

ANALYSIS 7

TEACHERS SHOULD PLAY
ROLE OF FRIEND, PARENT

MONEY 8

TOTAL GOVT DEBT RISES
TO RS 147 LAKH CR

SPORTS 11

DIDN'T FEEL PRESSURE OF
REPLACING KULDEEP: UNADKAT

VIJAYAWADA, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2022; PAGES 12 & 13



the pioneer

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**SOUVENIR
2022**



**CLEANEST
STATE CAPITAL
VIJAYAWADA**



Even as Amaravati continues to be a contentious State capital of Andhra Pradesh, Vijayawada, which is part of it, was adjudged the cleanest 'State/National Capital or UT' in the 2022 'Swachh Sarvekshan' rankings. No wonder Vijayawada bagged fifth place for being the cleanest city in the category of cities with more than one lakh population with its well-paved roads and flyovers looks neat and tidy with an effective garbage disposal system in place. The stunning achievement was possible due to increased focus on sanitation and hygiene after some of the State-level offices, including the Raj Bhavan, being relocated to the city. Part of the credit for this transformation should go to the successive VMC Commissioners who strove to instill a sense of cleanliness among the denizens through various awareness programmes.



HC notice to AP Min

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday has issued notices to Minister Vidyalada Rajini for issuing NOC for granite mining. Notices were served to Kadapa MP Avinash Reddy's uncle Pratap Reddy in this case.

A petition was filed in the High Court alleging that Minister Rajini was involved in allowing mining in 91 acres of assigned land in Murikipudi of NTR district. The High Court, which investigated the case, issued notices to the Tehsildar as well as the Minister Vidyalada Rajini to give an explanation. The case was adjourned for hearing after 3 weeks.

Rs 25 lakh ex gratia for Laurus Labs fire victims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Expressing shock over the incident, where four people were killed and one person was injured in a fire accident in Anakapalle district, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced a compensation of Rs 25 lakh each for the families of the deceased, Industries Minister Gudivada Amarnath stated.

Four people were killed, while another person suffered grievous burns after a fire broke out in a reactor at the Laurus Labs bulk drugs manufacturing unit at JN Pharma City in Parawada, Anakapalle district on Monday. As per reports, the fire broke out due to a sudden leak in a pipe when the workers were said to be cleaning the reactor. The deceased were identified as B. Rambabu (32) from Khammam District, Rajesh Babu (36) of Guntur District, Rapeti Ramakrishna (32) of Anakapalli District and M Venkata Rao (36) from Chodavaram Mandal.

According to the Parawada police, the workers were cleaning a room in Unit-3 of manufacturing block-6 of Laurus Labs at 3.15 pm in the afternoon when a short circuit caused the fire. The room where the fire occurred was filled with rubber stock and it is suspected that the sparks ignited the rubber stock, leading to the fire. The five workers were trapped in the room which was engulfed in smoke. Firefighters were called in immediately and they doused the fire.

The injured workers were being taken to King George Hospital in Visakhapatnam but they died on the way. Their bodies were sent for post-mortem.

Rs 590.91 cr released to 2.79L more beneficiaries

CM tears into Naidu for propaganda on pensions

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an effort to provide benefits of welfare schemes to each and every beneficiary in the State, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday disbursed Rs 590.91 crore and credited the respective amounts directly into the bank accounts of 2,95,065 beneficiaries who were not covered under various schemes due to some eligibility errors.

Addressing the event, the Chief Minister highlighted that through this initiative, his government has given another opportunity to those who are eligible but are unable to avail of the benefits of these schemes.

Highlighting that Andhra Pradesh is the only state where benefits of the government's schemes are reaching all beneficiaries in 100% saturation without any bias of caste, creed, religion, or party affiliation, CM emphasized, 'Like never before in the history of the nation, we are making deposits to the beneficiaries' accounts under various social schemes.'



Rs 225.05 cr	under Jagananna Vidya Deevena	Rs 9.00 cr	under YSR Vahana Mithra
Rs 187.18 cr	under YSR free crop insurance	Rs 6.18 cr	under YSR Nethanna Nestham
Rs 57.82 cr	under YSR Cheyutha	Rs 4.46 cr	under YSR Matsyakara Bharosa
Rs 56.82 cr	under Jagananna Amma Vodi	Rs 1.29 cr	under YSR EBC Nestham
Rs 26.03 cr	under YSR Kapu Nesthama	Rs 0.73 cr	under YSR Chedodu
Rs 16.35 cr UNDER JAGANANNA VASATHI DEEVENA			

Buggana blames TDP govt for State's fin mess

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy has alleged that due to the mistakes committed by the previous TDP government, the State is reeling in a deep financial crisis. The Minister slammed TDP leader Yanamala Ramakrishnu for false propaganda on the State's financial position. He said that the opposition party leaders are coming up with false propaganda on AP debt and financial management every day.

The Minister said that the present financial situation of AP was only because of the previous government's mistakes, the debts, and the arrears left behind by the previous TDP government. The YSRC government was paying interest and repaying the principal amounts left by the TDP government.

The Minister finds fault with Yanamala Ramakrishnu who has

25 years of experience and still was lying, Chandrababu Naidu who has 40 years of experience trying to mislead the people of AP with false predictions.

He said that the combined debts of Andhra Pradesh since independence till 2014 (1956-2014) are Rs 1,20,556 crores. After that, the Telugu Desam came to power in 2014 after the bifurcation in TDP five-year period it was Rs 2,69,462 crores. This means in five years the debt increased by 124 per cent, which is higher than the debt of various governments in 58 years.

Despite debts left by the previous TDP government, the YSRC government was paying the accumulated arrears responsibly in spite of the Covid crisis. The debt incurred by the YSRC government as of March 2022 is Rs 3,82,165 crores. Compared to 2019, the debt increase was only 42 per cent, said the Finance minister.



Jagan in Delhi, may meet PM Modi today

PNS ■ AMARAVATI/NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy arrived in Delhi on Tuesday and is expected to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and some Union ministers to discuss various issues concerning his state.

According to official sources, the chief minister is likely to meet PM Modi, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav and some

other Union ministers on Wednesday. Reddy is expected to bring to the notice of the prime minister various issues related to the AP Bifurcation Act and seek funds for the Polavaram project. The state government which is implementing the Polavaram Irrigation Project on the Godavari river has been requesting the Centre to give some upfront amount so as to complete it without further delay.



Chegondi demands 5% quota for Kapus

Threatens to launch fast-unto-death from Jan 2 if govt fails to act by Dec 30

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister and Kapu leader Ch V Harirama Jogaiah on Tuesday stated that he was prepared to die for achieving reservations for Kapus in Andhra Pradesh. The senior politician was desperately trying to get back into active politics in recent times.

Speaking to the media persons on Tuesday, Jogaiah said that he will not care for his life and will strive to fight for Kapu reservations. He said Kapus should be given a 5 per cent reservation

out of the 10 per cent quota given to Economically Weaker Sections through a Constitutional amendment by the Centre. He said that if Kapus cannot be treated as BCs, they should be given an EBC reservations quota. He demanded that the YSRC-led Jagan Mohan Reddy government in AP should come out with a decision on Kapu reservations by December 30, failing which he would launch fast-unto-death from January 2 and further said that at least with the death, Kapus will get reservations, he said.



He alleged that Jagan was not interested in the uplift of Kapus economically and politically. That was he had removed the quota for Kapus.

It may be recalled that former minister and Kapu leader Mudragada Padmanabham wrote a letter to the Chief Minister on the same issue in a requesting tone on Monday. Mudragada pleaded with Jagan to give a 5 per cent quota for Kapus in education and employment so that Kapus will be grateful to him lifelong. Mudragada further said, "You have been doing a lot of good for the poor people through your welfare schemes. You will remain forever in the hearts of Kapus if you give them a 5 per cent quota".

Govt to grant 'natl status' to IIFT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is proposing to declare the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) as 'institution of national importance' with an aim to empower it to attain standards of global excellence.

IIFT has three branches in New Delhi, Kolkata and Kakinada. The institute is a deemed university.

It was set up in 1963 by the government as an autonomous organisation to help professionalise the country's foreign trade manage-



ment and increase exports by developing human resources, analysing and disseminating data and conducting research.

According to the draft bill posted on the commerce ministry's website,

all the Indian Institutes of Foreign Trade would be declared as "institutions of national importance with a view to empowering these institutions in attaining standards of global excellence in international trade (management and international economics) and allied areas of knowledge". The draft -- The Indian Institutes of Foreign Trade Bill, 2022 -- stated that the director would be the chief executive officer of every institute, and would be responsible for proper administration.



Justice denied for 15 years, Ayesha's parents to move SC
P3

In TS, even 8,78,280 NEET rank can get an MBBS seat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has set a record by allocating an MBBS seat to a student with a rank of 8,78,280 in NEET.

The number of seats available under the convener quota has also been increased from 3038 to 4094. The cut-off in the OC, EWS, SC, ST, BCA, BCB, BCD, and BCE categories was reduced to facilitate

Last year in the B category, the student who secured the rank of 2,71,272 got a seat. This time a student who secured the rank of 8,78,280 got a seat.

In the C category or NRI quota, the number of seats has been increased from 556 to 578. Last year, students with ranks up to 9,23,789 got a seat while this year it went down to rank 10,55,181.

The government established eight new medical colleges in this year and local reservation in the B-category has been increased to 85 per cent. Reservation for the ST category has also been increased from 6 per cent to 10 per cent.

Health Minister T. Harish Rao said, "The revolutionary measures taken by Chief Minister KCR are making the dream of Telangana students to become doctors possible. Medical services are also reaching

remote districts. Many students are going to countries like China, Ukraine, Russia and the Philippines to study MBBS. But we are focused on helping students who want to become doctors." In 2022, the Telangana government established eight medical colleges creating a record in the country with the highest number of MBBS seats of 6,690 in 42 colleges. Telangana was also ranked first in MBBS seats with the highest ratio of 19 seats to a population of one lakh and second in PG seats with a ratio of 7.22 seats to a population of one lakh.

Earlier, only 495 seats were allocated to local students out of 1,214 seats in the B category due to a lack of reservations in the academic year 2021-22. The remaining 719 seats were allocated to non-local students.

The Telangana government ordered 85 per cent reservation in B category seats this time through GO No: 130. The change in reservation norms reserves 1,071 seats of the 1,276 seats for local students in 2022-23.

The ST quota has been increased from 6 per cent to 10 per cent with GO No: 33. The number of seats available for the ST category increased from 223 to 429.

Nationwide Covid readiness test done

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Many hospitals across the country held mock drills on Tuesday to check preparedness of health facilities to deal with any spurt in COVID-19 cases, with Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya saying it was important to gauge operational readiness of equipment and human resources.

Mandaviya oversaw the drill at the Centre-run Safdarjung Hospital here, while health ministers reviewed the drill in their respective states.

The Centre has asked states and union territories to conduct the drill as part of precautionary measures following an increase in infection in China and other countries.

Officials said the mock drill focused on parameters such as the

Mock drills in hospitals across country



availability of health facilities in all districts, the capacity of isolation beds, oxygen-supported beds, ICU beds and ventilator-supported beds,

and optimal availability of doctors, nurses, paramedics, AYUSH doctors, and other frontline workers, including ASHA and Anganwadi

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Shashthi: Dec 27 10:53 PM to Dec 28 08:44 PM
Saptami: Dec 28 08:44 PM to Dec 29 07:17 PM

Nakshatram:
Shatabhisha: Dec 27 02:27 PM to Dec 28 12:46 PM
Purva Bhadrapada: Dec 28 12:46 PM to Dec 29 11:44 AM

Rahukalam: 12:17 PM to 1:39 PM
Yamagandam: 8:10 AM to 9:33 AM
Variyam: 06:53 PM to 08:25 PM
Gulika: 10:55 AM to 12:17 PM
Amritakalam: 04:04 AM to 05:36 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Mostly sunny
Temp: 33°C
Humidity: 73%
Sunrise: 6:34 AM
Sunset: 5:43 PM
Updated: DECEMBER 27 2022 5:00 PM

PM MODI'S BROTHER, FAMILY INJURED IN ACCIDENT NEAR MYSURU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brother Prahlad Modi and family members sustained injuries when the car in which they were travelling met with an accident near here, police said on Tuesday. According to sources, other than the driver, Prahlad Modi, his son, daughter-in-law and a grandchild were in the car. They are said to have suffered some injuries and have been shifted to JSS Hospital for treatment. As per the police, the injuries are said to be 'minor' in nature. The incident happened near Kadakola around 1.30 PM when their car, on the way to Bandipur, is said to have hit the road divider. Mysuru Superintendent of Police Seema Latkar has visited the spot and the hospital, sources said.

ONGOING YATRA ACROSS FIVE STATES RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT ANAEMIA

The Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Societies of India is undertaking a yatra across five states to raise awareness about mitigating the rising incidence of anaemia among women. The 'Nari Swasthya Janandolan Yatra Anaemia National Ride' began from Rishikesh on November 28 and will cover 20 cities across five states -- Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. It will conclude in Kolkata in the first week of January, federation president Hrishikesh D Pai said. The yatra aims to bring holistic health awareness in Indian women, especially about anaemia prevention.

CAFFEINE MAY BOOST ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE, STUDY FINDS

Caffeine may significantly improve athletic performance, according to a study which found that caffeine supplementation reduced sprint time in the 100-metre dash. Caffeine, a stimulant that affects the nervous system, is a popular choice among athletes as a performance-enhancing aid. The World Athletics, formerly known as the International Association of Athletics Federations, has recognised caffeine as an 'ergogenic aid' in a consensus statement on nutritional strategy for athletes, the researchers said. "While previous studies have investigated the effects of caffeine on running activity, evidence from these studies is not conclusive enough to support the World Athletics consensus," said Professor Takeshi.

UTTARAKHAND: EXPERT TEAM INSPECTS 'SINKING' JOSHIMATH

Days after residents' protest over gradual 'sinking' of Joshimath, a team of experts on Tuesday conducted an on-the-spot inspection of the town in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. The move comes following reports that Joshimath, considered as the gateway to Badrinath, is 'sinking' with many of its houses, shops and hotels developing cracks. The five-member team comprising senior officials, geological experts and engineers inspected the buildings which have developed cracks, spoke to the affected people and gave its feedback to the district administration, officials said.

BRS' national foray: Elbow room for TDP's regrouping in TS

Politics makes strange bedfellows indeed! In Telangana, where the phenomenal rise of the erstwhile Telangana Rashtra Samiti had eclipsed the Telugu Desam Party, things have changed dramatically in the last couple of months so much so that the Bharat Rashtra Samiti's plans for national foray has given elbow room for the TDP to make a comeback, whether on its own or riding piggyback on the ascendant Bharatiya Janata Party.

In some circles that there is scope for 'inclusiveness' on the part of the once region-specific party. Telangana has previously targeted Andhra Pradesh, holding rulers of AP origin solely responsible for the plight of Telangana as it stood before attaining statehood.

The TRS has always maintained that AP rulers had exploited Telangana, which had been forcibly merged with then existing Andhra state. The long-cherished dream of Telugu people's own state became a reality on 1 November, 1956. Despite the initial agitation for separate Telangana state in 1969 and

In 2001, K Chandrasekhar Rao, a trusted lieutenant of then chief minister K Chandrababu Naidu, started the erstwhile Telangana Rastra Samiti (TRS) on 27 April, 2001 in 'Jaladruhyam', house of the leader of Telangana movement Konda Lakshman Bapuji with the singular purpose of attaining statehood for Telangana.



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

people's mandate in Lok Sabha elections of 1971 in support of the separate state, the then Union government headed by Indira Gandhi rejected the demand for separate states.

In 2001, K Chandrasekhar Rao, a trusted lieutenant of then chief minister K Chandrababu Naidu, started the erstwhile Telangana Rastra Samiti (TRS) on 27 April, 2001 in 'Jaladruhyam', house of the leader of Telangana movement Konda Lakshman Bapuji with the singular purpose of attaining statehood for Telangana. Despite having only two members in the Lok Sabha subsequently, TRS got full credit for achieving a separate state with people's sup-

port though ruling UPA led by Congress. People of Telangana reposed confidence in KCR and gave him the first chance to rule India's youngest state.

TRS managed to win the hearts of the electorate again in 2018.

Today, KCR, in his new avatar as head of BRS, is eyeing support from non-locals i.e. Andhra people. This means he or BRS can no longer afford to fume at 'Andhra leaders' who had 'betrayed' the interests of Telangana region. This changed atmosphere across Telangana gives elbow room for the Telugu Desam Party to put out green shoots again.

Now circumstances have changed with the emergence of BRS. Striking while the iron is hot, the TDP has taken a plunge in TS to regroup its moribund unit in the state. TDP started off with a rally at

Khammam, though it does not have a single MLA or MLC. TDP is convinced that, given BRS' national ambitions, there would be no hurdles for TDP's reemergence in Telangana.

TDP has been approaching its former leaders who had joined TRS in their quest for greener pastures. "We had no option left except joining TRS, if only for the development of our constituencies," was the stock reply of its former MLAs. TDP may not as yet nurture hopes of coming to power in Telangana; yet, it can hope for a sizeable number that can be vital in the eventual numbers game!

TDP's relations with BJP are considered the most impor-

tant thing in the changed situation.

The TDP has a soft corner for BJP in Andhra Pradesh and is thinking of forging an alliance with BJP and Jana Sena Party of film star Pawan Kalyan to ensure the defeat of ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) in the 2024 elections. It may be useful for BJP to have an alliance or otherwise ensure support from TDP in Telangana as the latter is competing with Congress in taking on KCR. Sailing with BJP in both Telugu states may be useful for TDP. In AP, it also has the compulsion of preventing Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy from getting closer to BJP.

APSRTC Cargo sets record

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) Cargo Service and Goods Transport sector has earned a record income of Rs.122 crore in just nine months of the 2022-23 financial year. The APSRTC Cargo Service has already crossed its previous year's (2021-22) income of Rs.122 crore. The RTC authorities estimated that by the end of the 2022-23 financial year, it will create a new record.

According to the APSRTC Cargo Service officials, this is the highest income for the RTC since it started the cargo and goods transport service system in 2017. Within a short period, RTC Cargo service is competing with private cargo services, the sources said.

RTC Cargo has been receiving praise from people for delivering their goods and parcels, said one of the

APSRTC officials in a press release here on Monday. RTC Cargo had an income of Rs.122 crore in the 2021-22 financial year and it achieved the same income by December 25, RTC said.

