

SIDBI joins hands with APGB for backing MSMEs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), country's apex financial institution for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Andhra Pragathi Grameena Bank (APGB) for refinancing to facilitate credit flow to MSME clients.

SIDBI Deputy General Manager P. Rajendra Prasad and APGB General Manager PR Padgetwar entered into a partnership through an agreement, here on Thursday.

Andhra Pragathi Grameena Bank has become the first regional rural bank in the State to initiate a unique/refinancing partnership with SIDBI. As per the agreement, SIDBI will extend the refinance facility to APGB to facilitate an improved flow of credit to MSMEs.

Speaking on the agreement, SIDBI Deputy General Manager Rajendra Prasad said that his bank had been playing a prominent role as an enabler in empowering the MSME ecosystem in the country. He said that this arrange-



ment with APGB would act as a tool for upscaling the MSME segment, especially in semi-urban and rural areas. "We are delighted to partner

with the Andhra Pragathi Grameena Bank and we will, in time, expand our refinance services to other banks as well," he added.

Women's panel member visits juvenile home

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Women's Commission member Busi Vineetha paid a visit to the Juvenile Welfare and Correctional Services and Welfare of the Street Children Home at Vidyadharapuram in Vijayawada on Thursday. She verified the records of the juvenile home and expressed happiness over providing good

facilities for the children. Suneetha said that infrastructure facilities at the juvenile home would be improved. She said that the State government would provide more facilities for the children for bringing a change in them. She further said that the juvenile home officials should try to help the children so that they could become responsible citizens in the future.



Officials focusing on govt building works: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao has told Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Secretary Gopalakrishna Dwivedi that the district administration is focusing on the prioritised government building construction and officials concerned are conducting review meetings on the progress of the works from time to time. Gopalakrishna Dwivedi, along with Commissioner Kona Sasidhar, conducted a video conference with all district collectors to discuss government building works, Jal Jeevan Mission, MGNREGA, Jaganna Swachh Sankalpam, and other schemes from the Commissioner's Office on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector said that construction of 141 out of 268 sachivalayam building had been completed so far. As many as 72 out of 260 RBKs and 49 of 239 YSR Health Clinics were also ready. The remaining buildings are in

various stages of construction and they would be completed within the stipulated period, he added. He told Principal Secretary Dwivedi and Commissioner Sasidhar that the district administration had given 2,682 cement bags as indent and the companies supplied 2,425 cement bags. "We aim to complete 80 government buildings per day. Because of the rains, there was some delay in the construction works. Our officers have overcome the site problems to construct buildings," he told. He further explained that all departments had been working in coordination and chalked out a plan. Constituency-level committees were formed comprising people's representatives and officers. DWAMA Project Director J Suneetha, Panchayat Raj Executive Engineer A Venkateswara Rao, RWS SE NV Satyanarayana, and others attended the video conference.



Athletes from Krishna bag three gold medals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Athletes from the Krishna district have bagged three gold medals at the sixth Andhra Pradesh Modern Pentathlon, Biathlon, and Triathlon Championship held at Dr. KKR Gowtham School, Anandapuram, in Visakhapatnam recently. Athletes D Rakesh, Ch Gnaneswari, and Ch Mounika won gold medals in their respective events.

These three athletes have been selected for the 11th Modern Pentathlon National Championship, which will be held at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Stadium, Balewadi, Pune, in Maharashtra from August 13 to 15.

The Krishna District Modern Pentathlon Association felicitated the three medalists at the KRVR International Sports Club in Vijayawada on Thursday.



Association secretary ML Usharani and KRVR International Sports Club founder N Venkat were present.

Srivari annual Brahmotsavams from Sep 27 to Oct 5

Anticipating heavy rush, TTD making elaborate arrangements

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Srivari Salakata (annual) Brahmotsavams will be conducted in a grand manner this year from September 27 to October 5, and all the devotees who are participating in the mega religious event will have to follow Covid protocols for their personal safety as well others, said TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy.

Addressing media persons after detailed discussions with TTD, district and police officials on the arrangements of ensuing Srivari annual Brahmotsavams at Annamaiah Bhavan in Tirumala on Thursday evening he briefed on some important measures. He said that on the first day

of annual fete on September 27, the Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy will present pattu vastrams to Sri Venkateswara Swamy on behalf of the state government.

Prominent 'vahana sevās' during the Brahmotsavams are - 'Garuda Vahana Seva' on October 1, 'Swarna Ratham' on October 2, 'Rathotsavam' on October 4 and 'Chakra Snamam' on October 5.

On the first day due to 'Dhwajarohanam' event, the 'Pedda Sesa Vahana' will commence at 9 pm but on all other days 'vahana sevās' are scheduled between 8 am and 10 am 7 pm and 9 pm.

Giving priority to common devotees, all privileged, SRIVANI, Rs. 300, 'Arjitha Sevās',



VIP Break (except protocol VIPs) Darshans have been cancelled during these nine days and only Sarva Darshanam will remain operational. Elaborate arrangements are being made for the 'Garuda Seva' as it falls on the second

Hindupur MP Gorantla's act despicable: TDP

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Former MLA and senior Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader Bonda Umamaheswara Rao on Thursday felt that the behaviour of some of the YSRC leaders is very despicable and the video of Hindupur Lok Sabha member Gorantla Madhav that is going viral on social media speaks volumes about the reprehensible conduct of their party leaders.

Umamaheswara Rao told media persons here that the behaviour of YSRC MPs, Ministers, former ministers, MLAs and other party leaders is very disgusting. The YSRC leaders are acting in a rude manner.

When the video of Madhav sexually abusing a woman is going viral on social media, he is shamelessly denying the fact, Umamaheswara Rao said.

Can another YSRC MP Vijayasai now tweet not to take action against Mr Madhav, the TDP leader asked.

As per the election affidavit, cases under Section 376, Section 302 and Section 506 are pending against Gorantla Madhav, Bonda Uma pointed out. In fact, it is Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy, who is responsible for this kind of sickening behaviour of his party MPs, his Cabinet colleagues, former ministers, MLAs and other YSRC leaders, he stated.

"In the past too, we all have witnessed how the video in which Minister Ambati Rambabu made some objectionable remarks against a woman. Jagan Mohan Reddy shamelessly accommodated him in his Cabinet, the TDP leader remarked.

The audio of another YSRC leader Avanti Srinivas telling a girl, "Come in half an hour, I will send you back in half an hour" also went viral. "We all know how Mr Jogi Ramesh,

another party leader, sexually abused woman volunteers in a drunken state in Pedana," the former MLA said adding that these are the facts before the people and not allegations made by the TDP.

Observing that there is no protection for women in the State, Bonda Uma said the present condition in the State is such that women are now afraid of coming out of their houses. It is becoming difficult for women to escape from

persons like Mr Gorantla Madhav, he remarked. When a fellow MP is threatening women in New Delhi with such objectionable videos what Mr Vijaya Sai Reddy is doing there, he asked.

How YSRC leader Lakshmi Parvathi can talk about the late NTR, former chief minister Chandrababu and former minister Lokesh, Bonda Uma asked. Lakshmi Parvathi should always remember that she was chased out of the TDP just

because she was resorting to such things, he stated.

The YSRC leaders even tried to use the death of NTR's daughter Umamaheswari for political gain, he said and demanded that at least now Jagan Reddy order the arrest of the murders of his paternal uncle, who was killed three years ago. Also, Mr Jagan should also tell the people what action he is initiating against Mr Gorantla Madhav, Bonda Uma said.

TDP gen secy denies YSRC MP's charge

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) general secretary Chintakayala Vijay on Thursday flatly denied the allegation levelled against him by YSRC MP Gorantla Madhav. Vijay told media persons here that the YSRC MP is making a baseless allegation against him saying that he is responsible for the MP's most disgraceful video going viral on social media.

"Besides indulging in a shameful act, the MP is shamelessly resorting to levelling baseless allegations against me and on the media," Vijay felt.

