



# THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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ISRAEL AGREES TO TEMP TRUCE, BALL IN HAMAS' COURT, U.S. SAYS

Israelis have more or less accepted to a proposal for a six-week ceasefire in Gaza and release of vulnerable hostages by Hamas, US official said



5,75,000

PEOPLE ARE ONE STEP AWAY FROM FAMINE IN GAZA, U.N. WARNS

PRISONER SWAP RATIO IS KEY ISSUE

Israeli media said the issue is the identity of hostages who will be released and how many Palestinian prisoners will be freed in exchange. Talks were held in Doha on Saturday and Cairo on Sunday. US, Qatar, Egypt are involved. Israel did not attend the Cairo talks after Hamas refused to give a list of hostages who are still alive | PTI

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Prashant Kishor speaking at Hyderabad Dialogues, an initiative of TNIE

## Jagan is losing big time in Andhra, says Prashant Kishor

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Hyderabad

ACE political strategist Prashant Kishor, who played a key role in YSRC chief Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy's massive victory in 2019, has predicted that the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister is going to lose big in the ensuing assembly elections.

Prashant was speaking on the pre-election scenarios in India at the Hyderabad Dialogues - an initiative of TNIE - here on Sunday. Asked about his views on Jagan and TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu's prospects, he offered the opinion that, even with all the usual caveats about calling an election, Jagan is losing. "I have no data or first-hand experience (of the situation in AP) but my gut is telling me that he is losing big. Not just losing... but losing big," he said.

Prashant, who is now on his own Jan Suraj Abhiyan in Bihar and away from professional political strategising, offered an interesting rationale for his conclusion: that Jagan has made a mistake in putting all eggs in one basket. "It is a function of how he ran the state. Andhra would probably fall in the middle income category. If you are not talking about capital creation and new infrastructure but only focusing on the distribution side in a middle income state, you are taking a big strategic risk. His government has given more priority to giving

doles and Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) even at the cost of incurring a lot of additional debt. This might work in a low income state but in Andhra, where urbanisation is more than 50%, and when your government is seen only in terms of the free benefit you are giving to the masses, it may not. Because 50% (of population) is not even eligible and you are not even reaching them."

Prashant Kishor met TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu a few months back in Vijayawada. Asked about what transpired at the meeting, he replied that he had spent three hours holding talks with the former chief minister but reiterated that he was in no way associated with the party. Elaborating further on Andhra, he referred to Jagan's portrayal of the coming elections as a class battle and felt it wasn't the right pitch. "You can talk about a class battle in Bihar or Jharkhand, but you can't in Tamil Nadu, Telangana or AP. It can't be based on DBT because youth look for jobs, not a thousand-rupees benefit. They are looking for more factories, better roads, educational facilities. So, if I am an Andhraite, would I take pride in the hope that Vijayawada or Vizag is coming up as the future city? I will feel inferior to my counterpart in Chennai, Kochi or Hyderabad. It is not difficult to make a prediction that it is very difficult for Jagan to make a comeback."

I see this whole assumption that Jagan is too strong to be defeated has no legs. He is on a sticky wicket. He is going downhill. Not just losing... but losing big.

Prashant Kishor

## Sure of third term, PM & ministers plan agenda for next government

Cabinet meet discusses action plan for 100 days, strategy to make India a developed country

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @New Delhi

CONFIDENT of retaining power for the third consecutive term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a day-long meeting of his Council of Ministers to discuss the immediate steps to be taken by the next government within the first 100 days. The meeting, probably the last such gathering before the Lok Sabha polls, also discussed the action plan for the next five years, and a blue print to make India a developed country by 2047.

Sources said PM Modi kicked off the 8-hour discussion by sharing his thoughts on the comprehensive Viksit-Bharat-2047 vision document and spoke for an hour about the various long-term strategies for India's progress. This was followed by presentations by the ministers



Prime Minister Narendra Modi | PTI

on their respective ministries' roadmap for 25 years with special focus on the next five years and 100 days.

In the meeting, it was decided that steps will be taken to ensure the Central development schemes reach every intended beneficiary. Sources said the deliberations included steps ensure zero poverty and impart skills to the youth.

NOT A MOMENT TO WASTE, SAYS PM

The PM said the 100-day action plan must be implemented soon after the next government is formed. "India needs a sustained effort in continuation without losing even a moment to make India a developed nation by 2047", said a source, quoting PM

The vision document includes goals and action points for economic growth, ease of living and ease of doing business, social welfare, and Sustainable Development Goals. "Creating a sustainable economy to push the country to become the third-largest economy, placing equal emphasis on empowerment of women and poor with the spirit of atamni-

bhar (self reliance) has been one of the primary bases of the vision document," said a source, adding that the details and outcome of more than 2,700 meetings held across the ministries have been added in the roadmap for 2047.

This newspaper has learnt that PM Modi suggested that a separate budget of ₹1 lakh crore be earmarked for development of technologies to accelerate the pace of progress. It was also advised that every ministry in future should frequently organise seminars with experts and try to implement good suggestions through suitable policies.

"The objective of the discussions was to ensure saturation of the government's welfare schemes, planning of people-centric policies, and schemes for time-bound elimination of poverty", said a source.



Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi along with alliance partners Lalu Yadav, Tejashwi Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav at an election rally in Patna | PTI

## INDIA bloc leaders flex muscles at Patna rally

RAMASHANKAR @Patna

FORMER Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said that the Modi government at the centre was ignoring 73% of the country's population.

Addressing a rally in Patna, Rahul said that farmers, youth and others are meted out injustice.

"The central government is neglecting the plight of the country's population that be-

longs to marginalised sections of the society," he said.

Launching a scathing attack on the government at the centre, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge accused the prime minister of failing to deliver on his promises.

He questioned the veracity of Modi's assurances regarding job creation, black money retrieval and pucca houses for all. He also accused BJP of betraying the trust of people and

engaging in manipulative tactics devoid of factual basis.

Taking a swipe at Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar the Congress chief advised RJD not to ally with him if 'chacha comes again'.

Taking a dig at Nitish, Bihar's Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav said the Bihar government should get its insurance done as it runs the risk of JD(U) president taking repeated U-turns. "They (BJP)

say 'Modi Ki Guarantee', but who will take the guarantee of Nitish Kumar?" he asked.

Referring to Modi's remarks on 'parivarwad' (nepotism), Tejashwi said, "They (BJP) call us nepotism, but they have Samrat Choudhary, deputy CM, Pashupati Kumar Paras, brother of late Ram Vilas Paswan and Jitan Ram Manjhi whose son has been made a minister in Nitish cabinet. It does not look like nepotism to them?"

## Old-age pension funds diverted in TN dists, authorities initiate probe

B ANBUSELVAN @Chennai

THE Commissionerate of Social Security Schemes has unearthed a major scam in which several lakhs of rupees, meant for distribution to beneficiaries of the Old Age Pension (OAP) scheme, have been redirected to other bank accounts in Pudukkottai and a few other districts.

The scam came to light after officials from the commission-

erate conducted an inquiry in Pudukkottai last month following an alert from the backend team of the digital surveillance system. The system was set up a few years ago to monitor the distribution of pensions and track the beneficiaries' bank accounts. Notably, similar irregularities were flagged in other districts too, but the volume was relatively low in comparison, sources said.

The inquiry revealed that

OAP to the tune of ₹27 lakh intended for over 70 beneficiaries in Pudukkottai had been deposited for over a year in the bank account belonging to a temporary staff member at the office of the Special Tahsildar (social security schemes).

In order to prevent such scams, the department of special initiatives, which implements the Kalaingar Magalir Urimai Thogai, and the commissionerate of social security schemes, have introduced surveillance methods. P7



DR HARSH VARDHAN QUILTS POLITICS AFTER TICKET DENIAL

The sitting BJP Lok Sabha MP from Chandni Chowk, Delhi said he will return to medical practice after 30 years in politics

## Calcutta High Court judge Gangopadhyay to resign

PRANAB MONDAL @Kolkata

CALCUTTA High Court justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay, who is in the crosshairs of the ruling TMC for ordering central agencies to probe at least 14 scam cases, on Sunday announced that he would step down as a judge on Tuesday.

"My inner soul tells me that my tenure as judge is over. Considering the interest of deprived people, who cannot come to knock the door of the judiciary, it is time to enter bigger sphere and serve. I will tender my resignation to the CJI and the President of India on Tuesday," he said.

Gangopadhyay, 62, is sched-

uled to retire after three months. "For passing several judgements, many in the ruling party made insulting comments against me. They even asked me to quit my chair and face them in the field of politics. I have finally made up my mind. I congratulate the ruling party for bringing me here. In history books, we have read about the Maurya Samrajya. Right now, we are witnessing Chaurya Samrajya (empire of thieves) in Bengal," he said. On his next move, he said, "I will reply all your questions below the statue of freedom fighter Surya Sen at the high court building at 1.30 pm on Tuesday."

## Move over IT gloom, startups fire up TN campus hiring

BINITA JAISWAL @Chennai

MAJOR IT companies might have skipped on hiring from Chennai's arts and science colleges this placement season, but startups, product companies and consultancies have more than made up for the loss. In fact, the colleges have registered a significant rise in the number of placements, with

better pay packages to boot. "The highest pay package last year was ₹9.5 lakh per annum (LPA), but this year it was ₹12.81 LPA," said Paul Wilson, principal of Madras Christian College (MCC). As many as 518 students from MCC have been placed so far (in the current academic year), against a total of 326 students last year. Loyala College too witnessed

record placements. According to college officials, while 430 students were placed last year, the number has surged to 680 this year, with more likely to be hired as placements continue till the end of March. "IT companies opting out of campus hiring at our college has proved to be a blessing in disguise, as we have managed to negotiate for higher pay packages for our

students with startups. Previously, IT firms recruited students in bulk at a starting salary of ₹2.5-2.75 LPA but this year, the starting salary is ₹3.5 LPA," said Princely Samuel S, director (Training and Placement), Loyola College.

"The lukewarm response of IT companies this season was definitely a concern, but we noticed an interesting trend of

startups, international schools and consulting firms hiring students from various departments in good numbers," said Archana Prasad, principal of MOP Vaishnav College.

College officials said they are aware the global tech industry is going through a recession, and had planned accordingly to ensure lucrative job offers for the students. P7