The officials further stated that RTC Cargo had been conducting door delivery since 2021 and received praise from people. Also, the cargo is not only permitted to Andhra Pradesh but also serving logistic services to Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai cities, the officials said. The cargo is receiving cash payments and UPI services in 84 bus stations and 480 authorised parcel booking agents in the State.

Further, they said that courier services were served quickly at the doorstep by specially prepared DGT. The 24x7 services are available at Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Rajamahendravaram, Guntur, Nellore and Tirupati bus stations.

Prime Healthcare chief meets CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Prime Healthcare Foundation Chairman Dr Prem Sagar Reddy called on Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at his camp office here on Tuesday.

Prime Healthcare is recognized as one of the top ten medical groups in the United States of America (USA) for managing 46 hospitals in 14 states.

The meeting with the Chief Minister was held in a cordial atmosphere and former Chief Minister Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy was his good friend and colleague, he said.

During his visit, Prem Sagar Reddy discussed various issues, mainly the health sector in AP. He appreciated the concept of family doctor initiated by the government and said that it is a great thing that 98 percent of doctors and medical staff are being recruited in the state.



"I am ready to provide digital X-ray machines and state-of-the-art medical equipment to AP," he said, adding that 1,500 oxygen concentrators were provided to the government in a very short period of time during the Corona pandemic.

He further said that the Chief Minister has brought revolutionary changes in the fields of health, education, medicine, housing for the poor, and agriculture like his father

and is getting accolades from all sections of the people, he said.

Prem Sagar Reddy also said that he was very proud to associate with the State Government and participate in the programmes.

Dr Prasad G Reddy, Dr Raghava Reddy, Medical Advisor NRI Affairs Vasudeva Reddy Nalipireddy, APNRT President Medapati Venkat and officials from CMO were also present.

Rs 590.91 cr released...

Continued from Page 1

With this, the total amount disbursed under various schemes was raised to Rs 6,684.84 crore and the total number of beneficiaries was raised to 44, 27,641.

CM Jagan lambasted TDP for malicious propaganda and fake claims on pensions. He also seized the opportunity to express his disappointment at the negative propaganda being spread by the Opposition and its extended mouthpiece-yellow media. He opined that the Opposition is working only with the agenda to defame his government and spread false news regarding pensions.

He said that they were disseminating false information on the deletion of pension recipients while the audit was under process.

The CM said that 'the State government has not stopped any pension. The pensions were temporarily withheld for conducting the social audit. What's wrong with this, he asked?'

Intensifying his attack on TDP, the CM said that TDP should be ashamed of Chandrababu Naidu govt during which the people were to pay some percentage of welfare schemes to Janmabhoomi committees. Comparing the stats of pensions from TDP's regime, CM said, 'the TDP administration only allocated a paltry Rs 400 crore for pensions, giving only 39 lakh people a monthly income of Rs 1000. While the monthly pension has now increased to Rs 2,750 and there

are now 62,70,000 pensioners. Besides, the CM asked the officials to conduct an audit of the pension schemes every six months. He further directed them to ensure that people wouldn't fall for the deceptive propaganda.

Deputy Chief Minister (Panchayat Raj and Rural Development) Budi Mutyala Naidu, social welfare Minister Meruga Nagarajuna, AP Agri Mission Vice Chairman MVS Nagi Reddy, Advisor to Government (Agriculture) I Tirupal Reddy, Chief Secretary Dr KS Jawahar Reddy, Special CS (Agriculture) Y Madhusudhana Reddy, Principal Secretary (Panchayat Raj and Rural Development) Gopala Krishna Dwivedi, Principal Secretary (Education) Praveen Prakash, Principal Secretary (BC and Social Welfare) G Jayalakshmi, Principal Secretary (Textiles and Handlooms) K Suneetha, Transport Secretary PS Pradyumna, Handlooms and Textiles Commissioner MM Nayak, Fisheries Commissioner K. Kannababu, Kapu Welfare and Development Corporation MD G Rekha Rani, SERP CEO Intiaz Ahmed, Special Secretary (Housing, Village and Ward Secretariats) BM Diwan and Commissioner (Village and Ward Secretariats) Shan Mohan were among those present.

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Nationwide Covid...

Continued from Page 1

India recorded a single-day rise of 157 new COVID-19 cases, while the count of active cases of the disease has marginally decreased to 3,421, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

In the national capital, the drill took place at the LNJP Hospital and other government-run facilities. Some of the private hospitals are expected to take up the exercise later in the day.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who also holds the health portfolio, visited the Delhi government-run Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital around noon to assess the drill.

"The Delhi government is prepared for any kind of emergency. At LNJP, there are 2,000 beds and 450 of them are marked for COVID-19. If a need arises, we can dedicate all 2,000 beds for COVID-19... we can also increase this number by using nearby banquet halls and add an additional 500 beds for COVID-19, so there would be no shortage," Sisodia told reporters at the hospital.

The deputy chief minister asked people not to panic, saying primary data suggests that the new BE.7 sub-strain of the coronavirus, which is causing a surge in infections in other countries, is similar to previous variants.

Compared to previous times, oxygen availability has increased 10 times, five PSA plants have been set up here. And ventilators are also present. Today, a mock drill was conducted, how patients can be attended to and shifted to desired location within five minutes was observed," he added.

Buggana blames TDP govt for...

Continued from Page 1

Buggana finds fault with Yanamala saying that in a press note on October 06, 2022, the TDP leader said that the debts of the State were Rs 8 lakh crore debts and on December 25, 2022 he says that the debts of the State are Rs 6,38,000 crore.

The Minister asked, how Rs 2 lakh crore debt can be reduced in two months. He alleged that the TDP leaders are misleading the people of the State with false propaganda against the government and its financial position.

The Minister said that in 2014, the public accounts of the state of Andhra Pradesh were Rs 19,000 crores. It was Rs 64,013 crore during 2018-19 by the time the TDP tenure was over which means the TDP has made only Rs 45,013 crore. In the latest financial year 2022-23 it is Rs 68,463 crores which means the YSRC government has

done only Rs 4,000 crores, he added.

He said since the YSRC came to power, BC, SC, ST, and Minorities have been given about Rs 1,35,000 crores directly deposited into their account which is a record across the country. A total of Rs 1,85,000 crores through DBT in a transparent way, out of which around Rs 1,35,000 crores (73%) beneficiaries are from weaker sections, which is proof of our sincerity.

Apart from this, in the non-DBT method, a total of Rs 1,45,000 crores was provided of which about Rs 1,22,000 crores (84%) benefited through various schemes. "We are proud to say that we have spent a total of Rs 2,57,000 crore (78%) for the welfare development of BC, SC, ST and Minorities. As long as the YSRC government is in power, the financial management of the State will not suffer any deficit," said Rajendranath Reddy.

In TS, even 8,78,280 NEET rank can get an MBBS seat

Continued from Page 1

Women secured most of the MBBS seats in 2021-22. They bagged 62.68 per cent of the convenor quota, 63.73 per cent of the management quota and 62.98 per cent of the 6,186 seats this year. Men secured only 39 per cent of the seats last year. This has gone down to 37 per cent this year.

MLC K. Kavitha said, "The determination of KCR to provide the best for every individual in the state without any support from the Centre is notable. The youngest state of India, despite being neglected by the Centre for eight years now continues to establish new benchmarks. The TS government has set up medical colleges, and has increased seats to ensure equal opportunity."

Govt to grant 'natl status' to IIFT

Continued from Page 1

Rakesh Mohan Joshi, Director at the Indian Institute of Plantation Management (IIPM), Bangalore, said that this status to IIFT would

provide more autonomy and grant, and recognition to these institutes.

"There is a huge potential in these institutes," Joshi said. Earlier, he was a professor and Dean of IIFT in the national capital.



AP scripts public health success

Marching ahead to fortify healthcare system in rural areas

SEELAM AROZIE ■ VIJAYAWADA

Call it a silent revolution or a total revamp - the churnings in Andhra Pradesh's health sector have impacted society so much so that the entire country is looking up to the State. In an ambitious attempt to provide quality health services to all, the State government has taken a series of steps in terms of diagnostics, augmentation of staff, better infrastructure and providing medicines to all citizens.

The village-centric healthcare system has caught the imagination of the State government and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is doing everything to ensure medicare is accessible to people, especially those living in rural areas.

YSR VILLAGE CLINICS

While Primary Health Centres (PHCs) are already serving the ailing public in villages, the YSRC government has come up with another novel programme of 'YSR Village Clinics'. The PHCs are manned by two medical officers who take care of vaccinations, deliveries, family planning and lab testing, updating the data and TB testing, HIV testing, antenatal checkups every month. Aimed at extending health care to the rural population, the government is also setting up YSR Village Clinics for every 2,000 population. Of the 10,032 village clinics, 3,673 are ready and an amount of Rs 1,692 crore was sanctioned for the construction. The Village Clinics are envisaged to provide round-the-clock health care services at the village level. Each village clinic will have one ANM (Auxiliary Nursing Midwifery) and one Mid-Level Health Provider (MLHP). These clinics can perform 14 tests including OPD, disease control programmes, NCD screening, FP services, immunisation, diagnostics and will have 67 types of medicines. Besides yoga and wellness activities are also made available in these clinics. All routine and additional immunisations for children and pregnant women can be done at these clinics. Fourteen types of tests, OPD services, and dispensation of 67 types of medicine are envisaged apart from immunization programmes.

AAROYGASRI 2.0 LAUNCHED

Recently, the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government successfully launched the Aarogyasri 2.0 after painstaking efforts in coming out of the pangs of the Covid third wave by effectively carrying out the vaccination programme and taking healthcare to the villages through YSR Health Clinics, initiating the process of family doctor concept and sanctioning of new medical colleges during the year.

As many as 809 additional medical procedures were launched under the YSR Aarogyasri Scheme, taking the total number of free medical services to 3,255. The government's annual expenditure due to augmented medical treatment under the Aarogyasri scheme has now gone up to Rs 2,894.87 crore.

'NADU-NEDU' (HEALTH)

The path-breaking programme of 'Nadu-Nedu' in the health sector has helped hospitals get a facelift with an outlay of Rs 16,255 crore.

According to State government sources, 11,888 works have been undertaken in the existing and new hospitals, of which 4,851 have been completed so far. Starting from Primary Health Centres (PHCs), Village and Ward Clinics, Community Health Centres (CHC), Area Hospitals (AH), District Hospitals (DH) and development works relating to teaching hospitals are also being undertaken in the 'Nadu-Nedu' programme.

17 NEW MEDICAL COLLEGES

Like never before in the history of the State, the government has taken a huge project of constructing 17 new medical colleges at a cost of Rs 12,268 crore, along with the existing 11 medical colleges.

According to government sources, the new medical and nursing colleges will be built in Paderu, Vizianagaram, Narsipatnam, Rajahmundry, Palakollu, Amalapuram, Eluru, Machilipatnam, Bapatla, Markapuram, Piduguralla, Madanapalle, Pulivendula, Penukonda, Adoni, Nandyala and Parvathipuram.

FAMILY PHYSICIAN CONCEPT

In yet another innovative programme, the State government has come up with the 'Family Physician Concept' to provide quality healthcare at the village level as a preventive step and ease pressure on secondary and tertiary hospitals.

According to sources, every mandal will have four doctors and two ambulances with one doctor and an ambulance touring villages assigned and the regular visits would familiarise the patients and their ailments, thus developing a rapport.

'YSR THALLI BIDDIA EXPRESS'

Besides, the Chief Minister flagged off 500 'Dr YSR Thalli Bidda Express' and said that these fully air-conditioned vehicles are meant to provide free transport to pregnant women, mothers, and infants safely back home. The Government has embarked on a programme to bring postnatal women home safely and comfortably after delivery from Government Hospitals.

Sources say these vehicles are enabled with a GPS tracking facility to ensure their safety. Besides that, the government is also paying the mother Rs 5,000 for various needs under Dr YSR Arogya Asara after childbirth.

Noticing a steady decline in Covid cases during February, the government eased restrictions in the state and lifted the night curfew urging the people to follow the guidelines set by the government to contain the spread of the virus.

BF-7 PREPAREDNESS

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, who reviewed the COVID new variant BF-7 challenge on December 26, asked the officials to find out the preparedness of all Government Hospitals in meeting the BF-7 challenge and set a deadline to complete the process by January 5.

With all these measures in place, it can be conveniently said that Andhra Pradesh has come a long way in the public health sector and it is no exaggeration to say that it is a role model to other states in the country.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT TENDER NOTICE

The Commissioner & Director Municipal Administration desires to invite tenders for Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Training & Maintenance of 150 Nos GNSS Network RTK Receivers, RFP download start date & time in <http://tender.approcurement.gov.in> & CDMA website: www.cdma.gov.in; 27.12.2022 @ 3.00 PM. Last date for submission of queries through email on engineering.asudc@gmail.com: 16.01.2023 @ 5.00 PM. Contact: 7675836600. RFP Submission end date & time in e-Procurement portal: 16.01.2023 @ 5.00 PM

Sd/- Commissioner & Director
Municipal Administration, Vargajagiri

Oil palm cultivation thriving in AP

C PRADEEP KUMAR
VIJAYAWADA

Every achievement has a small and humble beginning. So is the case of oil palm cultivation in Andhra Pradesh. What started as an experimental farming initiative in an extent of about 10,000 hectares in Eluru and Kakinada districts, oil palm cultivation has taken the State by storm with a target of 1,12,000 hectares for the year 2022.

Andhra Pradesh was identified as one of the potential states for taking up oil palm plantations due to its conducive climatic conditions and soil suitability. Realising the importance of oil palm, APOILFED in the early 90s took a pioneering step in the State by importing oil palm sprouts and establishing nurseries. The area expansion is targeted to be 6,50,000 hectares under the prestigious National Mission on Edible Oils (NMEO). Initially, oil palm cultivation was taken up in the Pedavegi and Lingapalem mandals of Eluru district in an extent of 8,500 hectares by about 6,000 farmers. Similarly, about 1,400 farmers took up the cultivation in Prathipadu, Yeleswaram and Kirlampudi mandals of the Kakinada district.

According to APOILFED Vice-Chairman & Managing Director Ch Babu Rao, the target given to AP under the National Mission on Edible Oils (NMEO), oil palm was 1,12,000 hectares for area expansion during the years 2021-22 to 2025-26 out of 6,50,000 hectares targeted for the entire country. APOILFED is expected to achieve cultivation in around 7,500 hectares in the allotted mandals during this period, covering about 5,000 farmers.

He said as per the NMEO, the target given for the year 2021-22 is 1,16,000 hectares of which 739 hectares were achieved, for 22-23 the target is 1,08,000 hectares target with 1,000 hectares expected to be achieved. For the years 23-24,



Chavala Babu Rao, VC & MD, APOILFED

24-25 and 25-26, the target set was 2,000 hectares. In the oil year 2018-19, the Fresh Fruit Bunches processed are 75,362 MT with Rs 206 lakh profit, in 2019 - 20 it was 63,441 MT with Rs 931 lakh profit, in 2020 - 21 it was 65,963 MT with Rs 815 lakh profit and in 2021 - 22 it was 94,133.821 with Rs 3,117 lakh profit. The APOILFED VC & MD said the future targets are to meet the increased processing demand and to have a second plant as done by other processors. A new oil palm plant of 45 TPH expandable to 60 TPH capacity is proposed by

APOILFED at a tentatively estimated cost of Rs 220 crore. To meet the above targets as per NMEO, APOILFED requires 7.50 lakh oil palm imported sprouts in the next two years. As of date, APOILFED is growing 1.00 lakh seedlings at the Kamavarapukota nursery. Further, it is planned to import 3.75 lakh OP Sprouts in three spells during the 2023 calendar year @ 1.25 lakh sprouts per spell.

Due to the insufficient process capacity of the plant, during the oil year 2021-22, out of the total procured (FFB) quantity of 1,22,735.486 MT, a quantity of 28,601.665 MT of Fresh Fruit Bunches are diverted to different private oil palm companies and achieved Rs. 731.60 lakh gross profit.

Further, APOILFED has earned a gross profit of Rs 3,117.8 lakh, on oil palm activities which are the highest in recent years. From the above, it is evident that the performance of the APOILFED has

been phenomenal in the year 2021-22 crushing a record of Fresh Fruit Bunches, i.e., 94,133.821, the all-time highest.

APOILFED has been engaged in the marketing of good quality edible oils like groundnut oil, refined sunflower oil, palmolein oil, rice bran oil, 'Deepam Oil' & coconut oils under the brand name of 'Vijaya Oils' in the State of Andhra Pradesh for the past three-and-a-half decades at a reasonable price and assured quality and quantity through a reliable network of about 150 distributors, institutions and other corporate distributors in the State.

APOILFED has two Oil Packing Stations, one at Vakalapudi, Kakinada, and another at Sarvepalli, Venkatchalam mandal in SPSR Nellore district with an installed capacity of about 5,000 MT per month and 3000 MT per month respectively. The Federation follows the FSSAI standards while packing edible oils, Babu Rao concluded.

Kakani opens new 'Rythu Bazaar'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Minister for Agriculture Kakani Govardhan Reddy inaugurated the newly-constructed Krishna Lanka 'Rythu Bazaar', on the bund of the Bandar Canal in front of Krishna Lanka Police Station with Rs 98.24 lakh in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Govardhan Reddy said that the State government is giving support by providing affordable prices to all crops produced by the farmers. Following the directions of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the Marketing Department is arranging new Rythu Bazaars available to the consumers, he said. He further said that 100 Rythu Bazaars are working in the State, of which 12 are in the NTR district. The State government is spending Rs.5 crore for the modernisation of 38 Rythu Bazaars, he said.

His government is taking steps to provide a Primary Processing Centre in each Parliamentary constituency in the State, he added. Kapu

'The State government is spending Rs 5 crore for the modernisation of 38 Rythu Bazaars'

Corporation Chairman Adapa Seshagiri Rao, Fibernet Corporation Chairman P Gowtham Reddy, YSRCP Vijayawada East Constituency in charge Devineni Avinash, VMC Deputy Mayors Avuthu

Sri Sailaja, Bellam Durga, Rythu Bazaars' CEO M Nanda Kishore, Joint Collector S Nupur Ajay Kumar, Marketing RJD K Srinivasa Rao, Deputy Director Divakar, and Assistant Director Kishore were present.