"Addressing media persons in New Delhi the MP held me responsible for this notorious video coming out. He should immediately clear as to how I am connected with the release of the video," the TDP

"Madhav, you know what I am and my background. You even recently tried to subject my father to some troubles and miserably failed. Now you are levelling baseless charges against me."

- Chintakayala Vijay

general secretary said. As a Parliament member, he should have minimum courtesy

and should have minimum ethics. Madhav appears to have nothing of this, Vijay maintained.

Instead of answering the public, the YSRC MP is targeting TDP. "Instead of sending it to the forensic lab as he has already claimed, he is targeting me and my party. Is he afraid of spending it on forensic tests," the TDP leader asked.

"Madhav, you know what I am and my background. You even recently tried to subject my father to some troubles and miserably failed. Now you are levelling baseless charges against me," Vijay said.

Instead of taking responsibility for the video and staying away from Parliament till he is found innocent, the MP is shamelessly levelling charges against the TDP. "It clearly indicates his indecent behaviours," he added.

As the TDP has faith both in the Chief Minister, Jagan Mohan Reddy, and the local police, the party wants the police to investigate the whole episode.

Also, the TDP is making an appeal to the Centre to conduct a detailed probe into the issue, he said. "The State is now really scared of Jagan as he felicitates only people like you who resort to this kind of obscene activities. He has earlier honoured leaders like you by inducting them into Cabinet," the TDP general secretary remarked. The TDP will also write to the Privilege Committee of Parliament to order a probe by the forensic wing of the Centre, he stated. "If you really feel that you are innocent, first submit your resignation as MP and after proved innocent only then you can attend Parliament," Vijay demanded.

TDP women leaders complain to police against Vijayasai

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) women leaders here on Thursday lodged a police complaint with the Ongole Taluk police against YSRC MP V Vijayasai Reddy and YSRC social media coordinator Gurrampati Devendra Reddy for their derogatory remarks and false allegations in the NT Rama Rao's daughter Kantanneni Umamaheswari's death.

They handed over their complaint to the Circle Inspector, complaining against the MP and the social media coordinator, and demanded action for their false allegation and derogatory remarks against TDP chief N Chandrababu



Naidu's family members. Talking to the media, TDP Parliamentary Mahila general secretary B Aruna Reddy alleged that the ruling YSRC was indulging in corpse poli-

tics. "It is unfortunate that the YSRC leaders are making baseless allegations against the Naidu's family which is grieving and saddened with the death of a close relative", she

slammed. State TDP secretary Kamarajugadda Kusuma Kumari said that if Vijay Sai Reddy did not stop the malicious campaign against TDP

MLC Nara Lokes, the TDP activists would teach a lesson to him.

"Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has failed to do justice to his own mother and sister. How can he do justice to the people of the state? The people of the state have started understanding the facts now", Kusuma Kumari lashed out.

State TDP vice-president Arla Venkataratnam lambasted that Jagan Mohan Reddy had engaged the PayTM batch to launch a malicious campaign against the TDP leadership. The TDP women leaders urged the police to take action against MP Vijayasai Reddy and media coordinator Devendra Reddy.

SRM to host national conference

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

SRM University-AP will host the 88th annual national conference of the Indian Academy of Sciences, on its campus here, from November 4.

It is after a gap of 21 years that Andhra Pradesh has been chosen to host the prestigious conference and SRM University-AP has taken it upon itself to organise it for three days, a university release here said.

This is one of the most prestigious conferences organised in the country. The primary purpose of the conference is to invite scientists from all over India and abroad onto a single platform for developing scientific and technological knowledge and conveying the outcome to budding scientists of the country, SRM Pro-Vice Chancellor D Narayana Rao said.

UBI opens new ATM at Machilipatnam branch

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector P Ranjith Basha inaugurated the new ATM set up at the Union Bank of India's (UBI) branch in Machilipatnam on Thursday. The Collector garlanded the statue of Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetharamaiah and paid tributes.

Later, he inaugurated the coin counter on the bank premises along with Union Bank of India Chief General Manager V Bhramhananda

Reddy and distributed coins. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the new ATM would give better services to the bank's customers as well as others. The Union Bank of India has introduced several schemes for the benefit of customers, Self Help Group members, and MSMEs, he said.

Later, the bank officials felicitated Ranjith Basha. Dr Dhanvanthari Acharya and bank officials were present on the occasion.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

Shun freebies

Freebie culture is a political disease and has to be cured politically. There is no need to involve the judiciary in it

There is something odd about Bharatiya Janata Party leader Ashwini Upadhyay's petition in the Supreme Court urging it to restrain parties from distributing "irrational freebies" before elections. Did he raise the issue at any of the party's forums? Or elsewhere? Besides, what political parties do before or during poll campaigns is, or should be, a matter among them. Why drag the highest court into that? On Wednesday, the Supreme Court suggested a panel comprising members from the Niti Aayog, the Finance Commission, ruling and Opposition parties, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and other stakeholders. The court also sought the views of senior counsel, Raja Sabha member, and former law minister Kapil Sibal. Politicians are often unable to sort out political matters, so they seek judicial assistance. But then they also grumble about judicial overreach or hyper-activism. Worse, they are unable even to act on matters of national interest. One need not be an economist to know that freebies are dangerous



not just for public finance but also the economy and even polity; and yet no political party is able or willing to take a principled stand against them. On July 16, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke against what he termed as the "revdi culture." He correctly pointed out that this is "very dangerous" for economic development. At the level of states, the danger is acquiring alarming dimensions, as governments under all parties indulge in mindless populism and offer freebies with impunity.

It was, however, not the first time that attention was drawn to this phenomenon. A couple of weeks before the Lok Sabha election results were announced, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had expressed concern over states' fiscal profligacy. An RBI report, in November 2021, highlighted the same thing. It said that in recent years, states' outstanding debt showed a gradual upward movement due to implementation of Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY), farm loan waivers, and economic slowdown in 2019-20, all leading to rising debt-GSDP ratio. GSDP is to a state what GDP is to a country. In April this year, NK Singh, chairman of the 15th Finance Commission, pointed out that both the economics and politics of freebies are deeply flawed. It is a "race to the bottom" and "a quick passport to fiscal disaster." Unfortunately, the economics and politics of freebies and populism continue unabated. They cost money and have consequences, one of them being costlier petroleum products. Hurling allegations and counter-allegations at each other all the time doesn't do any good to anyone, surely not to the nation. Instead of scoring brownie points, all political parties should chalk out red lines of populism that they pledge not to cross. They can do it without seeking the assistance of the judiciary. For this, something that is dead or dying needs to be resuscitated—meaningful dialogue across party lines. Only this can stop the race to the bottom.

PICTALK



A beach volleyball match underway between Australia and Cyprus at Smithfield at the Commonwealth Games

Love in the times of war!

The marriage of a Russian boy with a Ukrainian girl gives a glimmer hope in worst of times

An extraordinary marriage took place in the serene mountains of Himachal Pradesh a couple of days back. Everything about it was Indian except for the couple which tied the knot. Sergei Novikov, a Russian boy married a Ukrainian girl Elona Bramoka in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh. It was a love marriage and the couple had been in love for quite some time, even before their countries of birth Russia and Ukraine went to war around six months. They chose the tranquil Himalayan town of Dharamsala to tie the knot far from the din of war in their own countries. That the couple chose love over war and did not let their politicians decide their fate is a great feat in itself. The common people like Sergei and Elona are living testimony to the indomitable human spirit which shall prevail while the people in power shall play their power games. It has always been common people who have brought about changes in the world despite the machinations of the powerful people, - tyrants, autocrats, and what have you. They are the source of positivity that keeps human civilization ticking. It is love and cooperation that shall keep the planet a safe and habitable place rather than the guns and missiles created to destroy it.



