacles in the subsequent innings, as McCullum believes that allowing him to play with freedom was a real sign of leadership from Stokes. "He's only played a handful of first-class games and was probably a bit of a punt, selection-wise. But, we saw something in him that we thought would work over there, and he's a tough character,"

# India pummel New Zealand by 214 runs

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

Musheer Khan's superlative showing in the ongoing ICC U-19 World Cup continued as his second hundred trampled New Zealand by 214 runs in a Super Six encounter here on Tuesday. After India's top performer Musheer's 131 backed by opener Adarsh Singh's 52 powered India to a huge total of 295/8, left-arm spinner Saumy Kumar Pandey (4/19) and pacer Raj Limbani (2/17) ripped apart New Zealand's top order to bowl them out for a mere 81 in 28.1 over. Limbani struck on the first and the fifth ball of New Zealand innings to ensure momentum remained India's way throughout. India vice-captain Pandey finished with splendid figures of 10-2-19-4 as he knocked the stuffing out of Black Caps' chase. Left reeling at 27/4 in the Powerplay, New Zealand could

never really stage a comeback as Indian colts like every edition are looking favourites to win the tournament. For New Zealand, it was their third heaviest defeat in terms of runs and also their third lowest total at the U-19 World Cup stage. Earlier, Musheer flayed New Zealand attack with his second century of the ICC U-19 World Cup while opener Adarsh Singh struck 52 as India posted a stiff 296-run target. On a perfect batting wicket here at the Mangaung Oval, Musheer tore apart the Kiwis bowling line-up to become the first batter in the current competition to breach the 300-run mark, going past Pakistan's Shahzaib Khan with his stupendous effort. En route his 131, Musheer blasted 13 fours and three sixes off just 125 balls and once showed admirable temperament to play the ante just when it was required.



Busy at the crease constantly, the 18-year-old Musheer motored on from one end unleashing strokes in all directions, while he began with an upper-cut for a four. His innings was spruced with fine running between the wickets and ended in the death overs when he was looking to accelerate. Musheer and Adarsh carried out a fine recovery job with a 77-run stand for the second wicket after an early blow for India. Adarsh took charge of attacking the bowlers as he looked good while driving on the rise and also played the pull-shot with elan. It was only unfortunate that he failed to keep a drive in check when Zac Cumming (1/37) teased him with one outside off. A thick edge off Adarsh's bat flew to Oliver Tewatiya at point in the 18th over, which ended the charge for the left-handed Indian opener who made 52 off

58 balls with six fours. There also was some disappointment in store for India captain Uday Saharan who failed to convert his start and was dismissed for 35 (57 balls, 2 fours). He had two fifties on trot at the start of the tournament. Saharan, nevertheless, did a fine job of consolidating the innings for his side, putting on 87 with Musheer which also happened to be the best stand for India in this game. However, Musheer's century and Adarsh's contribution at the top notwithstanding, India lost wickets in a flurry towards the end to fall short of breaching the 300-run mark, finishing at 295 for eight. Brief scores: India U-19 295/8 in 50 overs (Adarsh Singh 52, Musheer Khan 131, Uday Saharan 35; Mason Clarke 4/64) beat New Zealand U-19 81 in 28.1 overs (Oscar Jackson 19; Raj Limbani 2/17, Saumy Pandey 4/19) by 214 runs.