Justice denied for 15 years, Ayesha's parents to move SC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

It has been 15 years since pharmacy student Ayesha Meera was brutally murdered, but the accused is yet to be nabbed by the police. Meanwhile, Shamshad Begum, mother of the deceased, has accused senior IPS officers of misleading the case to save the actual culprits. Addressing media persons here on Tuesday, she said that the police had arrested Satyam Babu portraying him as the prime accused, but later released him as they could not establish him guilty. She said that as justice was not done despite the CBI's intervention, they would knock on the doors of the apex court.

in Secunderabad. The CBI took all the details from. Despite the religious head objecting to the re-post-mortem, it was done as per court orders. However, even after three years, the body parts have not been handed over to us," she said and alleged that the CBI was also corrupt. She added that they would move the apex court seeking justice to Ayesha. "We will not backtrack until the real culprits are punished and justice is done. Ayesha was murdered when Dr YSR was the CM. Now, Chief Minister



YS Jagan Mohan Reddy should enact a law in the name of Ayesha in line with Nirbhaya. The government should extend full cooperation to punish the criminals, she added.

Women's leader Ganga Bhavani said that under the banner of Nyaya Porota Samiti, they were fighting to get justice for Ayesha. Since the death of Ayesha in 2007 to 2019, various departments have investigated the case, but all failed to catch the culprits. "Under whose pressure are they acting," she asked, and pointed out that the victim's family was not even given any help from the government. "We have no faith in PM Modi or CM Jagan and have decided to move the Supreme Court," she added.



500 Defence pensioners attend 'Sparsh' prog

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

An Outreach Programme on SPARSH Online Pension System was conducted by the Controller of Defence Accounts, Chennai at the Area Accounts Office (Navy), Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. K Rama Mohana Rao, Chairman Visakhapatnam Port Authority honoured the occasion as Chief Guest and delivered a special address to the pensioners on the benefits of the SPARSH Programme. Over 500 Ex-servicemen, retired Defence Civilians and their families from Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam Districts attended the Programme. The Ministry of Defence under the Central Govt. has rolled out a Sparsh Portal and Module for Pensioners as a 'One Stop One Solution' for all Defence

Defence Civilian Pensioners. T Jayaseelan, CDA, Chennai has clarified the doubts which were raised by all Pensioners. Shri Siva Shankar Bandi, DCDA, AAO (Navy) Vizag also participated in the Outreach programme where the benefits of the new system have been explained and Pensioner's doubts have been clarified and their grievances were noted for early resolution. The Programme was very useful to the Pensioners consequent on the migration of their Pension Account from the legacy system to the new system Sparsh.

Controller of Defence Accounts, Chennai is conducting Sparsh Outreach Programmes at various places located in the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Centre attacking federal system: Kerala Min

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Kerala Minister for Local Self-Governments and Excise MB Rajesh has alleged that the Central government is attacking State governments and the Federal system by using governors as weapons. "The Kerala government is implementing alternative policies to those implemented by the BJP-led Central government," he said.

MB Rajesh came to Vijayawada to attend a seminar and given the Makineni Basava Punnaiah memorial lecture. On Tuesday, he addressed the media along with CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao at the Balotsav Bhavan in Vijayawada. Speaking on the occasion, the Kerala minister said that the Central government was creating financial hurdles for various State governments by not allotting funds. The Central government is commanding the States, he alleged. The Union government has cut Rs. 30,000 crore to Kerala which should have been given to the State, he said. He further said that there were a revenue deficit of Rs. 6,770 crore and GST compensation of Rs. 10,000 crore. Tax share was slashed from 2.5 per cent to 1.5 per cent, which resulted in the Kerala govern-



ment losing Rs.12,500 crore in income from the Central government, he said.

In this situation, the Kerala State government led by the Left Democratic Front (LDF) is focusing on alternative policies, following steps towards economic development and implementing social welfare schemes in a bigger way. "Kerala is ranked first in GDP and the State aims to create two million knowledge-based jobs in the next four years. The government has spent Rs.70,000 crore for the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund, of which Rs.3,000 was allotted to education. Kerala also tops the School Quality Index given by Niti Ayog," he said. Further, he said his government is focusing on the development of higher education sector, enhancing facilities in universities and strengthening

the academic policies. The LDF government is giving utmost prominence to education and public health, he said. Government hospitals are providing super speciality health services, he said.

He flayed the Centre for not allowing the State government to take debts. "Industries have increased in Kerala, and at the same time, the Central government has decided to privatise the Public Sector Undertakings. However, the Kerala State government participated in the auction and ran those industries in a cooperative system," he said. CM Jagan should get assurance from Modi/CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao has demanded that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy should get assurance from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to implement State bifurcation promises.

'VAIKUNTHA DWARA DARSHANAM'

Masks mandatory for devout: TTD chief

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

To enable Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan to more devotees, TTD has been organising a ten-day Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan starting from January 2-11 and this practice has been in vogue for the past three years, said TTD Trust Board Chairman YV Subba Reddy.

Speaking to media persons along with TTD EO(FAC) Anil Kumar Singhal and other top officials from TTD and district administration, the Chairman said, "In view of the recent guidelines by Central and State Governments, we appeal the devotees who are coming to Tirumala for Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan to wear masks which is mandatory. We make other arrangements like frequently sanitising crowded places etc. as a part of the Health Safety and Security of visiting pilgrims.



TTD has planned to issue a total of 45,000 Slotted Sarva Darshan tickets per day from January 2 to 11. The issuance of free SSD tokens will commence by 2 pm on January 1 at nine centres consisting of 92 counters in Tirupati viz. Bhudevi Complex, Indira Maidan, Ramachandra Pushkarini, Jeevakona ZP high school, Vishnu Nivasam, Srinivasam, Ramanaidu Municipal High School, Seshadri Nagar ZP High School in Bairagipet and Govindarajaswami choultries 2

and 3. While four counters are earmarked in Tirumala at Koustubham Rest House exclusively for Tirumala locals.

All arrangements of food, water, and beverages have been arranged at these counters and mobile toilets have also been erected. To facilitate the devotees coming from various neighbouring states to know about the counters, QR code facility boards have also been displayed at all these counters and also at Cherlopalle, Pudi road, and Navjeevan Hospital areas. The

Other arrangements

Among other arrangements, a buffer stock of 3.50 lakh laddus would be kept for devotees, 400 sanitary workers, additional barbers in Kalyanakatta, vigilance sleuths and police would be deployed to safeguard the devotees. The 'Annarasadam' will be served from 6 am till midnight. Both the Ghat roads remain open 24x7 for the convenience of the pilgrims. Three additional dispensaries and one mobile dispensary will be set up for the

occasion. A parking facility in Tirumala has been created for 8,000 vehicles. Wide publicity is being given via all media platforms for the sake of devotees present across the country. About 3,500 Srivari Sevaku are being invited to serve the devotees at various places. 'Sri Vishnu Sahasra Nama Stotra Akhanda Parayanam' will be performed on the day of 'Vaikuntha Ekadasi' on January 2 at Nada Neerajanam.

devotees with SSD tokens shall have to report at Sri Krishna Teja Rest House in Tirumala on their specified date and time only, to avoid long waiting hours for darshan, the Chairman said. Srivari Trust tickets will not be issued offline.

"As we have already released 2,000 tickets of Srivari online for each day from January 2 to 11, no tickets will be issued offline", he reiterated. "Similarly we have also issued 2.05 lakh SED (Rs.300) tickets from January 1 to 11 online", he maintained.

NTR dist panel node for 27 new sand reaches

Collector Dilli Rao says adequate sand is available

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao has revealed that 27 new sand reaches will be identified in the western part of the district. He added that the district-level sand committee had given its approval for digging of sand in the respective reaches subject to environment and other related permissions.

He chaired the district-level sand committee meeting, attended by Groundwater, Mines, Rural Water Supply, Police and Water Resources department officials, at the collectorate in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

Collector Dilli Rao said

that new sand reaches were identified at Indugapally, Kannevedu and Allurupadu in Vatsavai mandal, Chevitalikallu, Kunikinaipadu, Pendyala, Vemulapalli and Gani Atkuru in Kanchikacherla, Magallu in Nandigama mandal, Malkapuram in Jaggaiahpet, Pokkunuru, Ustepalli, Kasarabad and Eteru in Chandraband, Venganaya kunipalem, Sangapadu and Penuganchiprolu in Penuganchiprolu mandal.

The Collector said that the new extent would be 129.37 hectares and around 12,93,700 metric tonnes of sand would be available. He further said that 1,49,109 MT

of sand had already been stored in seven depots in the district.

Further, the Collector said that at present, adequate sand was available for the construction of houses as well as government priority buildings such as Rythu Bharosa Kendras, Sachivalayams, Manabadi-Nadu Nedu and Health clinics. Dilli Rao ordered the officials concerned to take action against illegal sand mining.

Joint Collector S Nupur Ajay Kumar, Mining Deputy Director Subramanyeswara Rao, Krishna Central Division Executive Engineer PV Krishna Rao and others were present.



No freedom of speech in AP: Atchannaidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In the past three-and-a-half years, democracy has been brutally murdered in Andhra Pradesh and after the YSRCP came to power the people lost their freedom of speech which is a fundamental right, said the president of the Telugu Desam Party, Kinjerapu Atchannaidu, here on Tuesday.

Addressing an all-party meeting on 'State-Sponsored Terrorism-Save Democracy', Atchannaidu said that a factionist has become the Chief Minister of the State due to which the people have lost even their fundamental rights like freedom of speech. "I personally feel that the people have committed a blunder by

electing Jagan Mohan Reddy as the Chief Minister. He looted the State by lakhs of crores of rupees taking advantage of the power of his father, the Late YS Rajasekhara Reddy," the TDP state unit president said.

Now, as the Chief Minister of the State he is again minting money, Atchannaidu said, adding that the people have voted for a corrupt politician. Jagan wants to ensure that except for the YSRCP no other political party in the State should survive, the TDP state unit president said and made it clear that "Even if the leaders of the Opposition parties are sent to jail they will continue to fight against this corrupt Government."

Criticising CM Jagan, CPI state leader K Ramakrishna in



his style said that after CM Jagan loses power he would wear a burka (cloth covering the whole body) and go. He alleged that the CM was going into public with all four sides covered with cloth walls. The government was not allowing people to raise their voices to

protest, and with the help of the police they are being arrested. Similar to all welfare schemes being door delivered by the government and the ruling party MLC murdered his car driver and doer-delivered the body. CPM leader V Srinivas said that the govern-

ment was afraid of protests in the state and even the women were being threatened against demonstrations. Survival of people and opposition is possible only if democracy is followed. He said that the ruling party should ensure that the rights of the people will be pro-

CM consoles Audimulapu

PNS ■ PRAKASAM

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday extended his condolences to Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Audimulapu Suresh on the sudden demise

of his mother Teresamma. The Chief Minister reached the residence of Suresh here on Tuesday and paid floral tributes to the portrait of Teresamma.

He conveyed his heartfelt condolences to Suresh and the family members.



'Steps taken to curb drug menace'

PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru Range Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Pala Raju has said that steps were taken to check the drug peddlers and eradicate the drug menace in the Eluru police range.

The DIG, flanked by Eluru district SP Rahul Dev Sharma, WG district SP U Ravi Prakash, and Krishna district SP Jashuva, addressed a press conference here on Tuesday.

The DIG said that 37 persons were arrested in 7 loan app cases and Rs 13 crore was seized. He said that full focus was laid on curbing crimes against women.

He said that complaints were received on the harassment of loan app money lenders. He said that two persons died unable to bear the harassment of loan app money lenders in Rajahmundry. It



The DIG said that 37 persons were arrested in 7 loan app cases and Rs 13 crore was seized. He said that full focus was laid on curbing crimes against women.

was found that the origin of loan apps is in foreign countries. DIG Pal Raju said that steps were taken to get the accused in POCSO cases at the earliest by completing the cases. Steps were also taken to ensure the reduction of school dropouts. "10% murders have

been prevented in the Eluru Range through Ward Village. Surveys conducted by the Village Women Welfare Secretaries, 87% of the women missing cases have been resolved in the Eluru Range area and the missing women were found and handed over to

their family members, and 13% of the missing women are yet to be traced," the DIG said. The DIG said that in the background of previous cases registered against organizers of cockfight cases, bind-over cases were registered against 3,302 people, strong surveil-

lance had already been set up for the prevention of cockfight gambling, and notices are being issued to the managers of bars in villages, and suitable arrangements have been made so that all people can celebrate festivals in green villages with happiness.

Bankrupt govt cutting number of pensions, alleges Somireddy

PNS ■ NELLORE

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) senior leader and former minister Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy has said that the government has decided to reduce the number of social security pensions as it is bankrupt.

Talking to the media here on Tuesday, he predicted that not only social security pensions but also 'Ammavodi', 'Chedodu', and 'Vidya Deevana' schemes would also be reduced soon.

"The YSRCP leaders are plundering huge wealth but the common men are deprived of their legitimate rights. We will vehemently oppose cutting the number of beneficiaries of welfare schemes. The TDP will stand by the beneficiaries," Somireddy announced. Since the government has become financially bankrupt, it has decided to cancel thousands of social security pensions, Somireddy said, adding that over 20,000 social security pensioners in the combined Nellore district had been cancelled citing various reasons.

He lamented that pensions are being cancelled citing reasons that the beneficiaries have three acres of agriculture wetland or 10 acres of upland, consuming over 300 units of power and other such reasons.



He said that the DRA PD told them that all pensions would be disbursed on January 1, but at the same time, the district Collector made it clear after conducting an inquiry on those who were served notices, the pension would be disbursed and if it is proved the beneficiaries are eligible for a pension, otherwise, the payment would be stopped.

"We do not believe that an impartial inquiry will be conducted to ascertain the authentication of eligibility of pension beneficiaries in two days," Somireddy said. "Now the social security pensions are being cancelled. Tomorrow the Ammavodi, Vahanamitra, Chedodu, Vidya Deevana, and other schemes will be cancelled to the beneficiaries citing various reasons. Since the government has no money to

implement any welfare schemes, it is cancelling the schemes to the beneficiaries," he deplored.

Somireddy questioned the minister and MLAs what they were doing when pensions were being weeded out to the beneficiaries. The YSRCP leaders were busy earning money through real estate, layouts, gravel, sand and soil extraction while the poor were being deprived of their legitimate benefits, he slammed.

The irrigation department has become a hub for scams and crores of rupees being plundered by the ruling party leaders, he flayed. The TDP leaders led by Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy submitted a memorandum to the Collector urging him to stop weeding out social security pensions.



Two awards for college

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

PB Siddhartha Arts and Science College has received two awards in two categories for providing employment opportunities, certification courses, and internships to students. PB Siddhartha College principal Dr. Meka Ramesh on Tuesday said that EduSkills Foundation in collaboration with All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) provides certification, internship

in advanced technology courses by world-renowned IT giants like Celonis, Amazon Web Services, Palo Alto Cyber Security Academy, Blue Prism, Juniper Networks, and Microchip Academy to the students in higher educational institutes across the country. Dr. Ramesh said that PB Siddhartha College received awards in two categories and the awards were presented in a programme organised in New Delhi.

BJP protests cancellation of 26 schemes of SC Corp

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The BJP SC Morcha activists continue their protest on the second day in front of the Collector's office opposing the cancellation of 26 schemes of the SC Corporation.

The BJP SC Morcha activists embarked on a 48-hour 'Deeksha' on Monday and continued the same on Tuesday demanding the restoration of the 26 welfare schemes of the SC Corporation. BJP SC Morcha state president Gudise Devanand and state president Somu Veerajulu attended the protest programme today.

Addressing the gathering, Somu Veerajulu alleged that the YSRCP led state government had owned the Central sponsored welfare schemes and implemented them as their programmes.

"Though the Narendra Modi-led Central government is extending funds for the implementation of welfare schemes, the Jagan Reddy-led state government has claimed them as their schemes without giving due credit to the Central government," he lashed out. The state government is diverting the funds, being extended by the Central government for the Dalit beneficiaries, to other purposes, he slammed.

"We demand the state government to restore the implementation of 26 schemes of the SC Corporation," he reiterated. Somu Veerajulu announced that the BJP would take out rallies with unemployed youths in 165 Assembly constituencies in the state in the coming days. The Centre announced a Rs 900 crore fund to link all cities in the state. The state govern-

ment had failed to take steps to implement the programme, he said.

SC Morcha state president G Devanand alleged that the Jagan Reddy government had failed to do justice to the SCs by not implementing welfare schemes with the fund extended by the Central government.

BJP State General Secretary and SC Morcha in-charge Bitra Sivannarayana, Former MLA Dara Sambiah, BJP District Presidents Patibandla Ramakrishna, Jupudi Rangaraju, Talla Venkatesh Yadav, Maganti Sudhakar Yadav, Vallur Jayaprakash Narayana, Amishetti Anjaneyulu, Thota Ramakrishna, SC Morcha State General Secretary Meesala Prem Kumar were among those who took part in the protest programme.

Master plan prepared for development of Durga temple

Prasadam Potu and Annadanam complexes will be constructed, says Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Endowment Kottu Satyanarayana has said that the preparation of a master plan, which was designed for various development works on the premises of Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam, Indrakeeladri, is completed. The new master plan was finalised on the basis of various suggestions and modifications.

Minister Kottu Satyanarayana addressed a press meeting at his camp office in Vijayawada on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, the minister disclosed that as per the master

plan they would construct a multilevel building for making prasadam. Also, a building will be built for Annadanam (dining) and another one for queue complexes, he said.

The minister further said that a flyover would be constructed from Kankadurga Nagar to Indrakeeladri for the convenience of the devotees, who face hardship during Dasara and other festivities due to traffic congestion. Master plans were also being prepared for other prominent temples.

Durga Temple Executive Officer D Bramarambha, Executive Engineer KVS Koteswara Rao and L Rama Devi and others were present.



Dist Collector inspects emergency landing facility on NH in Prakasam

PNS ■ BAPATLA

District Collector K Vijaya Krishnan inspected the fighter jets emergency landing area on the Chennai-Kolkata highway at Picchia Gudipadu village in Korisepadu mandal on Tuesday.

The Indian Airforce is conducting a trial run of the landing of jet fighters and a cargo flight on the national highway on December 29. Air Force officials explained to her the latest technology and latest radar system.

The Collector directed the police and R&B officials to take needed steps to stop vehicular traffic on the national highway on December 29, at 11 am to facilitate the landing of fighter jets. The Collector said that for the first time the



emergency land is being made available to the IAF in South India in AP. After completion of trial run, the emergency landing facility on the NH would likely be dedicated to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2023.