In the classic novel, 'War and Peace', Leo Tolstoy beautifully depicted the impact of the war on the people. The war leaves behind nothing but misery, dead bodies, broken houses, and broken people. And the only thing that can stop it is the resolve of the people to live a peaceful life. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "there is enough for everyone's needs but not enough for one man's greed." It is not that countries at loggerheads do not cooperate. They do. Russia collaborates with the West in the space station, Pakistan offered relief material to India to fight Covid 19, and China and the USA set the agenda for fighting climate change in the Paris declaration. Indeed there is always room for sanity but then some vested interests try to upset it and create chaos to use it to their advantage. Such forces need to be nailed. Meanwhile, as Ukraine and Russia battle it out, the hope was getting a chance, far from the eastern borders of Ukraine where the fierce battle continues. No wonder the place where their love blossomed is in India. The locals extended a helping hand to the couple to perform the rituals as pundit Raman Sharma recited Sanskrit hymns and solemnized their marriage. It happens only in India!

The rise and rise of omnipotent ED

The ED today is being frowned upon by the Opposition parties for its alleged misuse. But didn't all parties in power misuse it?



BRIENDER SINGH PANWAR

In the face of allegations of the opposition parties that government agencies are being used by the ruling party against its opponents, the recent landmark judgment of the Supreme Court upholding the sweeping power of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for search, seizure, arrest, and attachment of property under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), has become a bone of contention. The verdict was pronounced on 242 petitions filed by many including Anil Deshmukh, Karti Chidambaram, and Mehbooba Mufti, challenging the stringent provisions of the PMLA.



While the opposition has questioned the timing of the pronouncement of the judgment when a host of top opposition politicians including Congress leader, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, P. Chidambaram, his son Karti Chidambaram, Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut, National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, TMC MP and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee and Delhi Minister Satyender Jain are among those under the ED's scanner for alleged money laundering, the ruling NDA has attributed the surge to its commitment to preventing money laundering and 'improved systems for gathering financial intelligence as well as better interagency cooperation.

As per information shared in the Rajya Sabha, raids carried out by the ED during 2014-22 saw a nearly 27-fold increase as compared to the searches conducted between 2004 and 2014 during the regime of the UPA government. However, the conviction rate has been poor and indicates investigative lapses and legal loopholes. The fact that only 23 accused have been convicted which is less than five percent of total cases points out the failure of ED in building airtight cases and giving credence to allegations of ulterior motives and settling of political scores.

It is claimed that the Centre's twin purposes—disposing of pending investigations in old cases and completing the probe in new cases in a time-bound manner under the PMLA have led to 3,010 searches in the past eight years resulting in the attachment of proceeds of crime to the tune of about Rs 99,356 crore and the filing of prosecution complaints in 888 cases. The ruling party justifies its action because money laundering is one of the heinous crimes which not only affects the social and economic fabric of the nation but also tends to promote other heinous offenses related to the NDPS Act.

Moreover, searches are largely confined to non-BJP ruled states targeting the leaders of the opposition parties. The PMLA was enacted during the UPA regime in 2002 and implemented in July 2005 to tackle the problem of money laundering. Over the years, it emerged as a matter of international concern and India made some commitments in this regard. The court has ruled that various provisions of this Act that have been challenged are indeed constitutional. To understand the real significance of PMLA, we need not focus on the details of the Act,

AS PER INFORMATION SHARED IN THE RAJYASABHA, RAIDS CARRIED OUT BY THE ED DURING 2014-22 SAW A NEARLY 27-FOLD INCREASE AS COMPARED TO THE SEARCHES CONDUCTED BETWEEN 2004 AND 2014 DURING THE REGIME OF THE UPA GOVERNMENT.

but, look at the big picture of the law that it conveys. During the past few years, ED, which was formed in 1956, has become a prime agency. Even the Supreme Court had acknowledged the sweeping powers of the ED under the PMLA. This is apparent from the fact that the ED is empowered to start an investigation without complaint or application. Although filing an FIR is a mandatory provision under the Indian Penal Code but, the ED officer is not required to abide by it. Under the PMLA, the ED officer has to simply file an Enforcement Case Information Report (ERIC) which is not shared with the accused and serves as an internal document. An IO can also issue summons without giving any specific reason. Under the PMLA, statements made before the officers of the ED are admissible in court and bail provisions place a reverse burden of proof on the accused, requiring them to show a lack of guilt even before the trial commences. The apex court said that the stringent conditions for bail under the Act are legal and arbitrary. All governments are

guilty of misusing central investigation agencies like ED and CBI to settle political scores. The congress government under Indira Gandhi in the 70s made started the trend and the PMLA was brought in by an NDA government and made more stringent by amendments during the UPA regime. The extensive use of ED against political opponents has risen during the present government. During the past few years, the ED had made high-profile arrests including the former Home Minister P. Chidambaram and his son Karti Chidambaram, Anil Deshmukh, Chhagan Bhujbal, senior NCP leader and former Minister, Nawab Malik and recently senior Shiv Sena leader, Sanjay Raut. There has been a list of leaders who have been summoned and questioned for long hours including Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. The media, gave them special coverage. The central investigation agencies have emerged as the conscious keeper of society. The credibility of these organizations should not be compromised. Their functioning should be above board and they should be allowed to function freely.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DOUBLE STANDARD

Sir — It is appreciable that without any loss of time, the Central Government has directed Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to write to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressing grave concern over the alleged irregularities in teachers' recruitment and asking her to take corrective action. Contrary to this, the ruling dispensation has not pursued the mega Vyapam scandal involving thousands of crores of rupees where many of the top BJP leaders were alleged to be involved with the same vigour and enthusiasm. Even though it was very clearly proved that BJP's vice president Bernard Mark was arrested on charges of running a sex racket in his farm house, BJP has tried to defend him and his heinous crime by calling it a case of vendetta. The local state unit has also tried to persuade Governor to remove the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of police of West garo Hills who have exposed the sex racket run by the BJP Vice President is a case in point. What a double standard by the saffron party! **Tharcius S Fernando | Chennai**

MAKING A MOUNTAIN OUT OF A MOLE HILL

Sir — Just 8 cases out of 1.3 billion! How to describe MMPP (Medics, Media Politicians and Pharmaceuticals) wasting their and other's time for something not worth a mention? Their obsession with every such new disease results in spreading fear. Notably, as all these entities stand to become richer and get to exercise extraordinary power over people from the spread they will not keep silent. With the disease spreading only through close and deep contacts, no specific community is at risk and it can be easily prevented from spreading. Let us not make mountain out of molehill in making Monkey Box a dreaded disease. But at the same time we have to be on the guard against the diseases that

FIGHT SUICIDIAL TENDENCIES

Suicides and deaths at young age is unfortunate in this modern scientifically advanced era of internet, google etc. the cause of suicides is generally depression and aimlessness. Developing a hobby can fill a void. One can search for a favorite club and join it. Joining mind boggling training classes such as Abacus (children), speed maths (anyone above primary school), quiz etc. can stop suicides. There are many clubs available such as debating, arts, gym, quiz, laughing, sports, cooking, film stars fans associations, ladies clubs, gents clubs etc. Mind boggling games clubs like crossword, sudoku, maths, fun maths, puzzles, juggling words, quiz too are available. You can join one or more of the above clubs which can really motivate and inspire you to appreciate life and live it with purpose. You can also start your own team / group on internet, Email, Facebook, LinkedIn, what's



spread during monsoon season. We are often fixated at the diseases which make international headlines rather than the diseases like malaria and dengue which kill thousands of people in India. We must make preparations to fight them. **Gundu K Mahniam | Trichy**

App etc. You can make videos of your liking and show it to the world if you feel that no one cares about you. Many house wives are selling pickles, chapathis, curries etc. via internet and home supply. So! Clubs, skills, hobbies no time to breath plus happy, healthy life. Moreover investing your personal development by meditating and keeping fit you could get a positive mindset which is so essential for living a happy life. Unhappy management gives unhappy and suicidal thoughts. **Madhu PV | Secunderabad**

TWO GREAT EVENTS

Sir — On August 15, we Indians celebrate two great significant and related events. One is the Assumption of Our Blessed Virgin Mary and the other is Independence Day. The reason as to why these two events are related is because they are both about freedom. Independence Day is celebrated as freedom from foreign rule and domination to self-rule and governance of our country and the feast of the Assumption of Our Blessed Mother Mary may be seen as freedom from this limited and incomplete life to bliss of eternal and perpetual life. There is indeed a happy coincidence to celebrate our Independence Day on the feast

day of the Assumption of Our Blessed Mother Mary. It is to our Blessed Mother that we dedicate our country as she is our patron saint. **Jubel D'Cruz | Mumbai**

DELHI HC GIVES CLEAN CHIT TO IRANIS

Sir — Sir, Its quite ludicrous that Delhi High court had to defend promptly in favour of Smriti Irani and her daughter aren't owners of the Silly Souls Cafe & Bar in Goa. Zoish Irani' herself once admitted to food writer Kunal Vijaykar that she is the owner of that bar in an interview needs no evidence. Delhi HC' observations on this case is bias and parochial towards Smriti Irani who isn't ready to accept that two wrongs don't make a right. One wonders what makes judiciary show the fasttrack conclusion on high-profile cases refers to political leaders whereas for others it's exactly reverse. **Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri**

SOUND BITE

We are in grave danger for the generation that graduates out of schools over the next 10 years.

Former RBI governor —Raghuram Rajan

BJP's '40% commission' govt in Karnataka runs opposite to Guru Basavanna's ideals of honesty and work

is worship. Congress is united in its efforts to uproot this corrupt and inefficient govt. **Congress leader** —Rahul Gandhi

There was a time when I craved for sweets but could not eat them as I had no money, but now I get a lot of sweets but can't eat them

Flautist, Composer —Hariprasad Chaurasia

India Should Have Played Virat Kohli in Every International Match Possible.

Cricketer — Sanjay Manjrekar

Today, we recommit to preserving the memory of the Roma and Sinti people who were murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Together, let us honour them by working to ensure that such vile acts of hatred never happen again.

Canadian Prime Minister —Justin Trudeau

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

MALDIVES PRESIDENT SEEKS DEEPER TIES WITH INDIA

India is helping Maldives have a better maritime surveillance system



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

President of Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih was in India this week, where his itinerary included meeting the President, Prime Minister, other senior government ministers and business delegations in Delhi and Mumbai.

Solih's main challenges in retaining robust economic and strategic ties with India stem from his principal opposition, ex-president Abdulla Yameen and current Parliament speaker Mohammed Nasheed.

Abdulla Yameen, the second democratically appointed president of the island nation and head of opposition party, Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM), was known to be openly pushing for a pro-China policy vis-à-vis Indian interests.

He was charged with money laundering and put in prison. However, a local court acquitted him of the charges last year. This acquittal has emboldened his party to pursue the 'India Out' agenda, where the ex-president is widely seen sharing stage with anti-India supporters.

Yameen has stated that if his party returns to power in 2024, they will cancel all ongoing agreements with India. India had in 2021 signed an agreement for providing financial assistance and developing the largest infrastructure in Maldives called Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP).



The GMCP will involve building a nearly seven kilometres long bridge and other links from capital city Male with three neighbouring islands. Almost 40 per cent of Maldives' population resides in the capital, while the rest are spread over across the 1200 islands dotting the Indian Ocean.

Boats and ferries are the principal means of transport from the capital to these islands and a rough Indian Ocean during most times of the year makes things difficult. A link via bridge has been seen as a crucial requirement for uplifting the lives of citizens in this island country.

India is also developing and maintaining a coast guard base at Uthuru Thila Falhu, which, according to both governments, is being done to help Maldives have a better maritime surveillance system in place. During the recent visit of Solih, both governments signed at least six MoUs and India received another USD 500 million worth of financial assistance to Maldives.

India also announced gifting 24 utility vehicles and replacement of an old ship, CGS Huravee, to Maldives defense force. This security cooperation between the two countries has been singled out by the ex-president Yameen, who has termed it as Maldives selling its sovereignty to India and providing unfettered access to Indian soldiers in the region.

The second challenge Solih, who leads the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), faces is with his partner in government, who is also Parliament Speaker Mohammed Nasheed. It is understood that the Speaker, who has also been an ex-president, seeks a Parliamentary system of government.

Solih has far resisted the move, which could be a cause of concern going forward, given the fact he was a coalition choice.

Geographically, Sri Lanka and India are two closest South Asian neighbours of Maldives. Located at a strategic juncture in the Indian Ocean, Maldives serves as an important post in the global maritime trade and traffic flows. It is worth noting that the fate of Sri Lanka has fallen with its huge dependence on Chinese money for building key infrastructure projects. Maldives can also be similarly persuaded to tilt towards China, unless India continues to enhance its strategic and economic ties.

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal)

States' borrowing spree a recipe for disaster

The RBI report on state finances is worrisome, for some of the states have resorted to unconstitutional ways of borrowing



G BHATTACHARJEE

The paper in the RBI Bulletin of June 2022 titled 'State Finances: A Risk Analysis', in which the public finances of the 10 most heavily indebted states of India were analysed using the usual vulnerability indicators, may have rather been called a 'State Bankruptcy Report'.

Before the onset of the pandemic, while most states could manage their gross fiscal deficits (GFD) within the cap of three percent of their gross state domestic product (GSDP) mandated by their Fiscal Responsibility Legislations (FRBM Acts), even then four states, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab and Rajasthan were exceeding this limit by more than 0.5 per cent.

The pandemic dried up the revenue streams of all states due to the protracted lockdown and other containment measures, while expenditure went up due to the subsidies that had to be provided to the poor and the vulnerable to survive. As a result, almost all states ended up breaching the FRBMA limit, with Bihar's GFD: GSDP ratio reaching as much as 11.3 percent, and those of Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh reaching 4.6, 5.2 and 4.3 per cent, respectively. This led to higher borrowing by states and swelling of their debt ratios (debt as a percentage of GSDP) much above the safe limits.

Once the pandemic waned, there were hope and even signs of a faster recovery, but then the Russia-Ukraine War broke out, impeding the recovery process. As per the 2022-23 (BE), the debt ratios have exceeded 33.3 per cent suggested by the 15th Finance Commission for Bihar, Rajasthan and West Bengal, while Punjab registered a debt ratio of 52.3 per cent in 2021-22 (RE). But this has not deterred these states from continuing with their populist expenditure that is sure to drag them towards an irreversible insolvency which will also affect other states through contagion effect.

Taking a cue from what is happening in Sri Lanka as a result of its unsustainable debt and the precarious finances of states, the paper has warned, "Given this parlous situation, the tendency towards handing out cash subsidies, in normal times, provision of free utility services, revival of the old pension scheme by some states and extension of implicit and explicit guarantees by various state governments in India act like swords of Damocles."

These ten states, including Haryana, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh in addition to those named above, account for half the total expenditure made by all states. Revenue expenditure accounted for 80 to 90 per cent of their total expenditure, leaving little room for the growth-enhancing capital outlay. Of the revenue



BETWEEN 2019-20 AND 2021-22, ANDHRA PRADESH RAISED RS 23,899 CRORE, UP RS 17,750 CRORE, PUNJAB ₹2,879 CRORE, MP RS 2,698 CRORE, AND HIMACHAL RS 90 CRORE, BYPASSING ARTICLE 293 OF THE CONSTITUTION

(The author, a former Director General from the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General of India, is currently a Professor at the Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial Management)



expenditure again, the committed expenditure on salaries, pension and interest payments accounted for more than 35 per cent for Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala and Punjab, further limiting the scope of developmental revenue expenditure on social and economic services.

Despite pension expenditure alone exceeding 10 percent of revenue expenditure—around 3 per cent of GSDP—for the most heavily indebted states, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh have switched back to the old pension scheme (OPS) to their own peril, by delinking from the New Pension Scheme (NPS), which reduced the pension burden of governments substantially, while West Bengal remains the only state in India never to have switched over to the NPS. Some more states are also contemplating to revive the unfunded OPS which is financed entirely by taxes and hence leave a burden for posterity, while the NPS limits government's liability towards pension through a matching contribution only during the service tenure of the employee, without creating any future liability on that account.