IAF group captain RS Chowdry said that a trial

run of landing jet fighters would be conducted on December 29 and all arrangements were made in this regard. The entire area on the NH would be under the control of the IAF of Suryalanka. JC Dr.K Srinivasulu, DROP Sarojani and IAF administration office K Sayyad and other officials were present.

Two girls sustain burns as helium balloon explodes

PNS ■ ELURU

In a freak incident, two girls sustained serious burn injuries as a huge helium balloon exploded at Agripalli on Tuesday.

Police said that a giant helium balloon was released and it was flying in the air. The balloon was tied to an iron hook on the terrace. A woman, Sheik Alia went to a bank along with her daughter and her friend's daughter.

When she was busy with bank work in the bank, the two girls Sheik Malin (11) and Parasa Mallika (6) went to the terrace where the helium-filled balloons were flying. When the two girls were playing, the helium-filled balloon exploded in which the two girls sus-



tained severe burn injuries. They were immediately shifted to the government hospital in Vijayawada. GGH Superintendent Sowbagya Lakshmi told the

media that the condition of the two girls was critical. She said one of the girls sustained 65 per cent burns and another sustained 50 burn injuries.

Collector reviews Covid preparedness

PNS ■ GUNTUR

District Collector M Venugopal Reddy said that mock drills on testing, tracking, and treatment were conducted as part of facing the predicted coronavirus third wave.

Collector Venugopal Reddy inspected the mock drill on Covid-19 preparedness conducted under the direction of the District Medical and Health Department at Guntur Government Comprehensive Hospital on Tuesday.

He inspected the liquid oxygen plant, Jagananna Prana Vayu plant and oxygen cylinder plants set up for backup in the hospital and spoke to the technical experts about their functioning and maintenance.

The Collector inspected the Covid OP, triage center, and testing sections set up for those with suspected symptoms in the casualty building. He directed the officials of the Medical and Health Department to make all arrangements as a part of early preparedness in view of the past experiences of Covid-19.

Venugopal Reddy inquired about the details of how many tests are currently being conducted, availability of test kits, testing equipment, details of available beds, masks, gloves, medicines, availability of oxy-

gen and human resources.

GGH Superintendent explained to the Collector that steps taken in Guntur Government Comprehensive Hospital regarding Covid-19 and said that a special Covid OP has been allocated for Covid patients at Podili Prasad Building in the hospital, where all types of tests related to Covid will be done.

According to the severity of the disease, rapid tests are conducted for the patient in emergency situations. She said that depending on the health condition of the positive patients, they will be admitted to the respective ward or ICU and treated.

The Superintendent said that 30 rooms would be set up in the B class ward of the hospital especially for Covid patients, and if the number of Covid cases is high, wards 219 and 220 would also be set up.

The Collector told reporters that in the wake of the spread of a new variant of Covid around the world, the mock drill was conducted under the auspices of the Medical and Health Department as part of the pre-preparedness arrangements to deal effectively with unexpected situations due to Covid. Medical college Principal Dr Padmavati and DM and HO Dr Sumaya Khan were among those who were present.



Officials directed to give priority to sanitation

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has directed the officials of Eluru city to give high priority to visible sanitation to promote cleanliness.

Collector Prasanna Venkatesh reviewed the sanitation management and development works in the city along with the in-charge commissioner and district Joint Collector P Arun Babu on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that measures should be taken toward a clear change in sanitation management. The Collector said that a night sanitation programme should be undertaken in the market and food

court areas of the city from Wednesday.

A team comprising 30 sanitation staff should be formed for the night sanitation programme, he said, adding that the Godavari and the Krishna canals in the city have been cleaned with great care, but necessary steps should be taken to keep them clean again.

Steps should be taken to keep the Tammileru canal banks clean, he said, stating that appointing at least one sanitary staff for every 2 KMs. The Collector ordered the appointment of a sanitary supervisor and a sanitary secretary for the purpose.

Main road areas and colonies in the city should be



divided into two sections and developed as garbage-free and sewage-free zones, he told the officials, stating that Ramachandra Rao Peta, Fatehabad Road, Canal Road and Jangareddygudem roads

should be developed as garbage-free and sewage-free. The Collector warned of action if there is laxity in monitoring sanitation works, adding that in some places, the garbage is dumped on the

dividers and steps should be taken to stop it. Collector Venkatesh said that the cleaning programme should be carried out in the rotation method by sweeping the 4 main roads with machines.

The Collector also reviewed the attendance of sanitation staff and said that the attendance was 85 to 86 per cent in the month of November and ordered to increase it to 93 per cent. Notices should be issued to those who have not attended duty during the last 6 months, he directed the officials.

The Collector directed the officials to remove the outsourcing staff from service if they are absent more than the prescribed leave. In order to

prevent mosquitoes in the city, oil balls should be continuously placed in the drains and sewage removal programs should be carried out.

Repairs to Chataparru-Madepally road should be completed at the earliest, he told the officials, stating that steps should be taken to install modern gas-based cremation machines in the crematoriums.

Housing P D Venugopal, Municipal Corporation Additional Commissioner Bapiraju, Deputy Commissioner Venkateswara Rao, SE Venkateswara Rao, Municipal Engineer Bhaskara Rao, Incharge Health Officer Dr. Malathi and other officials were present.

INDIA CORNER

After stampede-like situation, school children get separate queue at Puri

A day after nine students were injured in a stampede-like situation at the Jagannath Temple in Puri, the district administration has decided to introduce a separate queue for school children to enter the 12th-century shrine, an official said on Tuesday. The nine injured school students, all of them girls, were released from a hospital here earlier in the day and they have left for home in Mayurbhanj district, Puri Superintendent of Police KV Singh said. Earlier reports said that six students were injured in the crowded temple on Monday night. "We have introduced a separate queue for school children (in the temple) from today keeping in view the arrival of pupils during the winter vacation. Now many schoolchildren are coming for picnics to Puri and going to the temple," Singh said. The new queue will not be there after the vacation, he said.



Indian American community observes Veer Bal Diwas

The Indian American community here has observed the maiden 'Veer Bal Diwas' during which they paid tributes to the unparalleled sacrifices made by 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh's four sons who laid down their lives while defending their faith. The martyrdom day of Guru Gobind Singh's sons -- Baba Ajit Singh, Baba Jujhar Singh, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh -- is observed as 'Veer Bal Diwas'. On the occasion of Guru Gobind Singh's birth anniversary on January 9 this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that December 26 will be observed as 'Veer Bal Diwas'. Organised by the Indian Embassy at its premises here on Monday, a digital exhibition on the lives of the four Sahibzades was also mounted on the occasion. In her remarks, Charge d'Affaires Sripriya Ranganathan highlighted the various initiatives taken by the Indian government to commemorate Sikh festivals.



Law student arrested over killing of delivery executive by car

A 20-year-old law student has been arrested over the death of a food delivery executive here after his motorcycle was hit by a speeding car bearing the sticker of 'Judge' on its bonnet, the Noida Police said Tuesday. There were two more law students in the car at the time of the accident but they are at large. All three are friends of the son of a family court judge and had taken the car to go to Ghaziabad when the accident took place, an official said. The 27-year-old Zomato delivery executive was near Parthala Chowk when the Toyota Corolla car with registration in Prayagraj hit it around 1.30 am on Monday. The delivery executive, identified as Parvinder Kumar, was taken to a private hospital in Bisrakh area but was pronounced dead on arrival, the police said. The occupants of the car had also fled the spot after the crash, leaving the damaged vehicle behind, according to the police. On Tuesday, a Noida Police spokesperson said, "Suyash Mishra, the driver of the car has been arrested. The delivery executive had got hit by the negligently-driven car, causing him severe injuries that led to his death on the spot."



Govt signs peace pact with insurgent group of Manipur

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday signed a peace agreement with a Manipur insurgent group, which agreed to give up violence and join the peaceful democratic process. The tripartite agreement was signed by the central and Manipur governments and the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) rebel group which mostly operated in Manipur. In a statement, the Union Home Ministry said fulfilling the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of an 'insurgency-free and prosperous Northeast' and under the



guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the government of India and the government of Manipur entered into a cessation of operation agreement in New Delhi with ZUF that had been active for more than a decade. Representatives of

the armed group agreed to abjure violence and join the peaceful democratic process as established by law of the land, the statement said. The agreement provides for rehabilitation and re-settlement of the armed cadres. A joint monitoring group will be constituted to oversee enforcement of the agreed ground rules. This will be a significant boost to the peace process in Manipur, the statement said. The agreement was signed by senior home ministry officials and the government of Manipur and the representatives of ZUF in presence of Chief Minister N Biren Singh.

'India-backed projects in Afghanistan, Myanmar hit'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India-backed projects have suffered setbacks in Afghanistan and faced numerous challenges in Myanmar due to the current political and security situations in these countries, the Ministry of External Affairs has informed a parliamentary panel. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs chaired by BJP MP P P Chaudhary noted that there has been a reduction in allocation in aid to Afghanistan. In an action taken report tabled in Parliament last week, the Ministry of External Affairs said it has noted the parliamentary panel's observations and will work towards addressing them. India's development partnership with Afghanistan includes more than 500 projects spread across each of its 34 provinces and in various



sectors. "Several proposals in this regard are already under process. Due to the political and security situation in Afghanistan, projects implementation has suffered setbacks," the ministry said in the report. Responding to the parliamentary committee's observations on allocations to Myanmar, the ministry said despite the ongoing political situation in the country, India has completed and handed over a capacity building institution each on information technology and agriculture research in March this year.

Maha Council passes resolution on boundary dispute with K'taka

PNS ■ NAGPUR

The Maharashtra Legislative Council on Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution to "legally pursue" inclusion of 865 Marathi-speaking villages in Karnataka, the resolution said. It said the central government should urge the Karnataka government to implement the decision taken in a meeting with the Union Home Minister (over the border dispute issue). The central government should give directives to the Karnataka government to guarantee the safety of the Marathi people in the border areas, it added. The Council passed the resolution unanimously in the presence of Deputy Chairperson Dr Neelam Gorhe.

include (in Maharashtra) inch and inch of land of Belgaum, Karwar Bidar, Nipani, Bhalki cities and the 865 Marathi-speaking villages in Karnataka," the resolution said. It said the central government should urge the Karnataka government to implement the decision taken in a meeting with the Union Home Minister (over the border dispute issue). The central government should give directives to the Karnataka government to guarantee the safety of the Marathi people in the border areas, it added. The Council passed the resolution unanimously in the presence of Deputy Chairperson Dr Neelam Gorhe.

India emerges as voice of Global South

PNS ■ UNITED NATIONS

India emerged as a voice of the Global South during its two-year term in the powerful UN Security Council, which acrimoniously deliberated on Russia's invasion of Ukraine that led to unprecedented levels of global food and fuel insecurity as the world continued to grapple with inequalities amplified by the pandemic. Before relinquishing its non-permanent seat in the 15-member Council on December 31, 2022, India presided over the powerful UN body in December with the country's first woman Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj sitting in the President's seat at



the horse-shoe table. Just about two months into India's second year of its 2021-2022 term on the Council as elected non-permanent member, Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a 'special military operation' in eastern Ukraine on February 24. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres made a direct and strong appeal to Putin to "stop

your troops from attacking Ukraine" and give peace a chance as the UN chief called the invasion the "saddest moment in my tenure as Secretary-General of the United Nations." As the Russian invasion unfolded, India's then UN envoy Ambassador T S Tirumurti in February underscored New Delhi's call for urgent de-escalation of tensions and cautioned that the situation was in danger of spiralling into a major crisis. In statements in the Council and the General Assembly throughout the year, India consistently called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and an end to violence. New Delhi emphasised that dialogue and

diplomacy are the only way forward and actions that exacerbate the conflict should be avoided. "Our world faced many trials and tests in 2022 some familiar, others we might not have imagined just one year ago," Guterres said, adding that even in the brutal war in Ukraine, the power of determined, discreet diplomacy has helped people and tackle unprecedented levels of global food insecurity. India abstained on most resolutions related to the Russia-Ukraine war in the Security Council, General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, including on a Security Council procedural resolution to convene a rare emergency special session of the General Assembly.

BJP fields Rekha Gupta for Delhi Mayor election

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday declared Shalimar Bagh councillor Rekha Gupta as its Delhi Mayor candidate to challenge AAP's Shelly Oberoi in the January 6 election. The BJP has also named Kamal Bagri as its deputy mayor candidate and Kamaljeet Sehrawat, Gajendra Daral and Pankaj Luthra for standing committee member posts, said Delhi BJP media cell head Harish Khurana. All the party candidates filed nominations for the elections after their names were announced by the Delhi BJP. Gupta, after filing her nomination, asserted that she will contest the election with full strength. "I appeal to all the

councillors that vote for the development and betterment of Delhi. I hope they will choose the right mayor for the city listening to the voice of their conscience," she said. The AAP has a clear majority in the 250-member Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) House. Some BJP leaders, however, claimed that an intense contest could be witnessed for the mayor as well as deputy mayor posts since the anti-defection law does not apply to the MCD and floor crossing could be possible. The AAP ended the BJP's 15-year-rule in the MCD winning 134 of the 250 wards in the civic body polls earlier this month. The BJP managed to win 104 wards.

Arms and drugs were supposed to land on Gujarat coast, says DGP

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The firearms and drugs seized mid-sea from a Pakistani boat off the Gujarat coast were supposed to land on the coast between Salaya and Okha towns, state DGP Ashish Bhatia said on Tuesday. He said the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) will probe who are the intended receivers of the seized items and their ultimate destination. As per the preliminary investigation, the contrabands were sent by a Pakistan-based drug mafia, identified as Haji Salim Baloch, the Director General of Police (DGP) said. A Pakistani boat with 10 crew members carrying arms, ammunition, and 40 kg of



narcotics worth Rs 300 crore was intercepted off the Gujarat coast in the early hours of Monday by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) on specific inputs shared by the state Anti-Terrorist Squad, the ICG had said. "The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) will carry out a probe regarding the persons who were supposed to receive heroin worth Rs 300

core and the firearms which were seized mid-sea and where they were supposed to be taken after landing on Gujarat coast, besides a Pakistani smuggler who is behind this (cartel)," Bhatia told reporters. The seized drugs and firearms were to land between Salaya and Okha on the Gujarat coast, he said, adding the drugs were supposed to be delivered to an unidentified person in India using the Gujarat coast. Salaya and Okha are coastal towns located in Devbhumi Dwaraka district. "The drugs and firearms were to be landed between Salaya and Okha on the Gujarat coast and from there they were to be handed over to the receiver.

'BJP dubs Gandhi family 'most corrupt'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday dubbed the Gandhi family as "kattar paapi parivaar" and the "most corrupt family in Indian politics" as it cited the Rajasthan High Court's rejection of Robert Vadra's plea to quash a money laundering probe against him. BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi should break their "silence" on corruption and money-laundering allegations against Vadra, who is married to Rahul's sister and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi, when their party was in power in Haryana and Rajasthan and at the Centre as well. The Congress has often

claimed that the corruption charges against Vadra are politically motivated. The Rajasthan High Court had last week rejected a petition seeking the quashing of an Enforcement Directorate investigation into the purchase of land in Bikaner by a company (Skylight Hospitality), linked to Vadra and his mother, through alleged shady means. "This is a 'kattar paapi parivaar' (extremely immoral family) of India. Its only work has been to do corruption and grabbing land to hand over to Vadra," Bhatia alleged. He also rejected the Congress's claim of witch hunt against Vadra, claiming that it amounted to casting aspersions on the judiciary which has refused to quash charges



against him. "They are the most corrupt family in Indian politics. Three members of the family are out on bail in corruption cases. It is a serious matter of concern for a government with zero tolerance for corruption," he said, in reference to the corruption probe against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul, both former Congress presidents, in the National Herald case. Bhatia cited the details of the case against Vadra in Rajasthan

Rahul likened to Lord Ram

PNS ■ MORADABAD/NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid has likened Rahul Gandhi to Lord Ram and described him as "superhuman" and a "yogi doing tapasya" as he lauded the former party chief for his Bharat Jodo Yatra, evoking sharp criticism from the BJP. Slamming the opposition party leaders for their show of "sycophancy", the BJP said comparing a person out on bail

in a corruption case, a reference to the National Herald probe, to a God worshipped by so many people not only hurts the feelings of Hindus but also the entire society. The Congress leader, however, remained unfazed and defended his remarks. "No one can replace God but everyone can try to walk the path shown by him. Why should anyone object if I say someone is following that path," he said on Tuesday. and said the Congress government there during 2008-13 acquired land and allotted it to non-existing people. Huge parcel of land ended up in the ownership of the company in which Vadra and his mother were partners through a maze of transactions involving fictitious entities, he alleged.

3 detained for taking bribe to clear passport documents in Assam

PNS ■ DHUBRI

Three persons were detained by the police for allegedly taking bribe to clear documents for passport verification in Assam's Dhubri district on Tuesday, a police officer said. After receiving a complaint, a police team from Dhubri Sadar police station detained an employee of the Passport Office here along

with two brokers from the office premises here. The police had received complaints that the staff at the Passport office gives hint to applicants to get in touch with the brokers if they have any problems related to submission of required documents, Officer in Charge of the police station Partha Pratim Gogoi told reporters here.



Notes of bamboo: Taking eco-friendly route to music

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the climate worsens and the world looks to find more sustainable ways of life, a musician here is leading the way towards a more eco-friendly future by using bamboo to manufacture a wide array of musical instruments. Composer-percussionist Subhasis Sabyasachi has turned to the fast-growing bamboo to manufacture musical instruments, including xylophone, tabla, pakhawaj, sitar, veena

and guitar -- all traditionally made using woods like teak, rosewood, red cedar, mahogany, and poplar, among others. "If we continue cutting trees for any reason, we won't have any future for our children. The entire world is looking for ways to become plastic free. That is why I want to eliminate the use of wood in musical instruments and replace it with bamboo," Sabyasachi told PTI. It was Sabyasachi's guru and tabla maestro Brajen Biswas



who first came up with 'Brojo Tarang', a bamboo xylophone. "After guru ji's demise I am

taking this forward, our orchestra plays with all bamboo instruments, my mission is to convey a message about the climate, so that bamboo is used as a substitute," the Delhi-based musician said. He added that since bamboo is among the fastest-growing plants in the world and is widely used for climate change mitigation, it is ecological to use it for manufacturing musical instruments. It is generally the flute that is made using bamboo, but

Sabyasachi's musical kitty packs dholak, pakhawaj, tabla, kanjira, guitar, sitar and veena among other instruments. "Every bamboo forest hides the instruments for a whole orchestra," he adds. But doesn't using bamboo instead of traditional wood affect the sound quality? Other than offering a simple 'no' in response to the question, Sabyasachi adds other benefits of using bamboo to the list. "Unlike other woods, bamboo is a hollow timber. You

have to carve and cut through other material to create a hollow, which is naturally available with bamboo. And when it comes to sound, bamboo has a better resonance quality, creating better sound," the 41-year-old said, adding that the instruments made using bamboo are also comparatively lightweight. That said, though a cheaper alternative to expensive species of wood, creating an instrument out of bamboo cuts little from the overall costs.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

National parties?