It was primarily the soaring pension expenditure of defence personnel for whom the NPS does not apply that forced the Union Government to launch the Agnipath scheme; salary and pension alone account for more than half the defence budget, which is nothing short of insanity.

The highly indebted states also spend heavily on subsidies which further add to their debt burden, for such expenditure has

to be financed only through borrowing. One can understand the need for subsidies and freebies during the pandemic times, but now these should be carefully targeted to reach only the neediest. Yet populist pressures and the propensity to please the vote banks have seen these states spending more than 10 percent of revenue expenditure on subsidies and freebies.

Freebies for Andhra Pradesh and Punjab exceeded two per cent of the GSDP, while for Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, it was between one and two percent of GSDP. While some states have managed their finances rather well, like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Odisha, besides the Union Territory of Delhi, the paper has identified Punjab to be in the worst position with a debt ratio likely to rise to 45 per cent by 2026-27. Rajasthan, Kerala and West Bengal are also projected to exceed the debt-GSDP ratio of 35 per cent by 2026-27.

This is a sure way to doom and insolvency, but instead of taking corrective steps to control expenditure and contain the rising debt, now an ever more disturbing report has surfaced. It points out that unable and unwilling to control expenditure, these states have been borrowing from banks against the collateral of future revenues by creating escrow accounts which is clearly unconstitutional, and by also pledging government assets.

An escrow account is one that is kept outside government accounts and managed by the bank till the liability is cleared, and into which future revenues will go

directly, instead of going into the consolidated fund of the states as mandated by the constitution. At least five states – and possibly more – have escrowed their future revenues in this manner to raise loans.

Between 2019-20 and 2021-22, Andhra Pradesh raised ₹23,899 crore, UP ₹17,750 crore, Punjab ₹2,879 crore, MP ₹2,698 crore, and Himachal ₹90 crore. By doing so, they were trying to bypass article 293 of the Constitution which requires the states to take permission from the Centre to raise loans from the market if they are indebted to the Centre, which they are.

All these amount to off-budget borrowings, and states are even offering sovereign assets when loans cannot be collateralised by future revenue streams. This makes no financial sense as the lenders may not be in a position to sell such assets, say, a government office or a public park, in case of default in repayment. Most of these loans have been given by the public sector banks, including the SBI, and RBI has now issued a directive to them to stop this practice forthwith and report compliance within three months.

Centre also used to indulge in large scale off-budget borrowings in the past, mostly through its public sector, but over the last two years, this practice has by and large been stopped. Since populist governments cannot be stopped from spending recklessly regardless of the demands of constitutional propriety or financial prudence, it is perhaps only for the judiciary to restrain them.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

MODIJI SENT ME SOME OF THE PROCEEDS AFTER AUCTIONING HIS RS 10 LAKH SUIT. I BOUGHT A HANDBAG AND USED THE REST TO PAY LAWYER FEES. —TMC MP MAHUA MOITRA



MARIE ANTOINETTE MAHUA MOITRA HIDING HER EXPENSIVE BAG DURING A DISCUSSION ON PRICE RISE- HYPOCRISY HAS A FACE & IT'S THIS! — BJP SPOKESPERSON SHEHZAD POONAWALLA



Learner-centric classrooms may enhance outcomes

Interactive learning approaches employing various methods can give a quantum jump in learning outcomes

Most adults have experienced sitting passively in classrooms, as the teacher delivered monologues. Today we know such experience is not optimal and must be replaced with interactive, student-centred learning environments.

In the last few decades, educators have recognized the importance of interactive learning approaches. Research has established that learning rarely happens effectively in one-way lectures. In interactive learning environments, students are actively engaged. This can be done in a variety of ways; asking the students questions; making students work with peers and in teams; introducing hands-on experiences.

The students are actively engaged by 'speaking' or 'doing'



RADHIKA ZAHEDI

(The author is Director, The Green Acres Academy)

during the learning process. Student-centred classrooms leverage individual student qualities for deeper learning. Student-centred learning, also called Learner-centred approaches, is another pedagogical approach, gaining importance.

Student-centred approaches acknowledge that students are unique individuals with diverse interests, strengths and preferences for learning, while affirming that one size does not fit all. Good teaching requires us to know students well, and use this knowledge to make instructions more effective. This can be done by incorporating students' interests into the lessons, connecting the contents to their surrounding contexts to make them relevant, while differentiating

learning to suit different paces and preferences of learning, etc.

The positive impact of interactive learning can be enhanced further when Student-centred pedagogy is incorporated. This can be done at three levels - body: behavioural, sensory engagement; mind: cognitive/ intellectual engagement; and heart: emotional/ motivational engagement.

To promote behavioural engagement, we must have a learning environment or strategies that enable students to stay on task during the learning process. It's promoted by interactive learning strategies such as asking questions to help students stay attentive and using multi-modal interactive media to engage the senses.

The students can be given

opportunities to co-create classroom rules, which helps in making the learning more student-centred, and teachers can co-create the rules or classroom agreements with their students. This builds a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among students.

Engaging students cognitively means that students are actively thinking about what they are learning. Students must also be intellectually engaged in the process for deeper learning.

Interactive strategies like questioning and group work can promote intellectual engagement. The students can be given opportunities to express their thinking, as interactive pedagogy is more powerful when it encourages students' participation, nudging

them to express their own opinions and listen to others. Group work and digital polling tools can also be used to give students the opportunity to share their ideas at the same time. When students are intellectually engaged they are more likely to retain it for longer.

Different students learn at varying paces. One-size-fits-all make the students rush through the process, which leaves gaps in foundational knowledge. Differentiating the pace of instruction can promote better learning for all. Advances in technology now give us options to curate learning resources that can be accessed asynchronously. This can promote a great deal of self-paced learning.

Emotionally engaging students means making them

excited, curious and motivated. We do not want students to learn simply, because they are being watched by a teacher or only for a grade on a report card. Learners should be driven by their curiosity and passion. Interactive learning strategies like collaborative learning and hands-on, project-based learning can promote this.

Students should be given opportunities to learn with peers, which promotes interaction. But beyond that, peer learning, with the right classroom culture of course, can create safe learning spaces in which students are encouraged to reach out to peers to demonstrate or clear doubts. It is much less intimidating to reach out to a peer for support instead of always asking the teacher.

Also the students should be given opportunities to make interest-based choices during the learning process. Having a say in what they learn makes learning more motivating and helps build self-directed learning habits. Student-centred approaches like project-based learning provides students with 'voice and choice' in their projects along with sustained inquiry and reflection. Student-centred approaches can enhance one-size-fits-all interactive learning approaches to promote engagement that goes beyond compliance or participation. It extends to cognitive engagement (mind) that intellectually stimulates and emotional engagement (heart) that motivates. This higher level of engagement leads to deeper, enduring learning for students.



'I was confident about the numbers during *Dhadak*'

Janhvi Kapoor has recently opened up about the pressure that she feels about the box office collections of her films, on their opening days. She shares with her latest film *Good Luck Jerry*, it was a different situation itself. The actress who rose to fame with *Dhadak* says that she was even less worried about the box office numbers when her debut film *Dhadak*, was released in July 2018. The daughter of the filmmaker Boney Kapoor and late actor Sridevi, said that she was overconfident that people will come to watch her debut film at least to see how she is.

Sharing how she feels on Fridays, Janhvi told Pinkvilla, "It's different when it's an OTT release. Because when you do a media preview, you get a sense of how the audiences are going to react to your films, and so that pressure of the numbers isn't there so much. So once you get the audience's reaction you are a little at ease. So Friday night, I had already kind of heard that people are responding positively to me and the film. To acchi need aayi thi mujhe (So I had a good night's sleep). There was not that tension whether it will earn Rs 5 crore, or Rs 3 crore or Rs 2 crore."