Both the BJP and Congress units in Maharashtra and Karnataka have opposite views on land dispute

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has upped the ante by presenting a resolution on the decades-old border dispute with Karnataka in the state Assembly. It enunciates Maharashtra's resolve to contest the pending case in the Supreme Court with full strength for the inclusion of each and "every inch" of 865 villages including Belgavi, Karwar, Nipani, and Bidar Bhalki. This is reminiscent of the resolution that both houses of our Parliament unanimously adopted on February 22, 1994, stressing that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India, and that Pakistan must vacate parts of the state under its occupation. But Pakistan is an enemy nation that has illegally grabbed our territory; in the present instance, both states involved are Indian and following the Indian Constitution. In both states, the Bharatiya Janata Party, which prides itself on its nationalist credentials, is in power. Such a resolution is an affront to national unity. To be fair to Shinde and his deputy, Devendra Fadnis, their Government was apparently responding to an equally deplorable resolution passed by the Karnataka Assembly a few days ago. Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai moved the resolution which was unanimously adopted by a voice-vote. "There is no compromise on the matters relating to Karnataka's land, water, language and Kannadiga's interest. The feelings of Karnataka's people and members [of the Assembly] is one of this subject, and if it is affected, we are all committed to unitedly take constitutional and legal measures to protect the interest of the state."



Since both resolutions were unanimously adopted in the respective Assemblies, all parties, including the BJP and the Indian National Congress, consented to their contents. A question arises: where do these national parties stand on the land dispute between the two states? The state units of BJP and Congress Maharashtra believe that "every inch" of the land in dispute belongs to Maharashtra; similarly, the state units of BJP and Congress Karnataka believe that "every inch" of the land in dispute belongs to Karnataka. What, pray, do the BJP and the Congress believe — that is, if they believe in anything other than power? For how long can national parties keep pandering to the groups which thrive on sentimentalism, be it region, linguistic, or religious? Governance is a serious business, which must be carried out with reliance on facts, commonsense, and reason; it cannot be allowed to run amok, following the vicissitudes of demagogic politicians. But, unfortunately, that is exactly what seems to be happening. Former Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray is of the view that the Centre should declare "Karnataka-occupied Maharashtra" areas as a Union Territory. Despite the inappropriate description of the dispute areas, his suggestion is worth examining; it can be a UT till the Supreme Court decides over the matter. It is, however, not just the duty of the Centre to sort out the dispute but also of the two national parties.

PICTALK



Snow-covered Himalayas mountain range after fresh snowfall, seen from Shimla

Restore deterrence along LAC for peace



ASHOK K MEHTA

A 'Snow Leopard' style operation is needed to dissuade China from doing another Yangtse. The lasting peace can come only through quid pro quo.

Ram Madhav, once a powerful RSS voice who counted in the government, recently remarked that Indian action at Yangtse was only defensive but India is now prepared for China, adding that only Operation Snow Leopard against China was proactive. On the 15,000 feet high Yangtse plateau, the LAC follows Yangtse Ridge, the watershed where Indian border posts are located along a stone wall. Overlooking the plateau are the Yangtse heights which command a towering 360-degree view, especially of Tawang bowl 30 km away extending to Sela Pass where a tunnel is being built. It is one among several disputed areas resulting from the patchy marking of the McMahon Line on an 8-inch map and perhaps the only disputed area in Indian possession. This riles China as it was occupied by the bold actions of local commanders in Tawang when PLA infiltrated across LAC into Wangdung/Sumdorong Chu in June 1986. Over time, Tawang developed into a fortress. It has the 341-year-old Galden Namgye Lhasse monastery, second only to Lhasa's Potala monastery, the world's largest Tibetan Buddhist place of worship. More importantly, the 6th Dalai Lama was born in Tawang which Tibet administered till 1950.

For China, the succession of the 14th Dalai Lama is linked to the status of Tibet and its control over Tawang. During the talks starting in 2005 over finding a political settlement to the border, skipping LAC identification, three clauses turned out to be key: 'not to disturb settled populations'; 'political compromise'; and 'national sentiment'. India's claim to Tawang's 'settled population' was trumped by China's use of 'national sentiment' and 'political compromise'. The Chinese offer in the 1950s of a border solution was a swap: India conceded Aksai Chin while China accepted the McMahon Line. Unfortunately, this Chinese position has hardened from concessions in the west to concessions in the east, mainly in Tawang. In no way

China will compromise on Tawang and will by hook or



crook, even by use of force, try to retake Tawang which was under its possession for two months in 1962. China's new border law 2022 equates territory with sovereignty and makes recovery of lost territory sacred.

The PLA's attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo at Yangtse is not their first. They've done so regularly since 2016 to assert China's claim over disputed territory. According to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, supported by satellite imagery Dec 2022 of Planet Labs, Chinese infrastructure has improved significantly in one year with a road now 150 m short of LAC with new villages coming up close by. China's infrastructure development along LAC has created an 'escalation trap' for India which it tries to compensate for with increased readiness and surveillance to reduce the risk of accidental escalation. On 9 December, the PLA operation started around 3 am in foggy conditions, expecting to overwhelm Indian troops who were forewarned and beat back intruders with clubs and sticks. Through these attempts, says ASPI, China is testing India's willingness and readiness to resist while eroding the status quo.



INDIA HAS GONE SILENT ON DOKLAM IN BHUTAN WHERE IN 2017, INDIAN TROOPS ALLEGEDLY 'ILLEGALLY CROSSED LAC' INTO CHINESE TERRITORY TO PREVENT THE CONSTRUCTION OF A ROAD TO THE DISPUTED TRI-JUNCTION INVOKING ITS TREATY OBLIGATIONS WITH BHUTAN

India has gone silent on Doklam in Bhutan where in 2017, Indian troops allegedly 'illegally crossed LAC' into Chinese territory to prevent the construction of a road to the disputed tri-junction invoking its treaty obligations with Bhutan. Following an agreement, the Indian and Chinese disengaged after 73 days. But the Chinese feigned withdrawal and soon returned. According to Planet Lab's, imagery obtained this month Chinese village 9 km east of Doklam at Pangda is inside Bhutan with now a bridge over Torsa Nullah. This will create a new red-line situation for India with Indian troops at Dokla just meters away from PLA at Doklam. India has allowed the Doklam front to reopen as Bhutanese would any day settle their differences with China but for India's security concerns in Chumbi valley.

It is increasingly clear China will neither clarify LAC nor settle the border question. It will repeat its 2020 tricks in East Ladakh in other areas as its infrastructure expands further. After withdrawal from Hot Springs in September, China said it would not accept the status quo of 2020 created by India's 'illegal crossing of LAC'. This fiction China has

used after every clash with Indian troops in shifting the onus of blame to India. High time India paused to rethink its China policy of diplomacy which has hit a cul de sac. PM Modi's handshake at Bali with President Xi Jinping has made little difference. Last week's 17th round of military talks produced a blank de sac. PM Modi's handshake at Bali with President Xi Jinping has made little difference. Last week's 17th round of military talks produced a blank de sac. PM Modi's handshake at Bali with President Xi Jinping has made little difference. Last week's 17th round of military talks produced a blank de sac.

Madhav is wrong claiming India is prepared for China. Far from it. Deterrence has broken down and military diplomacy has also failed. The government's resolve to keep Parliament in the dark and Modi's reluctance to utter the 'C' word add to the complexity of the LAC dilemma. China is extracting maximum advantage from it. One way to rebuild deterrence is through QPQ (Quid Pro Quo) operations like Snow Leopard. Political will is needed for QPQ but so is a worthy allocation to next year's defence budget to boost deterrence.

(The writer, a retired Lt Gen, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, & founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT ANYWAY?

Sir — This is in response to Prafull Goradia's article titled "The life & career of Mohammad Ali Jinnah" (December 24). Though it would be unfair to say that the Partition of India was the handiwork of MA Jinnah only, the whole world knows that the Muslim League leader played a pivotal role in that gory episode. Had Pakistan been achieved by taking resort to non-violence dialogues debates and the population of the sub-continent not got adversely affected; perhaps a favorable case could have been made for Jinnah.

But the fact remains that it was Jinnah's call of "Direct Action Day" that provoked the year-long Great Calcutta Killings and resulted in thousands of innocents being butchered to death. Jinnah's dream of Pakistan got fulfilled at the expense of the lives of millions. And those who survived the mayhem found themselves raped, widowed, orphaned, uprooted, and homeless overnight. After achieving his goal, Jinnah acted pious by promising equality for all Pakistanis, irrespective of their religious affiliation! But that rhetoric is not enough to absolve Jinnah of the deadly crime that he had perpetrated against humanity. So painting him as "originally secular" is meaningless in the context of his future deeds.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

NEW GOVT IN NEPAL

Sir — Instability in Nepal for the last few decades has cast an ugly shadow on both its internal and external affairs. The November general election failed to produce a single candidate as no party could claim to form the govt despite Nepali Congress emerging as the single largest party. However, in a dramatic turn of events after weeks of speculation and negotiations were put to rest as former Maoist rebel leader Pushpa Kumar Dahal, Prachanda, is set to become the PM of the Himalayan state. His previous two terms in 2008–2009 and 2015–16

A good decision



The decision or initiative of the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who invited Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati and Jayant Singh of Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) to participate in the Bharat Jodo Yatra (BJY), as per

sources for the unity of the country is a welcome step. A formal letter has been written by the Congress leader but its not received consent from these leaders.

The Bharat Jodo Yatra will resume on January 3 from Ghaziabad in UP and it is said that Congress wants all like-minded parties to participate in the Yatra which is already successful in other states with a very large participation of people from all castes, communities, and religions. Earlier, many non-Congress leaders and celebrities including actor and politician Kamal Haasan joined the yatra. It is high time leaders of political parties must join the Yatra irrespective of different ideologies.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

were marred in controversy owing to a political crisis over sharing of power. His decade-long armed struggle from 1996 to 2006 only ended with establishing peace in November 2006 by means of an agreement.

In a nation clouded by political and economic instability where smaller parties role as brokers by siding either with Mr Deoba or Mr Oli, it is no surprise then that its pressing problems like maintaining law and order, fighting corruption, creating jobs, improving economic conditions, providing health and quality education remain as elusive as ever. The new govt has its task cut out. The political changes may not bode well for India as the guerrilla leader's proximity to China and his pro-China stance will pose problems for a healthy relationship.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

SPORTSPERSONS' CAREERS

Sir — Sportspersons' careers often hang on slender threads, waltzing amidst swings in fortunes. None can be a better example of this fact than the two soccer giants - Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, whose contrasting campaigns were the highlights in the recently con-

cluded FIFA 2022 World Cup. While Messi reached the pinnacle of glory by winning the cup, in contrast, Ronaldo's extraordinary career has undergone a sudden, undeniable, and maybe irreversible shift. It is really sad that the Portugal star, post world cup, has been relegated to a state where he has millions of die-hard fans, yet still being lonely. Imagine a football giant, who everyone came to watch, yet was stuck on the bench often because of the rift in the relationship between him and Coach Fernando Santos. Or precisely, being Cristiano Ronaldo, yet not being wanted now.

Hitting the football into the net with regularity was what Ronaldo had been doing for years. But when he can't do that anymore, his value plummets. Sadly, just in the space of one world cup, Ronaldo's legacy has been battered beyond repair. As for Messi, completing the set of trophies with the summit clash of the game is not only phenomenal but also like cutting through the knife in the heart of Ronaldo.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

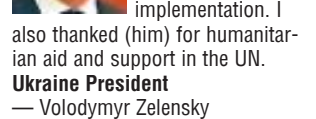
SOUND BITE

He (Vajpayee) was a rare combination of a politician, poet, fearless human being, and sympathetic leader who had no enemies, like Ajatshatru.



Former President — Ram Nath Kovind

I wished (Modi) a successful G20 presidency...now I count on India's participation in its implementation.



Ukraine President — Volodymyr Zelensky

... I was coming out of some serious cinema with Uri, Bhoot. As an actor, even I was hungry to explore.



Actor — Vicky Kaushal

I feel honoured to have been assigned this responsibility by the PCB Management



Committee and will have no stone unturned in fulfilling this responsibility to the best of my abilities. Pakistan cricketer — Shahid Afridi

A lot of lies are being spread about Rahul-ji. They should start Rahul Gandhi Troll Ministry and put Smriti Irani as the in-charge. She does not talk about when atrocities are committed against women.



Congress Social Media incharge — Supriya Srinetra

Nature's wrath

Extreme weather is playing havoc in the USA where such a big chill is being witnessed after decades

At least 48 people have already died and thousands of flights have been canceled in the USA due to storms and severe cold conditions which are being touted as one of the biggest chills in decades. The cold is so stark that it is posing danger not only to humans but to entire ecosystem. Though it has been over a week there are no signs of any let-up and it is feared that the worst is yet to come. Buffalo, New York is one of the severest hit areas by the storm which is causing high-speed wind, rains, and snow across the US. According to the forecasts, the extreme cold settling over the US this week will be biting, as a blast of arctic air and strong winds threaten to plunge several regions into subzero temperatures. Roughly 150 million people across the US are facing the frigid conditions, posing life-threatening dangers to anyone without shelter, wrecking havoc on holiday travelers and causing power outages, and blocking supply lines. Since this extreme weather is not normally witnessed in the USA it is not as prepared to face it as Canada where sub-normal temperatures are routine. Govt agencies across the country are urging households to prepare for the worst, with strong winds adding to the possibility of disruption in power supply. People are being advised to keep extra supplies, including blankets, to face any eventuality. This could be life saver.



Ironically, worldwide stark winters are becoming less common. The dramatic and sudden shift in temperatures, can have a profound effect on adaptation, especially for plants, animals, and ecosystem.

The extreme weather and storms may be direct consequence of upheaval in climate change, and fall out of human actions and interference. But it's clear that the underlying impacts caused by global heating may make them harder to endure. The abruptness of the drop in temperatures is also expected to impact aquatic life. It may be intriguing to know that such conditions can prevail in warmer climates like ours as some scientists are indicating. What has been the reason for such a sharp decrease in such a short span of time is still being debated but the reason for so many deaths can be attributed to a lack of preparedness and lesser tolerance for extreme cold conditions. This extreme winter is also a reminder that no matter how technically advanced you might be, you cannot beat nature which can take away what it gives. Life!

**FIRST COLUMN**
HEALTHY, FIT INDIA IS MUST FOR WELLBEING

Govt is addressing numerous critical health challenges



MONIKA ARORA

Health is the building block for the prosperity of a nation. The Covid-19 has brought the focus back on healthy living and the need for robust health infrastructure, and the Indian government has been quick to respond. Even before the pandemic struck, the government was emphasising on the holistic health and well-being of all.

With programmes like Ayushman Bharat and Mission Indradhanush, the government has been addressing numerous critical health challenges and promoting Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Another important but often ignored area for health programming has been women and adolescents. The health of the nation depends on the health of its women, children, and youth but health-seeking data among them in India is less than one per cent as per a study.

Similarly, only a few adolescents (5 per cent young men and 8 per cent young women) are aware of AFHC in India. Health Promotion among adolescents is the need of the hour as their empowerment is crucial to address the looming burden of overweight – obesity and NCDs among adolescents alongside the unfinished agenda of malnutrition and communicable diseases.

POSHAN Abhiyaan is a path-breaking government flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.



CNNs data has highlighted huge overweight-obesity prevalence among 10-19 years in India with five per cent in both girls and boys. Over 17 million children, aged 5-19 years in India are affected by obesity. If left unchecked, these numbers will increase to 27 million by 2030-34. Thus, addressing the food environment to enable healthy choices for children and adolescents is crucial. Findings of a recent study conducted by the PHFI's research team with support from the WHO country office for India in 2021 highlighted that the advertising environment in and around schools is obesogenic, despite government and educational institutes guidelines on restricting the availability and accessibility of HFSS foods.

Another PHFI study conducted a content analysis of food advertisements on popular television channels among children and youth in India. The results revealed that a total of 88.6 per cent of 1735 food advertisements were for HFSS foods and a higher proportion of food advertisements were seen on children's channels (38 per cent) than on youth channels (23 per cent). The study highlighted that the majority (90-95 per cent) of advertisements broadcast on television channels targeting children and youth were of HFSS foods. These studies laid the foundation for designing and initiating the "Let's Fix Our Food" (LFOF) campaign to combat an obesogenic environment for children and youth.

Better adolescent health can only be achieved by meaningfully engaging adolescents in intervention design and implementation. Recently, when multiple stakeholders convened nationally on the issue of addressing obesity among children and adolescents in India, it was noted that adolescents' voices were missing in these academic and scientific debates. It led to the launch of the 'LFOF initiative, which is co-created with adolescents. Under this initiative, their meaningful engagement in creating a healthy food environment in the country and leading to ownership of issues as campaigns are designed and delivered by the youth themselves. It will create health-promoting norms among adolescents, in families, and communities and will also support policies that will enable addressing malnutrition by addressing both ends of malnutrition: obesity and undernutrition. The time is ripe to come together and work towards the nation of our dreams, a healthier and happier India, by bringing all the relevant stakeholders for strengthening awareness and adoption of healthy behaviours around nutrition and physical activity among adolescents.

(The author is Vice-President, Public Health Foundation of India)

Teachers should play role of friend, parent

DR BIJU DHARMAPALAN

A teacher's job is to equip the students to overcome the travails they face in their later life

There was a time when a teacher was looked upon as a role model by students. Apart from imbibing knowledge, students also copied their teacher's attitude and character in their private life. A teacher is considered as par with God; whatever they deliver is considered divine by the students and the parents. They were the sole provider of knowledge for students. Before the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, corporal punishment by teachers was never considered a punishable act.

There are instances where parents supported the action of the teachers, for they knew that teachers punish students only for their betterment. Situations have changed recently, and parents consider even compelling a student to learn as a grave crime! If a student commits suicide, authorities make the teacher a culprit, and the media also goes against the teachers. A true teacher should act as a guiding light in the life of students, correcting them when they make mistakes and acting as a philosopher to provide tips to manage the travails in life.