When asked if that pressure existed when *Dhadak* had released in theatres, Janhvi said, "During *Dhadak* I was very unaware. I think it was the naiveness but there was also the overconfidence that 'pehli film mein dekhne ke liye to aayenge hi (people will definitely come to watch my first film to see how I am)'. So I was confident about the numbers."

Dhadak, the remake of the 2016 Marathi film *Sairat*, had earned approximately Rs110.11 crores at the box office. Apart from *Dhadak*, Janhvi's only film that was released in theatres was the 2021 film *Roohi*, which could not do good business.



Actress Upasana files case against Miss Universe Harnaaz

Upasana Singh, a face familiar to many as 'Bua' of *Kapil Sharma's comedy show*, has filed a case against Miss Universe Harnaaz Kaur Sandhu for allegedly "breach of contract" in the District Court of Chandigarh.

Advocate Karan Sachdeva and Irvan Neet Kaur, filling the suit, mentioned that their client signed a contract in the year 2020, with Sandhu after

she won Femina Miss India. Sandhu entered into an agreement with Santosh Entertainment Studio LLP being run by her to produce a Punjabi feature film *Bai Ji Kuttange*. She signed Sandhu as the lead artist.

Through this agreement, it was specifically agreed between the parties that the artist would make herself available throughout the promotional activities of the film both by being present in per-

son during the events as well as virtually.

However, Sandhu evaded all her professional and contractual commitments of being the female lead artist in the film by completely ignoring all the communications made to her by the production house as well as all other concerned stakeholders by being absent from all the promotional events and distancing herself from the cast and crew.

Jennifer Coolidge quips she slept with a lot of men after *American Pie*

Actress Jennifer Coolidge got 'a lot of sexual action' after starring in the comedy *American Pie*.

The 60-year-old actress took on the role of Jeanine Stifler or 'Stifler's Mom' in the 1999 coming-of-age comedy, and joked that she has slept with hundreds of people since playing the part, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

"I was so happy for *American Pie* and the MILF thing. I got a lot out of being

a MILF and I got a lot of sexual action from *American Pie*," she said.

"There were so many benefits to doing that movie. There would be like 200 people that I would never have slept with (had I not done it!)." Meanwhile, *The White Lotus* star is also known for playing manicurist Paulette Bonafonte in the *Legally Blonde* movies opposite Reese Witherspoon and has to deal with fans coming up to her to do impressions of her ditzy

character's famous line.

In *Legally Blonde 2: Red, White and Blonde*, Paulette says, "Oh my God, you look like the Fourth of July! Makes me want a hot dog real bad." Coolidge is set to reprise her role as Paulette once again in the upcoming *Legally Blonde 3*. However, she claimed that she is yet to see a script for the movie.

She said, "Everyone keeps talking about it. I'm very excited about the script that is coming my way but I haven't seen it yet."



Chrissy Teigen and John Legend announce pregnancy

Chrissy Teigen has announced that she is expecting her third child with her husband, John Legend, almost two years after losing a baby during pregnancy.

The US model, aged 36, shared an Instagram post showing herself visibly pregnant, saying she was feeling 'hopeful and amazing'. "Joy has filled our home and hearts again," she added. In September 2020, she lost a baby, whom the couple had named Jack, after suffering complications and bleeding.

Teigen previously said that the loss was "the

greatest pain I could ever imagine."

At the time, she wrote that she and her husband were "shocked and in the kind of deep pain you only hear about, the kind of pain we've never felt before. The last few years have been a blur of emotions to say the least, but joy has filled our home and hearts again," Teigen wrote on Instagram in her latest post.

"A billion shots later (in the leg lately, as u can see!) we have another on the way. Every appointment I've said to myself, 'OK if it's healthy today I'll announce' but then I breathe a sigh of

relief to hear a heartbeat and decide I'm just too nervous still. I don't think I'll ever walk out of an appointment with more excitement than nerves, but so far, everything is perfect and beautiful and I'm feeling hopeful and amazing," she added.

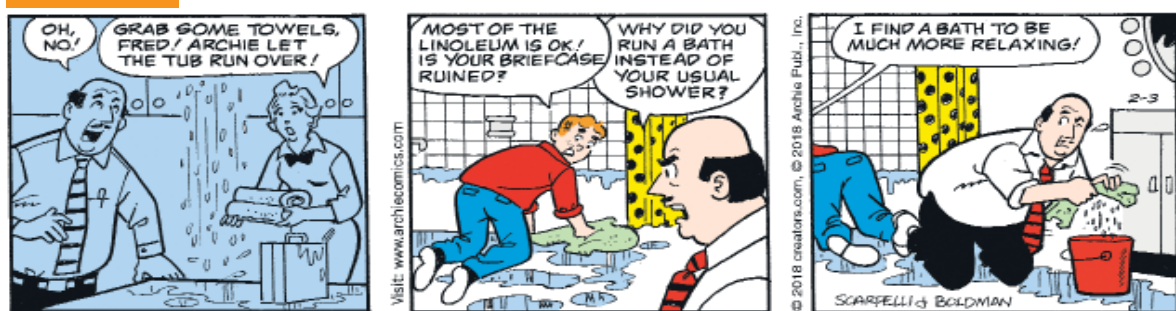
The couple are already parents to daughter Luna, aged six, and son Miles, aged four.

In December 2020, following the loss of the baby, Teigen said on Instagram that she was sad she would never be pregnant again - but did not clarify in her post why she believed that would be the case.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



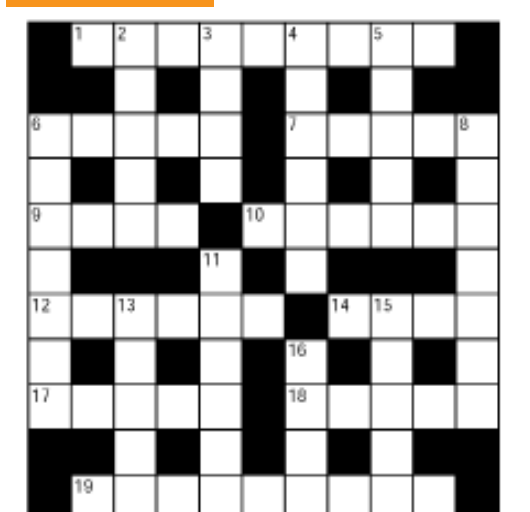
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



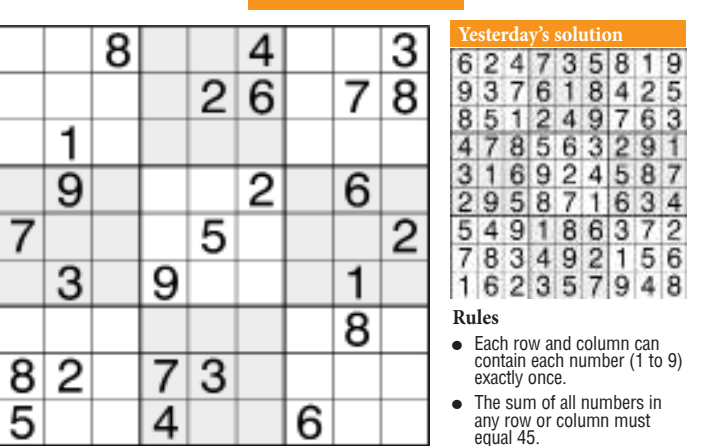
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



ACROSS

- 1 Don't jump out of a flying aeroplane without this
- 6 A compass direction
- 7 Time of darkness
- 9 Decays
- 10 A large seal-like animal with whiskers and long tusks
- 12 Sampled by mouth
- 14 Where Peruvians live
- 17 Places where people live
- 18 Parts of a sentence
- 19 Vegetable growers

DOWN

- 2 Crown-up
- 3 A throbbing pain
- 4 A building for an aeroplane



GINGER MEGGS



Maniesh, creating a revolution in hosting

Synonymous with hosting on stage as well as on television, fondly regarded as the sultan of the stage, Maniesh Paul has established himself as a successful host and actor over the years.

Beginning his career as an RJ, VJ, and then creating a revolution in hosting on television, he has scaled an impressive journey. Recently turning into a nationwide sensation with the humungous success of *Jugg Jugg Jeeyo*, he also garnered recognition and love for his vibrant, energetic, and entertaining character as Gurpreet in the latest release.

He throws shade, "Having hosted numerous awards shows, live stage events, and reality shows, I was irked by the placement of the host on stage and decided to take charge which has now remained my trademark." Revealing an incident from the early stage of their career, he shared, "I used to see a lot of hosting on television. One thing I really used to feel bad about was, why is it that the host is standing in one corner and all the heroes come center stage? I said I would like to change that. I remember I was hosting a very big award night show and they told me that Maniesh when you come on stage, that's the corner for you. I said, if you

don't mind, I don't want to stand there. He asked where do you want to stand. I said center stage. So, I remember, I started hosting from there, and I felt so good. And now thankfully nobody tells me to stand in a corner. They say that Maniesh stands wherever the show is yours."

Love leads to major changes in one's life, one such change instigated in Maniesh Paul's life around his graduation was inspired by his then-girlfriend, now wife Sanyukta Paul. Maniesh revealed, "I finished my graduation. She said I'll marry you only if you are a graduate."

Now the actor is not only a graduate but also one of the most loved actors of the industry and the most successful host in India. And then, there's nothing greater than parents' love and support in achieving big dreams. "I was a young boy from Malviya Nagar in Delhi who aspired to achieve great heights and make it big as an actor, however, the path wasn't easy. What made it easier was the constant support of my mother, right from childhood. My mother acknowledged the creative side of her son and offered wings to my dreams. I'll tell you how I used to be in all the fancy dress competitions, sometimes becoming Amitabh Bachchan, Raj Kapoor from

Mera Naam Joker. I remember she used to work really hard. I don't think there's any shade of lipstick she's left that she hasn't used on me to dress me for fancy dress competitions, but yes, I feel good today. Because now when I look back, that worked."

Moving ahead, for an outsider with big dreams, Bollywood isn't an easy path. "From photoshoots to auditions, the road was filled with experiences and madness. Like any other actor, I carved my journey with bitter-sweet moments that now stay etched as strong memories in my life. For my first ever photoshoot, my wife would steal ties from her father's wardrobe and put it back after the shoots, to support her childhood sweetheart. My singing talent also bloomed when I hosted a singing reality show. The same was identified by Salman Khan, who encouraged me for singing debut *Harjai* with Lulia Vantur," he ceased. He even hosts Salman Khan's yearly *Dabangg* Tour. But he is presently busy charming the audience with his acting chops. Much like his onscreen character in the movie, his fashion game is also on fleek. A look at his social media and one can guess that he loves to experiment with bright colours and there's no denying the fact that this guy has a game of its own.



Thoughtful gifts for your sibling this Rakhi 'in budget'

Raksha Bandhan, which is perhaps the most celebrated and most seasoned celebration of India is not far off. Celebrated upon the arrival of the full moon in the period of Shravan as indicated by the lunar schedule, it is the celebration of the love and affection of the sibling love.

We understand that with the ongoing pandemic, festivals may not be just about as terrific as they used to be, yet you can in any case invest quality energy with your brother/sister and fill their heart with joy exceptional with a gift they would cherish!

In case you are confounded about what to get for your dearest kin, and chocolates appear too standard, here are a couple giving thoughts that your sibling will undoubtedly cherish:

Wall reading light for your nerd sibling:

Everybody has a bibliophile sibling. For someone who is always engrossed in books, this is the most considerate gift. Also, Book nerds have a special inclination towards reading accessories, so go out and shop this beautiful gift from WoodenStreet for your brother/sister this Rakhi.

Price: Rs. 1504

Vintage furniture for your aesthetic sibling:

Girls generally love decorating and redecorat-

ing their rooms on special occasions. If you have a sister who likes the same, this is an apt gift. Moreover, there is an exceptional show of love for things that are vintage. Bring home some beautiful vintage and antique furniture from PritiHome and choose from their exciting variety.

Price: Rs. 3699

Explore the ethnic wear collection:

Somebody once said that women never have enough clothes. The statement is true to this date. S check out a beautiful collection of women's wear ranging from ethnic formals to western wear to loungewear at 'Aachho.com'. They are offering huge discounts for the occasion.

Price: Rs. 2700

Pick out luxurious fragrances for your sibling:

A Fragrance Reed Diffuser is one of the greatest products for gifting your beloved ones this RakshaBandhan. An aromatic atmosphere brings one sense to calm, composed and warmth. Pick out this perfect gift for your sibling at this festival. A sophisticated, festive fragrance of elegant mulberry enriched with a smooth base of patchouli, nutmeg and vanilla. It softly imparts a sweet-smelling formula with rather sweeter undertones for added temptation.

Price: Rs. 1592

Aesthetic products, from bookmarks to home decor

TEJAL SINHA

Standing in the long queues in the supermarkets, waiting for your turn to check-out, has been the worst challenge, of course. The June Shop, a Kolkata-based online store, is this one-stop destination. You will find anything and everything. Right from a highlighter to some amazing quirky products for home decor, you can find anything and everything at an affordable price.

The Pioneer connects with the CEO of June Shop, Vansikha Nahata, a young 25-year-old entrepreneur, who leads the brand and is steering the expansion, content, branding, and marketing aspects of the business. She is responsible for driving the business's critical mandates and



her multi-dimensional qualities ranging from ideation and content curation to designing as a leader have ensured a fundamentally strong, customer-centric business with enormous potential.

Excerpts from the interview:

Tell us more about The June Shop?

The June Shop is the brainchild of the two co-founders, Rishabh and Pranav, and they are also childhood best friends who always shared the passion to start a business together. With thorough research, they found out that there's a huge gap in the impulse buying B2C sector. After a year of inception, they realised the growing demand for design-oriented home decor products. Nowadays, people are majorly indulging themselves and their homes in innovative and unique accessories and products that make their homes look good.

What is your USP?

Our USP is our designing team. There's an immense amount of research that goes into studying the demands in the market before research comes into the picture. The design team sits with it, then they brainstorm and ideate on how we can extract data from the research and bring the

products to life. Rishabh, the co-founder, actively participates in the procurement process. We have recently started in India, where we have branched all over India. We

have tied up with multiple manufacturers because we do see ourselves promoting the local artisans.

What's the price range?

The price starts as low as Rs 299 and goes up to Rs 25,000. We have recently expanded to the premium and luxury sectors.

Starting around the pandemic, what were the challenges?

We started in December 2019 and soon after its inception, three months later, we were hit by the pandemic. One of the major challenges was definitely the operations. The team was very newly formed. The team was a little erratic; some people worked from home, while others had to come to the office, but the timings were a little off. I believe we were extremely fortunate that the operations team remained at the headquarters and strictly adhered to the COVID protocols. While many e-commerce websites faced difficulties in, let's say, delivery, we didn't face as much because the team stayed back.

Where do you see The June Shop in the upcoming years?

I see June's shop being primarily in the home decor space. We do see ourselves catering to any and every customer in some way or the other, because we amp up any given space. I think any customer would sort of ben-



efit from landing on the June Shop, and the product range is also affordable, even if the demographic is such that an age group would sort of purchase from the June Shop and they become repeat customers.

Being young entrepreneurs, what has been the key to success?

I think the success has been the team along with the co-founders are always on the go, always willing to learn and upskill. None of us come from an e-commerce background so it's a learning for all of us. It's definitely been a challenge for us to understand how things go around or work. Everything that we learn or know it firsthand.

Your recently launched products are these unique and quirky rakhis. What would you like to tell about it?

We studied the market demands and we studied how consumer behaviour. We found that there's a lot of demand for the rakhis on our website that's when our team got into place and started designing the rakhis. So everything that you see on the website everything is designed by our team. Again we do take pride in the fact that we are doing rakhi's all by the local artisans and taking the help of their expertise. In some way, we are trying to give back to the community.