But in today's digital era, the public perception of teachers has changed a lot. They are no longer considered a provider of knowledge. For today's generation, Google and YouTube are the knowledge sources. Even a kindergarten child knows how to use these on a laptop and smartphone. Today's children learn to attain every skill through the internet. They learn foreign languages, learn music and other skills easily using apps available on the internet.

Suppose the purpose of a university is to facilitate the advancement of knowledge and the development of high cognitive skills in the community. In that case, Google can aptly be called a 'Google University'.

In this era of 'Google University', a teacher is considered secondary, mostly to act as an intermediate between humans and machines. For teachers to survive in this new world is challenging, especially for school and college teachers.

Teachers in the earlier generations ranked based on their knowledge in their domain and their attitude. Today if a teacher has to earn respect in the knowledge domain, they need to overpower the 'Google University'. This is a difficult task for many. The attitude of a teacher in the present generation is hard to define. Indian society gives high respect to teachers and the teaching profession. Our tradition considers teachers as par with God, and hence they expect some qualities from a teacher that a student can emulate.

Truthfully speaking, most teachers are just moving with the trends of the society and never try to keep their individuality at the forefront. They try to satisfy the needs of the present generation of students.



Many of today's teachers try to be friends with students to be in their good books and be among them. Partying with students, dancing with them and being with them on social media are new means of impressing students. There are hardly very few students who expect their teachers to be a knowledge repository.

Everyone in our society, be it students or teachers, has become an attention seeker through social media. Seeking attention is the basic human instinct. Toddler seeks attention from their parents; a student seeks attention from their teachers; a teenager from friends of the opposite sex, a professional from their peers; in every sphere of life and every stratum of society, people have become attention seekers.

The quantum of posts available on various social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, or Pixstory is ample proof of this. A teacher being a part of this new digital society is no exception. Teachers dancing with students, partying with students, or even dating students and posting their photos and videos on social media has become a new norm in this new world. Many teachers play appeasement politics with their students for their survival.

Of course, like any other person, a teacher has a professional as well as private life. There is no need to intrude into their private life. That doesn't make sense to have the teacher and student consuming alcohol together or taking a smoke together. There are excellent teachers who have their tempta-

tions like any other person. The authorities should check whether the teacher is doing their profession judiciously.

Even though a good teacher should be a friend to a student, they should know where to draw the line. They should know how to keep a distance from students. Too much closeness to students may be misused by some.

Many institutions have put forth a dress code for teachers, driven mainly by the prevailing traditions in that society. The dress code also gives dignity to the profession and helps demarcate teachers from students. Otherwise, it would be tough to identify a young teacher from a student. Imagine how our army men/women would look without proper uniforms.

The unwritten rules and codes of ethics formulated by society are based on the experience our ancestors gained through their experience. The teachers are dealing with students, who are mostly in the age group of adolescents or teenagers. Their brain is fluid and is driven by the temptations caused by body chemicals. Many times the outward behaviour a student expresses is beyond their control. It's the duty of every teacher not to instigate their physiological status to extremes. In a recent affidavit filed by the Kerala University of Health Sciences at the Kerala High Court, it was stated that "absolute freedom on attaining the age of 18 may not be appropriate and good for the society, and maturation is fully accomplished at the age of 25".

In this digital communication world, a teacher must be more cautious in their attitude and behaviour on social media, as their students are constantly monitoring them. In this era, it is the duty of teachers to teach students how to behave on social media and how to tackle crimes associated with it. They should teach students how to use the internet judiciously.

With the emergence of AI technologies, all creative things like writing, drawing, compositions, etc., where human brains need to be used, can be done using the internet within minutes. In this situation, evaluating a student and developing content for teaching is an arduous task for the teachers.

A teacher's job is not only to complete the syllabus or pass examinations but to equip the students to overcome the travails they face in their later life. A good teacher should play the role of a good student, friend and parent. Only if they consider themselves a student will they be curious to learn more from their domain. Similarly, they should be a good friend to students, listening to their concerns. They should also play the role of parents showing empathy and correcting them when they make mistakes.

The problem we face in our education system is that we lack teachers who are passionate about the profession. Many have taken up the job either by accident or by peer pressure.

Teaching is a divine profession, and teachers should show divinity by inculcating the spirit gained from our rich heritage.



IN THIS ERA OF 'GOOGLE UNIVERSITY', A TEACHER IS CONSIDERED SECONDARY, MOSTLY TO ACT AS AN INTERMEDIATE BETWEEN HUMANS AND MACHINES. FOR TEACHERS TO SURVIVE IN THIS NEW WORLD IS CHALLENGING, ESPECIALLY FOR SCHOOL AND COLLEGE TEACHERS

(The author is a science communicator and academic)

POINT COUNTERPOINT

YOU CHANGED THE ENTIRE [PCB] CONSTITUTION TO BRING IN ONE PERSON, NAJAM SETHI, AND TO ADJUST HIM. I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD.

— EX-CHAIRMAN OF PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD
RAMEEZ RAJA



THE CRICKET REGIME HEADED BY RAMIZ RAJA IS NO MORE. THE 2014 PCB CONSTITUTION STANDS RESTORED. THOUSANDS OF CRICKETERS WILL BE EMPLOYED AGAIN. THE FAMINE IN CRICKET WILL COME TO AN END.

— CHAIRMAN PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD
NAJAM SETHI

Next year will be crucial for India on several counts

Economy, politics and foreign affairs will hog limelight with keen global interests in 2023

What is in store for the year 2023? Will it be good or bad? For the past three years, the world has faced an unprecedented pandemic, Covid-19, which has devastated the globe. Crystal-ball gazers are hoping for a better scenario next year. They expect the economy's health will be restored and hope to resolve the war-like situation in Ukraine.

But the famous French astrologer Nostradamus predicted that in 2023 the Ukraine crisis might lead to a world war. He foretold a temperature rise and heralded the arrival of a new Pope, a civil war in America, civil unrest in the world, and a Mars landing.

The Economist magazine notes the global interlocking challenges, including the war



KALYANI SHANKAR

in Ukraine, food and fuel prices, the fight against inflation, the transition to renewable energy, and China's uncertain post-pandemic path. India might overtake China as the world's most populous country next year. It has the world's largest youth population.

On foreign policy, India will host the prestigious 18th G20 Heads of State and Governments summit on September 9-10, 2023 in New Delhi. As part of the Summit, India will hold more than 200 events spread across major metro cities. Prime Minister Modi plans to showcase himself and India in a grand show to project himself as a world leader ahead of the 2024 polls.

The coronation of King Charles III is a colourful

event next year. Politically, for India, the upcoming nine state elections are the most significant in 2023. It will decide the fate of several parties and their leaders, including Congress, the BJP, and other regional parties. The strength of Rahul Gandhi will be tested in these polls after his current Bharat Jodo yatra ends in February.

Nine states will go to polls over the next 12 months. They are—Meghalaya, Tripura, and Nagaland in February; Karnataka in May; Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Telangana, and Rajasthan in November. The government might also hold elections in Jammu and Kashmir. The results will be a precursor for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Who wins and

who loses will impact the electorate and the workers' morale.

The ruling BJP is making all efforts to expand its base. For the Opposition, it is vital to ensure that non-BJP parties win to stop the BJP juggernaut. There is a direct fight between the BJP and the Congress in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh. In Karnataka, there will be a triangular contest between BJP, Congress, and JDS. In Telangana, a triangular fight will be between TRS, Congress, and BJP. In Tripura, too, there will be a triangular fight between the BJP, the Congress, and the Left Front.

Of these, the BJP rules Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. Both are critical for Congress and the BJP. And so are Chhattisgarh and

Rajasthan, the only two states Congress currently holds. The BJP wants to wrest Telangana from chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, who fancies himself as the challenger to Modi. Confident because his party has maintained over 40 per cent vote share, establishing its formidable position in Telangana, KCR wants to perform a hat trick. Though he has finished the Congress and Telugu Desam, to his dismay, the BJP has emerged as the main opposition party in the space vacated.

The immediate focus is on Karnataka. The BJP has high stakes as that is the only state the BJP is ruling in the south. The Congress-JD(S) combine has a chance to wrest the government from the BJP.

Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram are poll bound in the Northeast. The BJP currently rules Tripura. In Meghalaya and Nagaland, the BJP-backed governments are in power. The Mizo National Front government is ruling in Mizoram. The once pre-eminent Congress is almost finished now.

Will Congress revive its strength? Will Rahul Gandhi emerge stronger? The Himachal Pradesh win this month has boosted the morale of the Congress. It has allowed a chance for Congress to unite the Opposition.

The opposition parties have realised that Modi will get a third term unless they combine. They will decide on the prime ministerial candi-

date only after the polls. There are at least half a dozen contenders, mostly the egoistic regional satraps like Mamata Banerjee, KCR, and Arvind Kejriwal.

The return of covid with a new variant is a new threat. India managed to contain the pandemic by vaccinating a billion plus people. Still, the government should be on guard against any new variants.

On the economy, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget on February 1. Inflation and price rise are two critical issues. The World Bank expects India's GDP growth to be better than expected, but inflation would stay above 7 per cent.

Overall, 2023 might bring us better prospects in most spheres.

MONEY MATTERS

Power Min, DRDO ink pct for early warning system for hydro projects

The Power Ministry on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) for the implementation of an early warning system for vulnerable hydro projects or power stations. The ministry and the DRDO will jointly work towards developing suitable mitigation measures against avalanches, landslides, glaciers, glacial lakes and other geo-hazards, an official release said. The expertise of the DRDO will also be utilized in developing comprehensive Early Warning System for vulnerable hydro projects/power stations in hilly regions. The ministry has taken the initiative of implementing Early Warning System (EWS) in the hydro power projects especially those located in upper reaches of hilly regions. The EWS is an integrated system of hazard monitoring, forecasting and prediction, disaster risk assessment, communication and preparedness for timely action to reduce disaster risks in advance of hazardous events.



Sensex, Nifty rise for 2nd day as banking, metal shares shine

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher for a second straight day on Tuesday on gains in banking, IT and metal shares following a firm trend in the global markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 361.01 points or 0.60 per cent to settle at 60,927.43. During the day, it rallied 420.26 points or 0.69 per cent to 60,986.68. The broader NSE Nifty climbed 117.70 points or 0.65 per cent to end at 18,132.30. From the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Asian Paints, Wipro, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Tech Mahindra and Titan were the major winners. Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Mahindra & Mahindra and Nestle were the laggards. "With strong support from global peers, the domestic market is attempting to recoup its previous week's losses. Metal stocks shone amid hopes of a demand revival in China on reports of loosening COVID restrictions."



Myplan8 launches app to sensitize about carbon footprint

Startup firm Myplan8 on Tuesday said it has launched an application to sensitize people about their carbon footprint and help reduce the emissions. The application would help track carbon footprint caused by day-to-day lifestyle activities, according to the company. An individual can check about their carbon footprint through Myplan8, by answering few questions on the application, it said. The app will help people move towards a more sustainable way of living, through a carbon-conscious lifestyle. "Every nation stresses on carbon footprint reduction... We aim to eliminate roughly 1 Giga tons of carbon emissions by 2030 by enrolling 100 million people in Myplan8," its Co-founder Nidhi Mehra said in a statement. The app will help evaluate aspects like usage of water, electricity, food habits, waste management, and mode of transportation.



Total govt debt rises to Rs 147 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The total liabilities of the government increased to Rs 147.19 lakh crore at September-end from Rs 145.72 lakh crore at the end of June this fiscal year, according to the latest data on public debt.

In percentage terms, it reflects a quarter-on-quarter increase of 1 per cent in second quarter of 2022-23.

Public debt accounted for 89.1 per cent of total gross liabilities at September-end 2022, up from 88.3 per cent as on June 30, the quarterly report on public debt management released by the finance ministry on Tuesday said.

Nearly 29.6 per cent of the outstanding dated securities had a residual maturity of less than 5 years, it said.

During the second quarter, it said, the central government raised Rs 4,06,000 crore through dated securities, as



The ownership pattern of central government securities indicates that share of commercial banks stood at 38.3 per cent at September-end 2022 as against 38.04 per cent on June 30, it said.

against notified amount of Rs 4,22,000 crore in the borrowing calendar, while repayments were at Rs 92,371.15 crore.

The weighted average yield of primary issuances hardened to 7.33 per cent in Q2 FY23 from 7.23 per cent in Q1 FY23, it said, adding, the weighted average maturity of new issuances of dated securities was lower at 15.62 years in Q2

as compared to 15.69 years in Q1.

During July-September 2022, the central government did not raise any amount through Cash Management Bills. The Reserve Bank did not conduct Open Market operations for government securities during the quarter.

The net daily average liquidity absorption by RBI under

the longer tenure securities during the second quarter, it said. Monetary Policy Committee decided to hike the policy repo rate by 100 bps, i.e., from 4.90 per cent to 5.90 per cent during Q2 largely with an intention to contain inflation, it said.

The ownership pattern of central government securities indicates that share of commercial banks stood at 38.3 per cent at September-end 2022 as against 38.04 per cent on June 30, it said.

With regard to foreign exchange reserves, the report said, it stood at USD 532.66 billion as on September 30, 2022, moderated from USD 638.64 billion on September 24, 2021.

Between July 1, 2022 and September 30, 2022, the rupee depreciated by 3.11 per cent. The value of rupee against the dollar as on July 1 stood at 79.09 as against 81.55 on September 30, it said.

Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) including Marginal Standing Facility and Special Liquidity Facility was at Rs 1,28,323.37 crore during the quarter, it said.

The yields on government securities in secondary market hardened in short-end curve due to near-term inflation and liquidity concern though softening of yield was observed for

2022 YEAR-ENDER

Implementing labour reforms, expanding social security coverage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Expanding the social security coverage for unorganised workers and pursuing states to make rules for labour codes will be the key priorities for the government in 2023, as efforts continue to strengthen the country's labour market.

With India set to host G-20 leaders' summit for the first time next year, the Union labour ministry will also pursue key employment-related agenda touching upon global skill gaps, gig and platform economy, sustainable financing of social security schemes and other issues.

"Our efforts will be to cover a large number of unorganised sector workers under the ambit of social security schemes in 2023 and provide them with eligible benefits online. We want to make processes paperless in the ministry," Union Labour and Employment Minister Bhupender Yadav told PTI.

The four labour codes on social security, industrial relations, wages, and Occupational Safety Health & Working Conditions (OSH) have already been cleared by Parliament but they can be implemented only when the Centre and states notify the respective rules since labour is a concurrent subject.

The Centre is ready with the rules, while some states are yet to complete the rule-making exercise.

As many as 31 states and Union Territories have issued draft rules for The Code on Wages, 2019 while 28 states each have done this exercise for The Industrial Relations Code, 2020 and The Code on Social Security. There are 26 states which have issued draft rules under The Occupational Safety Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020. The Centre is working with states for the implementation of the four codes that will be the key in providing social security to all informal workers in the country.

"India has a federal structure. Labour is a concurrent subject. We have already pre-published draft rules on the four labour codes. The states are in the process of completing this exercise. We are pursuing them to complete the

exercise. I hope that the codes are implemented at the appropriate time," Yadav said.

The four codes envisage strengthening the protection available to workers, including unorganised workers, in terms of statutory minimum wage, social security and healthcare. They also provide for a statutory right for minimum wages and timely payment of wages for all workers to support sustainable growth and inclusive development.

Among others, the codes provide for a uniform definition of 'wages' that will help

The Centre is working with states for the implementation of the four codes that will be the key in providing social security to all informal workers in the country.

in reducing multiple interpretations of the labour law and related litigations. It also envisages provisions for annual health check-up and medical facilities to enhance labour productivity and increase life expectancy.

As part of efforts to formalise the employment of more people, the codes also require issuance of appointment letters to every employee of an establishment.

Such a system is expected to enhance job security as well as enable a worker to claim statutory benefits such as minimum wage and social security. Under the codes, the gig and platform workers have

been defined for the purpose of formulating schemes to provide social security benefits. Another provision is that the central government may extend benefits to unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers and the members of their families through Employees' State Insurance Corporation or Employees' Provident Fund Organization.

The applicability of Employees' Provident Fund has been extended to all industries under the codes as against scheduled industries at present under the new legal framework.

Another major issue will be on the way forward with respect to the Supreme Court order on Employees Pension Scheme 1995 (EPS-95). "We are examining the judgement," Yadav said.

Last month, the apex court upheld the Employees' Pension (Amendment) Scheme, 2014 and allowed employees to opt for enhanced pension coverage alongside their employers in four months' time.

In a written reply to Rajya Sabha earlier this month, Minister of State for Labour and Employment Rameshwar Teli said the apex court judgement has legal, financial, actuarial and logistical implications. As per the court order, employees who were existing EPS-95 members as on September 1, 2014 can contribute up to 8.33 per cent of their actual salaries, as against 8.33 per cent of the pensionable salary capped at Rs 15,000 a month towards pension. It had also struck down the requirement in the 2014 amendments mandating employer contribution of 1.16 per cent of the salary exceeding Rs 15,000 per month.

Late Payment Surcharge Rules help cut receivables of power producers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Late Payment Surcharge 2022 Rules is facilitating receivables reduction for independent power producers, according to India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra). India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said the implementation of the LPS Rules 2022 issued by the Ministry of Power on June 3, 2022, has brought in greater discipline from state electricity distribution companies (discoms) in making timely payments to independent power producers (IPPs) in the renewable and thermal power sectors. Ind-Ra's portfolio has witnessed reductions across most states, significant in some -- such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh (receivables on October 22 at 30-90 days compared to 120-450 days in May 2022) -- and an improving trajectory in others, namely Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, the statement said. The scheme encourages

payment discipline from discoms, given the risk of losing short and eventually medium- or long-term access to the power supply through the interstate transmission system (ISTS), it added. Along with the reduction, a greater alignment across IPPs and a level playing field with central utilities for payment security provide for greater stability in cash flows and mitigate liquidity pressures in the stressed project, the agency said. Ind-Ra expects ratings in its portfolio in the investment grade to remain resilient; on the other hand, the rules will limit downside risks to stressed projects in the non-investment grade. However, the EMI (equated monthly instalments) payments for realising the accumulated dues up to June 3, 2022, through the scheme are primarily facilitated by funding from Power Finance Corporation Ltd and/or REC Ltd (IND AAA/Stable), adding to the debt liability of discoms, the agency pointed out.

India-Australia FTA to help increase apparel exports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Customs duty advantage under the India-Australia free trade agreement will help Indian apparel exporters get greater market access in that country as compared to their competitors, AEPCC said on Tuesday.

The agreement is coming into force from December 29. Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPCC) Vice Chairman Sudhir Sekhri said Australia is the largest importer of garments in the southern hemisphere.

While China's share in import of apparel into Australia is more than 70 per cent, India's share is less than 5 per cent. "With the India-Australia ECTA (Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement) getting operationalised, India will have a slight duty advantage over Vietnam and Indonesia for



imports in the Australian market," he said.

India's ready-made garment exports to Australia have seen a growth of an average of 11.84 per cent over the last 5 years, which is "purely on account of China Plus One strategy adopted by most countries," he added. Going by this growth trend and with the agreement coming into play, AEPCC believes that the exports to Australia would grow three times by 2025, the Vice Chairman said.

An outreach programme with apparel exporters was organised on Tuesday by the Department of Commerce in association with AEPCC and Okhla Garment Textiles Cluster (OGTC). OGTC President P M S Uppal said most of the big Australian companies have deep roots in China and they will only be considering India as an option if "we give them lucrative incentives and reasons to shift to India for sourcing their requirements".

Rupee falls 20 paise to close at 82.85 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined 20 paise to close at 82.85 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, pressured by month-end dollar demand from importers and foreign capital outflows. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened lower at 82.71 against the greenback and witnessed an intraday high of 82.69 and a low of 82.87. It finally settled at 82.85, down 20 paise over its previous close of 82.65. The dollar index, which gauges the

greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.27 per cent lower at 104.02. Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 0.83 per cent to USD 84.62 per barrel. The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 361.01 points or 0.60 per cent higher at 60,927.43, while the broader NSE Nifty climbed 117.70 points or 0.65 per cent to 18,132.30. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in capital markets on Monday as they sold shares worth Rs 497.65 crore, according to exchange data.

LOAN FRAUD CASE

Ex-ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar, husband approach HC against their arrest

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Former ICICI Bank CEO and MD Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar on Tuesday approached the Bombay High Court, calling their arrest by the Central Bureau of Investigation in a loan fraud case illegal. The court, however, refused to grant urgent hearing and directed the Kochhars to mention the matter before the regular bench once it resumes after vacation. A lawyer represent-

ing the Kochhars said that no prior sanction, as required under the law, was obtained by the CBI before their arrest. The probe agency arrested the Kochhars on Friday night after questioning them briefly. It alleged that they were evasive in their responses and did not cooperate in the investigation. The CBI had named the Kochhars and Venugopal Dhoot, chairman of the Videocon Group, along with Nupower Renewables (NRL) managed by Deepak Kochhar,

Supreme Energy Private Ltd (SEPL), Videocon International Electronics Ltd. (VIEL) and Videocon Industries Limited, in its FIR registered in 2019 under IPC sections related to criminal conspiracy and the Prevention of Corruption Act. The CBI has alleged that ICICI Bank had sanctioned credit of Rs 3,250 crore to the companies of the Videocon Group promoted by Dhoot in violation of the Banking Regulation Act, RBI guidelines, and credit policy of the bank.

Quality of domestic coal has increased considerably

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday said the quality of domestic coal has increased considerably as the grade conformity of fossil fuel has improved to 69 per cent in the current fiscal. The government and the coal companies, including Coal India, have taken several steps to achieve the objective of supplying quality coal to all consumers. In a statement, the coal ministry said, "The grade conformity (of coal) has jumped to 69 per cent in 2022-23 (till November 2022) as against 51 per cent in 2017-18."

These companies have taken steps like periodic re-gradation of coal mines, introduction of improved mining technology and installation of auto analyzers, among others to improve the quality of Indian coal.

An app called "UTTAM" -- Unlocking Transparency by Third Party Assessment of Mined Coal -- was also introduced in 2018 for coal quality monitoring. It has been helping consumers to view the third-party validation of coal supply. Many consumers are taking advantage of this app in planning their coal usage, the statement added.



OPEN MARKET SALE SCHEME

Govt mulls offloading 15-20 lakh tons of wheat from FCI to contain prices in 2023

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is considering releasing 15-20 lakh tonnes of wheat next year from the FCI stock for bulk consumers like flour millers, under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) to contain rising retail prices, according to official sources.

According to the data maintained by the consumer affairs ministry, the average retail price of wheat was at Rs 32.25 per kg on December 27, higher than Rs 28.53 per kg in the year-ago period. Wheat flour (atta) price too remained higher at Rs 37.25 per kg than Rs 31.74 per kg a year ago.

Under the OMSS policy, the government allows state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) to sell foodgrains, espe-



cially wheat and rice, at pre-determined prices in the open market from time to time to bulk consumers and private traders. The purpose is to boost the supply during the lean season and moderate the general open market prices.

An official source said, "The nodal Food Ministry has moved an OMSS policy for 2023 for wheat and the plan is

to release 15-20 lakh tonnes from the FCI for bulk users under the OMSS. "Wheat grown in the last two crops will be issued from the FCI stock and the rate has not yet been decided, the source said. Another source said there is a possibility of releasing wheat under the OMSS as the government is comfortable with the foodgrains' stock position.

'The stand-up comedian that you see is recalibrated for Shark Tank'

Recently, it was announced that comedian Rahul Dua replacing Rannvijay Singha as the host of the business reality shows *Shark Tank*. *The Pioneer* quickly connected with the comedian, who shares with us his learnings from donning this new cap, and some more insights.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

We have a business reality show in our country too and Shark Tank India is all set for its second season. And guess what? Fans' favourite Rahul Dua will be there in the new season! Recently, there was a major change made on the show which took not just netizens but media also by surprise. When Rannvijay Singha exited the show, in his place, comedian Rahul Dua has been roped in to host the business reality show.

And, we can't keep calm! Welcoming him into this new venture, we ask him about the magical aspects and learn-

ings from donning this cap now and he had a lot to tell us.

"All the entrepreneurs that were paying their had sentiments attached to their entrepreneurial pitches. From liaising with a scrap dealer, and farmers to a student who was brought up by his professor — their spirits were unwavering. After a point, I started doubting myself (he bursts out laughing) whether am I doing something legitimate for myself or not," he shared.

According to the YouTuber, it wasn't as if he was a succession to Rannvijay, instead, he stated it as, "There was never an exchange of information between Rannvijay sir and me — it was the channel's call.

They wanted a discrete element via an artist, who can take over behind the scenes. The stand-up comedian that you guys see is recalibrated for this show! There was no set prepared for me, instead, I was a friend to the pitchers. When they go inside the tank, meet the sharks: the atmosphere over there is very hair-raising. Even the production is also very disciplined, they have no time to sympathise with the ones who couldn't get any funds because they are busy making a number one show for the country! So, who's left? It's me, as a host and dost. Before entering the tank, I used to calm their nerves down and once they are out of the tight spot: Rahul Dua was back."

Doing comedy is also a business for us, we have a full-blown team that we are expanding!"

The sharks are way too impressive and Rahul, just at the first instance understood that you can't step up the line with them because each one of them is so well informed.

He continued, "They are very influential, you just can't cook up a blue story with them. They'll speck you out immediately! Their approaches are also very extraordinary, joining them were the two new founders. If they were owning a cricket team of their own, each one of them would have won for sure. In the beginning, when Amit Jain used to interrogate the pitcher consec-

utively it was a tad bit maddening for us behind the screen, while moving ahead I understood by the time he used to reach his 6th question — he was actually gauging the pitcher's intelligence and passion towards his startup ecosystem, and of course his/her honesty. You asked me about Ashneer Grover, forget about him, on the contrary, even I am not there in the promos funnily (he giggled). I myself am a spontaneous takeaway from the show, how will I miss Ashneer sir?"

Hoping to turn an entrepreneur soon, Rahul Dua is gearing up to launch a mixed line of his own. He exclaimed, "As a comedian, the first move that naturally appears to us is launching merchandise of our own and I did. Unfortunately, it didn't turn out to be a resounding trend as I expected. Down the lane, will soon be launching a thundering designer label of my own and it will be so astonishing that it will have to do well in the market."



Content Creation: Influencers who represented India on global platforms

Round up 2022

Over the past years, the content creation world has gained huge prominence. In fact, even film celebs collaborate with influencers. This year, there have been several influencers who have taken the content creation to a whole different level, representing that nation on various global platforms.

Let's rewind back and have a look to the influencers who have made us proud.

Niharika NM



Niharika NM has been one of the most renowned social media stars. Niharika was titled with the 'Youth Icon- Entertainer of the year 2022' at the World Influencers and Bloggers Awards. Niharika was one of the influencers who waved the Indian flag at the Cannes Film festival. For the Cannes, she looked drop-dead gorgeous in her black ensemble from Geisha Designs.

Masoom Minawala



Globally recognized influencer Masoom Minawala is known for her choice of classy fits. She is the perfect example of how a fashion influencer should be, giving us affordable and stylish looks in one go. For Cannes, she was spotted in a wide range of looks, each look giving us a hint of her colorful and vibrant personality.

Malvika Sitlani Aryan



Digital creator and CEO of her own brand M a s i c Beauty, she made her debut at the Cannes Film Festival this year. She opted for a

Millia London orange ruffle gown with a trail that swept us off our feet followed by an It-girl saree from Papa Don't Preach by Shubhika.

Diipa Buller Khosla



Diipa gave us some major fashion goals with her outfit choices at the Cannes Film Festival 2022. Styled by Manish Malhotra, for her first look, she wore a beautiful ivory saree by the fashion designer himself. She continued with the ivory and white streak with a shimmering gown by Nedret Taciroglu. She also chose a bright orange outfit by Georges Hobeika and for her last look, she donned a black and white ensemble by Avaro Figlio.

Tarini Peshawaria



Skincare influencer Tarini Peshawaria had her debut at the Cannes Film Festival and she did not disappoint. Staying in touch with her minimalistic style, she opted for a pastel blue ruffle gown by Ambika Lal and a sequined saree by Manish Malhotra.

Aashna Hegde



Aashna Hegde is the queen of fashion and content creation. She was one of the influencers who represented India at the VidCon. She has posted a few vlogs as well on her YouTube channel talking about her experience and you should totally check it out to know more about the entire event. She also walked the runway for New

York fashion week.

Radhika Bangia



Radhika Bangia too represented India and the above picture is from the welcome dinner party at VidCon. Honestly, it looks like one hell of an experience. She interacted and conversed with so many creators all around the globe which gave her quite a few insights too about the community.

Gautami Kawale and Abhyudaya Mohan



Gautami Kawale and Abhyudaya Mohan were invited for a talk at this summit and it's such a huge thing to give a speech among some amazing global creators.

Nagma Mirajkar



Nagma Mirajkar became the first Indian content creator to walk the London Fashion Week Runway. She walked the ramp as one of the show-stoppers representing Indian influencer presenters at the global platforms.

Gaurav Taneja and Ritu Rathee



Gaurav Taneja who is also popularly known as Flying beast will be seen walking the New York Fashion week runway along with his wife Ritu Rathee.

5 musts to ace the New Year's eve look

New Year's Eve is fast approaching, and while we're sure you've already picked the absolutely perfect outfit, the perfect shoes, and all the matching accessories, we want to make sure you've packed everything you need.

Need a refreshed fragrance post the fun on the dancefloor? We got you covered. Smudged your eyeliner? No problem! No matter what hurdles life may throw your way, it is essential that you equip your purse with everything you need to guarantee a flawless celebration.

We have created this survival guide with the help of Tara Sutaria, for the absolute must-haves in your bag before you head to a New Year's party:

A mini 'fashion emergency' kit: Fashion emergencies can come anywhere and at any time. Fixing them up ASAP can be a little challenging especially when you're at a party with a whole bunch of party-people. Carrying a mini sewing kit can always come in handy in case your tights caught on your fingernail or if a button pops.

A perfume that fits: We are all aware that New Year's Eve is all about the dancing and the midnight kisses! But you also want to smell super fresh and clean at all times. A pen perfume is the ultimate tool that you need to have in your bag. Tara



Sutaria, Brand Ambassador, ITC Engage says, "I strongly believe that fragrances

have a lasting effect on our personalities and that's why I don't step out of home without mine! I am constantly on the go and need my perfume easily accessible. I've always wanted a fragrance that is sleek, stylish, and easy to carry. Engage Lamante Click & Brush perfume was my answer to that — it is so easy to carry along for fragrant touch-ups and fits perfectly in my travel sling bag — ideal for the modern woman and our active life style!"

Blotting Paper: Being a tad bit over prepared when it comes to your make-up on New Year's Eve is perfectly okay. To keep your makeup looking as fresh as possible for hours, dab on some blotting paper after applying your foundation, and then touch up during the night to avoid getting too greasy.

Lip and Cheek Stain: Keeping essential makeup items at home is not an option when you're at any party. A lip and cheek stain serves several purposes and also helps you carry less makeup items in your purse. It can instantly lift your entire look but dabbing some on, on the apples of your cheeks and lips!

Hair Ties: After the party is done and you enter the new year with a bang, you may just want to put your hair up in a sloppy bun and call it a night. A hair tie is a must-pack item; extra points if it sparkles!

Providing an adaptive curriculum by bridging learning gaps

The trend of homeschooling has been growing over the past several years. Homeschooling provides flexibility to students in terms of timing and pursuing a passion-based career. It is the way forward for the education sector and a mix of some hybrid learning activities.

With an aim to impart holistic learning where all-round development of the student is the prime focus, Birla Brainiacs is here to achieve this through student engagement and experiential learning models allowing the student to build knowledge which caters to their individual needs and the needs of the 21st century. All this while making learning enjoyable and fun.

Birla Brainiacs is an Edtech company founded by Nirvaan Birla in 2019. The Edtech platform was founded to cater to every section of society who wanted to study in good schools but could not study due to higher fees or the unavailability of good



schools in their locality. Its main objective is to provide the best education at a minimal fee. It is also for those students who want to make their passion-based career like sports, dance, technology, music etc., but cannot pursue their dream career after 8-10 hours of schooling.

They are here bringing a solution for both

students and parents in many ways. It is a hybrid option combining the best of both worlds (Offline+Online). It offers flexibility and freedom to students to learn at their own pace. For students, they have to spend a daily of only 3 hours as compared to 8 hours in a physical school. They do not need to carry 8-10 kg of heavy school bags. With limited accessories, parents can afford premium education at 1/4th of the cost and can track their child's daily progress.

Covid has impacted the lives of people and students in many ways. While everyone was busy gadgetizing their offline school for a temporary online school, Nirvaan Birla - The founder of Birla Brainiacs unleashed the opportunity and founded Birla Brainiacs, where anyone can complete their schooling from home. They have also developed its app and web feature where one can access an entire school thing from home itself.

DIDN'T FEEL PRESSURE OF REPLACING KULDEEP: UNADKAT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jaydev Unadkat did get his much-awaited chance with the red ball and he kept his "promise" with a spirited effort in his first Test for India after 12 years.

His love for the longer version of the game became apparent more than ever in January when he typed a tweet that went viral.

"Dear red ball, please give me one more chance. I'll make you proud, promise!" the left-arm pacer had posted.

"Everyone thought that I was referring to a national comeback. I was just missing red ball cricket in general as Ranji Trophy was postponed for a second time (due to COVID)," Unadkat said after his arrival from Bangladesh.

The 31-year-old, who had played his first and only Test way back in 2010 with the great Sachin Tendulkar and current head coach Rahul Dravid being his celebrated teammates, featured in his second outing last week in remarkable circumstances.

Having not been on selectors' radar despite a record-breaking performance in the 2020 Ranji Trophy, a national recall came for Unadkat when he expected it the least.

He was not even part of the India A side that toured Bangladesh before the Test series, so one could not fault



him for keeping his hopes to bare minimum.

Eventually, his patience and perseverance prevailed as he was flown to Bangladesh as a backup pace option, with Mohammad Shami not regaining full fitness for the series.

The visa delays meant he could only reach Chattogram after the start of the first Test

but against all expectations, stand-in skipper K L Rahul gave Unadkat the big break he was waiting for while toiling on the domestic circuit for years.

The opportunity came at the expense of spinner Kuldeep Yadav, whose exclusion after an eight-wicket haul in the series opener triggered a selection controversy.

The scoreboard would show that Unadkat took three wickets in his comeback Test but his impact was bigger in the game.

With years of first-class experience under his belt since his Test debut in South Africa, Unadkat relished the pressure.

Getting the most out of flat tracks in Rajkot is something

Unadkat had done for years and the Porbandar-born cricketer found himself in similar territory in Mirpur.

It did not take long for him to make his presence felt as he removed previous game's centurion Zakir Hasan with a ball that jumped from good length. That was his maiden wicket in Tests and Unadkat says that moment will remain the most special of his career.

"I was trying to extract bounce off length and I felt I could do that. The feeling (when it happened) will remain one of the most special memories of my cricketing career. Getting a Test wicket is something I visualised 1000 times," said Unadkat.

Did he feel the pressure of replacing Kuldeep?

"Absolutely not. When you don't expect things and they happen, I take it in my stride. I just wanted to contribute. If not take a wicket then create pressure from the other end. That was the thought.

"Domestic cricket has helped me immensely that way. You always have a role to play as a bowler even when you aren't getting the wickets. You can create pressure and put batter in doubt and other bowlers can capitalise on that."

What worked for Unadkat

was his ability to bowl long spells on flat decks. 12 years from his debut, he was also a much wiser man having cap-

tained Saurashtra to unprecedented success.

"I got my chance as the management felt I was suited to the pitch. Like you said the conditions were similar (to Rajkot), not a lot of pace off the wicket and you will have to extract whatever you can by hitting the length hard.

"I knew if I will stick to my strengths, there will be something coming my way and that is how I got that extra bounce."

Unadkat could be the next left-arm pacer India have been looking for years but he is not thinking about that. When Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Shami are back, finding a spot in the XI will be much tougher.

"I was pretty young when I made my debut. All these years (at Ranji level) I never felt like a veteran. I am still 31 and at my peak. These four to five years would be the peak of my career and I want to continue as much as I can."

Does he see himself retaining his place for the Border Gavaskar Trophy beginning next month?

"I don't want to expect things as that has been helping me honestly. I am looking forward to the next round of Ranji (against Delhi), and that is all I am thinking about. If it has to happen, it will happen."

"I hope India dominate Australia. It is going to be a great series," he said.

India beat SA by 54 runs

PTI ■ PRETORIA

The Indian U-19 women's cricket team produced an all-round effort to beat South Africa by 54 runs in the first T20I of the five-match series here on Tuesday.

The series serves as preparation for both teams ahead of the ICC U-19 Women's T20 World Cup to be held in South Africa from January 14 to 29.

Opener Shweta Sehrawat and Soumya Tiwari scored 40 each off 39 and 46 balls respectively to guide India to 137 for five after being asked to bat.

But the start was far from rosy for the Indians as they lost skipper Shafali Verma in the first delivery of the match.

But Sehrawat and Tiwari then joined hands and stitched 70 runs off 74 balls for the second wicket to set the platform for India's total.

While Sherawat decorated her innings with five boundaries, Tiwari hit three fours and six.

Besides the duo, wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh made 15, while Titas Sandhu (13 not out) and Hurley Gala (11 not out) also played useful hands towards the end.

Kayla Reyneke (2/13) and Ayanda Hlubi (2/22) picked up two wickets each for the home team.

Defending the modest



total, medium pacer Shabnam Shakil (3/15) shone bright with the ball as Indian bowlers picked up wickets at regular intervals to restrict South Africa to 83 for eight.

Shakil struck in her opening two overs to reduce South Africa to 10 for 2 inside three overs, a position from which the hosts never recovered.

Besides Shakil, off-spinner Archana Devi (3/14) also sparkled with the ball in the middle overs.

Hurley Gala (1/13) and Sonam Yaddav (1/15) also chipped in with a wicket each.

Only three South Africa batters -- Kayla Reyneke (20), Madison Landsman (10) and Jemma Botha (10 not out) -- managed double digit scores.

The second match of the series will be played here on Thursday.

Warner retires in pain after making 200 in 100th Test



AP ■ MELBOURNE

David Warner battled through searing heat to hit an epic unbeaten 200 in his 100th Test on Tuesday before retiring in pain as Australia consolidated their advantage against South Africa at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

On a scorching day, the hosts were 386-3 at stumps on day two of the second Test, leading by 197 after the Proteas were dismissed in their first innings

for 189.

Travis Head was not out 48 with Alex Carey on nine.

Steve Smith (85) and Marnus Labuschagne (14) were the only wickets to fall. But worryingly for Australia, Cameron Green, who took 5-27 in South Africa's first innings, also retired hurt after a nasty rap on the finger from Anrich Nortje.

Smith and Warner's 239-run partnership took the game further away from South Africa, whose bowlers toiled in temper-

atures touching 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit).

Opener Warner, 36, snapped a near-three-year century drought in typically aggressive and gritty fashion, reaching three figures for a 25th time after coming into the game under pressure on a lean run.

It was his first Test hundred since January 2020 and as the opposition bowlers tired, he battled the elements and converted it to 200 for only the third time.

His wife Candice told host broadcaster Fox: "You'd think by now people would know writing David Warner off is the wrong thing to do."

But it was an exhausting effort, as he passed 8,000 Test runs en route.

Chairs had to be brought out for Warner and Smith to rest on in the drinks breaks, with towels draped over their heads and ice-packs on their shoulders.

Warner needed treatment for cramp several times and retired in pain after reaching 200 and dropping to his knees, eventually helped from the field by support staff.

"The boys were cramping left, right and centre," Smith told reporters. "So, difficult (conditions) but nice to get us to the position where we are now. I think we're in a nice spot."



England to tour B'desh for white-ball series in March

PTI ■ LONDON

The England men's team will undertake its first tour of Bangladesh since 2016 when it travels to the country to play three One-day Internationals and an equal number of T20Is in March next year.

The tour will commence with three ODIs, the first two matches taking place at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka on March 1 and 3. The final match of the series will take place on March 6 at Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram.

The three-match T20I series will start on March 9 in Chattogram, with the final two matches, on March 12 and 14, scheduled to be played in Dhaka.

The last time the teams

played a series was in 2016, when England won the ODIs 2-1.

The England squad is expected to play two warm-up fixtures ahead of the ODIs, the dates for which will be announced in due course, said an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) statement.

"It is exciting that the England Men's white-ball squad will return to Bangladesh for the first time since 2016. The atmosphere generated in Dhaka and Chattogram for this eagerly-anticipated tour will be fantastic," said ECB interim CEO Clare Connor.

"There is a great passion for cricket across Bangladesh, and we expect a tough challenge against a side who have an excellent record in home conditions."

Conway, Latham take New Zealand to 165-0

AP ■ KARACHI

New Zealand's opening pair responded with a solid 165-0 in the first cricket Test on Tuesday after Agha Salman had scored his first Test century and led Pakistan to 438.

Devon Conway and Tom Latham batted confidently against the challenging spin of Abrar Ahmed on a dry wicket to remain unbeaten on 82 and 78, respectively, at stumps on the second day.

New Zealand trails by 273 in its first Test tour to Pakistan since 2002.

Conway also completed 1,000 Test runs in 19 innings, taking the national record previously held by John F. Reid.

Both batters used their feet well against Abrar, who took 17 wickets in two Test matches against England earlier this month. Conway reached his half century off 89 balls with nine fours, including four against Abrar.

Latham followed in reaching his 50 off 96 balls with six fours as both batters grew in confidence and didn't hesitate to even reverse sweep on a wicket which still has some turn for the spinners.

Pakistan's weakened pace



attack in the absence of injured Shaheen Afridi, Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah, didn't offer a challenge to Conway and Latham with the new ball as both batters took New Zealand to 41-0 by tea before adding 124 more runs in the final session.

Leftarm fast bowler Mir Hamza, recalled after four years since playing his only Test against Australia in 2018, and Mohammad Wasim, also playing only his second Test, couldn't break through.

Earlier, the 29-year-old Salman batted resolutely in

the company of tailenders to score 103 with 17 fours. He was the last batter to be dismissed when Pakistan was bowled out an hour after lunch.

Tim Southee, the Kiwis' new test captain, picked up his 350th Test wicket and wrapped up the innings when Salman tried to play across the seamer, was struck on the back leg and was ruled out leg before wicket. Southee was the pick of the bowlers with 3-69 while three spinners -- Michael Bracewell (2-72), Ish Sodhi (2-87) and Ajaz Patel (2-112) -- shared six wickets.

Avesh picks four as MP bowl out Railways for 274

PTI ■ INDORE

Avesh Khan took four wickets as defending champions Madhya Pradesh bowled out Railways for 274 on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy Group D match here on Tuesday.

Avesh returned with figures of 4 for 69, while Saransh Jain and Puneet Datey (2/52) shared four wickets between them as Madhya Pradesh took 87.4 overs to fold Railways' innings.

Besides, Kumar Kartikeya (1/57) and Shubham Sharma (1/8) picked up a wicket each.

Electing to bat, Railways did not have the best of starts as Avesh struck in the fifth delivery of the match, removing Vivek Singh.

The India pacer came back in the 16th over to account for the wicket of Shivam Chaudhary (21) before Shubham Sharma dismissed Rahul Rawat (29) to reduce Railways to 68 for 3 in the 25th over.

Mohammad Saif (39) and Shubham Chaubey (24) added 44 runs for the fourth wicket before both the batters departed.

Skipper Upendra Yadav top-scored for Railways with a gritty 61

off 123 balls and hit eight boundaries in the process.

Towards the end, Akash Pandey (24 not out) and Adarsh Singh (24) played useful hands to take Railways past the 250-run mark.

SAMARTH'S TON DRIVES K'TAKA

Porvorum: Opener R Samarth's fine knock of 140 and his century partnerships with skipper Mayank Agarwal and Vishal Onat powered Karnataka to 294/3 against Goa in their Group C match.

Agarwal won the toss, opted to bat and provided a strong start for the team by adding 116 runs with Samarth. The two looked untroubled against the Goa attack and completed a century stand after a cautious start.

Agarwal appeared set for a big score before he fell LBW to Lakshay Garg for 50, which included five boundaries and two sixes.

Samarth and Onat (73 batting, 172 balls, 9 fours) built on the platform provided by the opening partnership and piled on the Goa bowlers' misery.

The home team attack comprising Arjun Tendulkar, Garg,



Darshan Misal and Mohit Radkar was taken to the task by Samarth and Onat.

Samarth raced to a ton and was batting on 120 at tea. He added 20 more runs to his score before being dismissed by Tendulkar (1 for 30). It was a third straight first-class century for Samarth, after having done so against Services and Puducherry in previous games.

TN RESTRICT DELHI

New Delhi: In-form Dhruv Shorey blew away an opportunity to score his third successive hundred in as

many innings as Tamil Nadu restricted hosts Delhi to 212 for six on opening day of a Group B Ranji Trophy game here on Tuesday.

Shorey (66, 168 balls) and left-handed Jonty Sidhu (57, 107 balls) added 105 runs for the third wicket but the home team could hardly dominate on a Feroz Shah Kotla track which became good for batting after the first hour and half.

But the manner in which Sidhu and Vaibhav Rawal (11) were out defending slow bouncers from pacer Sandeep Warrier (3/59 in 22 overs) was embarrassing to say the least.

Warrier and fellow seamer I. Vignesh (3/42 in 19 overs) were disciplined as they bowled a probing line and hit good lengths time and again.

DHAPOLA TAKES 8

Dehradun: Uttarakhand seam bowler Deepak Dhapola breathed fire on the opening day of their Group A match, grabbing eight Himachal Pradesh wickets as the visitors were bundled out for 49 runs on Tuesday.

Dhapola, 32, dismissed three players for duck and returned figures of 8/35 off 8.3 overs as Himachal could not weather the storm and were dismissed inside 17 overs.

At stumps on day one, Uttarakhand were batting on 295 for six, having taken a massive 246-run first-innings lead. Aditya Tare (91 not out) and Abhay Negi (48 not out) showed there were no demons in the pitch as they batted with confidence.

But the highlight of the day was Bageshwar-born Dhapola's bowling. The seamer, who made his first-class debut in 2018 and is playing only his 15th game, had a previous best bowling figures of 7/50 in an innings, but on Tuesday he bettered his personal best as Himachal batters made a beeline to the dressing room.

Dhapola's feat did not miss the attention of the BCCI secretary Jay Shah who termed it as one of the finest bowling performances of the tournament.

"Ranji Trophy has time and again helped bring out raw home-grown talent onto the forefront. This time it's Deepak Dhapola! His 8/35 against Himachal is one of the finest bowling performances of the tournament. Long way to go!" tweeted Shah.

Dhapola, who was the leading wicket-taker for his state in the group stage of the 2018-19 Ranji Trophy with 44 dismissals in seven matches and finished the tournament with 45 wickets in eight games, will look to improve his best bowling figures in a first-class match (12/96) when he comes out with the red cherry in the second innings.

'S5 No Exit has an unimaginative narrative'

PNS | HYDERABAD

S5 No Exit starring Tarakaratna, Prince, Sunil, Ali, and Sai Kumar is being promoted on a grand scale. The film, a horror thriller is directed by Bharat Komalapati is produced by Aloori Pratap Reddy, Devu Samuel, Shaikh Rehim, Melki Reddy Gade, and Gautham Kondepudi under the banner Shourie Entertainments.

Ahead of the film's release on the 30th of this month, the director of the film Bharat and producer Gautham spoke to the media about the film.

Bharat Komalapati said, "I started working in the field from 2004. The original plan was to emerge as a hero. After then, my friends gave me the affirmation that I was dancing well after they saw me perform in a few programmes. I then took part in *Aata dance show*. Designing a concept for every song became a habit. My reputation as a choreographer consequently improved. The opportunity to perform a song in *Jyotilakshmi* was given by Puri Jagannadh. Even though I still work as a choreographer, I was passionate about direction. I used to write various concepts and stories when I was free. *S5 No Exit* is one such story. An entire coach catches fire on a train going from Hyderabad to Visakha. It will be interesting to know why that single bogie caught fire."

In the film, Tarakaratna plays the role of Subbu. "He is the son of CM Sai Kumar. A coach is booked to celebrate his birthday. All of them decorate the bogie and have a party. Then suddenly the coach doors close. There is no exit. Then there is the fire. Why the fire actually happened, how it happened, and what happened afterward are very interesting. The narrative is unimaginative," added the direc-

Tarakaratna starrer S5 No Exit is all set to hit the theaters on December 30. Just two days before its release, director Bharat Komalapati, and producer Gautham Kondepudi interacts with the Hyderabad media and shares some interesting insights about the film.

tor about the story of the upcoming film. The director says there is also a political drama angle to this.

"Tarakaratna worked hard for this movie for 45 days. He is a man who does not speak much but follows the word of his father. Also, the performance of Ali in the role of TC and Sunil in another key role is impressive. An animated song comes before the start of the movie. I am confident that all those who will watch the movie will like it," said Bharat adding, he is going to do more films as a director. Meanwhile, producer Gautham said, "Bharat is my friend. He used to tell interesting points and stories that he felt. One day he told the story of *S5 No Exit*. I liked it very much and decided to do it with new people. But the story was so good, we decided to go with the padding artists. We started the set work the week after the story was approved. We made this movie without compromising anywhere. That's why many distributors came to the competition, but Saga Entertainment is releasing the film on a grand scale. So you can understand how much faith they have in the film.

Also, if a music director like Mani Sharma gives a background score to a horror movie, you can only imagine how good this movie is going to be. Cinema-tographer Garuda Vega Anji is also a big strength of our film. It will be released in more than 200 theaters."



Minakshi Goswami onboard for Vaaraahi

The makers of *Vaaraahi* brought the latest development in regards to the film. On Tuesday, the makers announced onboarding Minakshi Goswami as the female lead.

Minakshi is a theater artist from Rajasthan. Sumanth is making the film based on the temple of Vaaraahi Amma, who derives from the power of Varaha Swami.

The film is directed by Santosh Jagarlapudi. The film marks the second film of the combo after *Subrahmanya Puram* which was a success.



Nayanthara's CONNECT to release on Dec 30 in Hindi

After having received a phenomenal response for its Tamil version, the rising demand for the film led to compelling the makers to release Nayanthara starrer Tamil horror thriller film *Connect* in Hindi that has eventually made its name count among one of the biggest Hindi releases coming from the South this year. While the audience has seen a flood of South Indian blockbusters films setting up their charm all across the globe, with the kind of response *Connect* is receiving from the audience, it seems like it is yet another film that is all set to create a rage in the Hindi market with its release on 30th December.

With films like *KGF*, *Kantara*, *RRR*, *Vikram*, and *Pushpa*, the south Indian film industry has left everyone impressed with their mind-blowing content. Be it winning the hearts of the audience to creating records at the box office, south Indian films have profoundly booked their mark all across the world.

Now, as Nayanthara's *Connect* is all set for its release in the Hindi market on 30th December, it seems like yet another film that is about to create an example of its success with its release. While the audience saw the films winning the hearts of the audience with their different kind of genres, *Connect* is one of its types of horror thriller films that the audience will witness after a long time in the theaters.

Produced by Vignesh Shivan under Rowdy Pictures, *Connect* is directed by Ashwin Saravanan. The film stars Nayanthara, Sathyaraj, Anupam Kher, and Vinay Rai. The film is written by Ashwin Saravanan and Kaavya Ramkumar and has been released in Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam on 22nd December and will be released on 30th December in Hindi.



Abhishek Agarwal arts brush off rumours being associated with Prabhas & Sukumar

Production banner Abhishek Agarwal Arts has dismissed rumours about the company being associated with "multiple high-profile projects". Recently, there were reports claiming that the banner will be backing a film by Sukumar featuring Prabhas. It further suggested that the film will start shooting in 2024. However, dismissing the rumours, the banner said in a statement, "From the past few weeks, the name of Abhishek Agarwal Arts has been associated with multiple high-profile projects. The reports of the same were on social media as well as shared by fans on social media.

We would like to clarify that these are baseless rumours and there is no fact in it whatsoever. Any news or updates regarding such prestigious projects would be given by us to the media and the same would be published on our official handles."

Director Harish Shankar unveiled the concept poster & title of Annapurna Photo Studio

Annapurna Photo Studio is the sixth film from Big Ben cinemas, which has to its credit meaningful movies like *Pelli Choopulu*, *Dear Comrade* and *Dorasani*. Producer Yash Rangineni has roped in Chaitanya Rao and Lavanya to play lead roles. Chendu Muddu of *O Pitta Katha* fame is its director.

A village-based crime comedy, the film's concept poster and title reveal was made today at the hands of star director Harish Shankar. The title *Annapurna Photo Studio* and a caption that says that beautiful photos will be clicked in the studio, are mentioned on the poster.

Speaking on the occasion, Harish Shankar said, "The title sounds refreshing and it's the first such feeling I am having in a long time. In the old days, every village used to have a photo studio and we used to eagerly wait for our photo every-time. The 1980s backdrop of the film and the crime comedy genre seem promising. The title and the poster design are exciting. All the best to the entire team."

Director Chendu Muddu said, "I thank Harish Shankar garu for releasing the poster. This film is set in the 1980s. This crime comedy takes place in a village. I hope the film is going to be liked by the audience. They encouraged me when I debuted with *O Pitta Katha*."

Hero Chaitanya Rao said, "Harish Shankar garu happened to support my web series *21 Weds 30* in the past. And here is again, supporting our movie *Annapurna Photo Studio*. The film is coming out so well. We are confident that it will be loved by the audience."

Heroine Lavanya said, "I thank Harish Shankar garu for supporting us today. Expect regular updates from our team. We need the audience's support."



SHETTY & SHETTY: 777 Charlie, Kantara Stars Joining Hands For Richard Antony?

Superhit movie *Kantara* actor and Shelper Rishab Shetty's latest update featuring his photograph with his friend and 777 *Charlie* star Rakshit Shetty has triggered speculation that the two Shettys are coming together for *Richard Antony*. The movie is being produced by Hombale Films, the production house behind *K.G.F. Chapter-1* and *K.G.F. Chapter-2* as well as *Kantara*. The title launch of the movie has already become a sensation among Kannada moviegoers.

Rishab has shared an old picture of himself with Rakshit, actor Pramod Shetty, Pragathi Shetty (Rishab's wife) and journalist-turned-director Sheetal Shetty.

Rakshit is directing and acting in the movie *Richard Antony* and rumours are rife that Rakshit and Rishab will be seen together in the action-packed drama. Fans of both the stars, who are known for experiments, are hoping for the best.

Rakshit is at the end of his new Kannad project *Sapta Sagaradacheyello* and has already begun work on *Richard Antony*. The music for the film is being composed by B. Ajneesh Lokanath of *Kantara*



fame. The fans of the two Shettys are now hoping that the two of them, who have made it to the top from the scratch, get together and produce magic.