RUKSHAR DHILLON: Soft, independent & full of life

TEJAL SINHA

This beauty has been climbing the ladder of success like a supersonic express train. She has won hearts ever since her debut in the Tollywood film world with films including *Aakatayi*, *Krishnarajuna Yudham*, *ABCD: American Born Confused Desi*, and *Ashoka Vanamlo Arjuna Kalyanam*. Not only did she make a remarkable name in the Telugu film industry, but also *Bhangra Paa Le* in Hindi and *Run Antony* in Kannada.

Ever since the makers of the film *Spark* announced taking on-board Rukshar as the female lead, her fans are super excited for the film's release.

We couldn't wait and quickly connected with Rukshar, who shares with us some exclusive details of her character, her memorable moments from the shooting so far, her take on two of the most controversial happenings in the film industry and much more.

In the film, Rukshar will be playing the character of a student named Ananya. Sharing more on the same, she says, "My character, Ananya, is a student who is studying research in science. She is this young city girl who has the heart to help people and does social services for everyone around her. She is a smart, strong person, and she makes her own decisions."

As the shooting for the film is said to be underway, she shares that, so far, her experience while shooting has been really great. She says, "The team is very young and fresh. The way they execute things on screen is very real, and it's something that the audience wants to watch today. They are very dedicated and very particular about getting the perfect shot, so it looks amazing on screen. It's been really amazing working with Vikrant and Aravind sir. I am sure we are going to create a great product that the audience will love."

She further continues sharing her most memorable moment from the set of *Spark*, and that is her introduction shot. "The composition, the mood, and the feeling that Aravind Sir has created to introduce me in the film has been one of my most amazing introductions so far. It creates this very serene, very mesmerising girl who has her head on her shoulders. It depicts every shade of me. The soft side, the independent side, someone who is full of life. So the way it was composed and shot, and the amount of time we took to shoot that perfect entire introduction scene, I think that was my most memorable moment," she says.

Apart from being an eccentric star, Rukshar shares that she loves living and enjoying a simple life. She further reveals that when she's at home, she loves cooking a good meal for her family. She says, "I am a

very homely person, but I still love going out. I love travelling. Every time I am home, I love to cook something for my family and get them a good meal. Besides that, I just love all the little things in life. I am just not someone who is really big on spending a lot of money or buying a lot of expensive things. For me as a person, it's always the little things that matter. I just love being around people who I can give joy and happiness and have a good time with. So yes, very simple, straight and very chill." Over the past years, we've seen actors connect on a different level with their fans and audience via social media. So, as an actor, is it mandatory to be popular on social media? Rukshar explains to us her take on this, and says, "As an actor, and especially being in the public eye, you need to grow up with the audience. And, if the audience is on social media, I believe it is a good way to connect, and being on social media will allow you to reach a much larger audience. At the end of the day, they come to the screen to watch you. They give that time, they invest in you, and they encourage you, so being connected with them is the thing I believe is the most amazing thing. Initially, when social media didn't exist, it was actually more difficult. But since it exists now, it has become such a big and amazing platform for the entire audience and the fans. So definitely, we should make the most use of this, and I think we all are. It's a great way to communicate and a great way to be put out there, know what your audience likes, and interact. It has great benefits, and I seriously enjoy it."

No doubt, the most viral topic and the talk of the town have been Ranveer Singh's latest photoshoot. The *Befikre* star has always been a true befikra, who never regrets putting himself as he is in front of the public. As many celebs from B-town have come forward to support him, Rukshar also has a message for the public in regard to the same. "I have always believed that everyone, be it a man or a woman, should have freedom in what they want to do. We live in a country where we have so much freedom and so much exposure. Whatever we personally feel is the right thing to do. We should go ahead and do it. As long as there's an intent behind it, there's nothing bad or bitter. I feel some people would like it, some won't. You cannot please everyone. The only thing is you can please yourself. You should go ahead and do what you like."

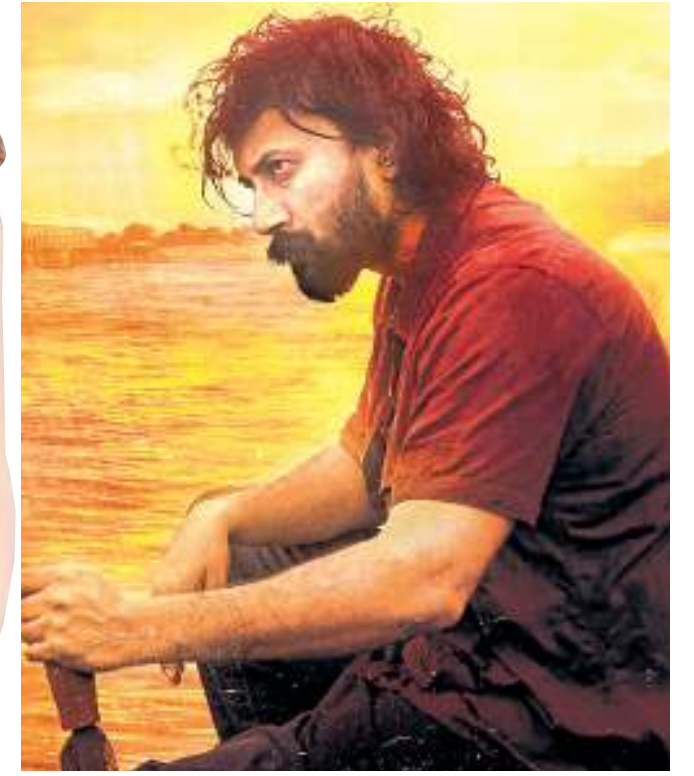
While there's this continuous debate on South Indian vs. Bollywood films, where every day, a new celeb comes forward talking from either side, Rukshar shares, irrespective of the region, it's the Indian film industry that's growing. She says, "There's definitely been a debate about it, but I feel personally the larger our cinema grows to be, the more it's from any region of India. The larger film industry will grow. And

In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, *Ashoka Vanamlo Arjuna Kalyanam* fame Rukshar Dhillon reveals some exclusive tidbits about her character in her next *Spark*, her most memorable moment from the set, her opinion on Ranveer Singh's controversial photoshoot and much more.

that's what is happening. So when someone who's done a Hindi film and not a South film goes to another country, when they say they've come from a land of making Indian cinema, they collectively represent Indian cinema. I don't think people ask you which part, where, or category. We also shouldn't do that because right now the aim is to grow Indian cinema and not to grow cinema from a specific region in a country. The more we grow as an Indian cinema, the more our position as an Indian cinema will grow, and that's the larger picture that we need to see."

On the work front, along with *Spark*, Rukshar has been working on her next Hindi film. She says it's an interesting project and she's really looking forward to it.

"It has amazing content and I am playing a very different role compared to what I've done before. I also have an Amazon show coming up. I have already finished shooting for it. There is a lot of exciting stuff coming up, and I can't wait for the audience to watch all of it," she signs off.



Satyadev in an intense & terrific avatar

Young and promising actor Satyadev needs no special introduction to the Tollywood audience. He is a versatile hero who has earned his place by playing different roles. *Godse* recently entertained the audience with the film. Satyadev has been a part of many projects too.

Chiranjeevi is playing a pivotal role in the movie *Godfather*. The latest movie in which he is acting as the hero is *Krishnamma*. Recently, the intense look in the release of the first look poster of the movie got an amazing response. Hero Sai Dharam Tej released the teaser of *Krishnamma* on Thursday and congratulated the film unit.

The teaser revealed how intense and rustic the film will be. In the teaser, Satyadev is narrating the story with a voice-over. Creating a fear of not knowing his voice. The teaser shows the reason behind the title with the powerful dialogue 'like this *Krishnamma*, no one knows when or where we were born. The movie *Krishnamma* is about the conflict between three friends in a small town and a villain—how a small inci-

dent changed the lives of three of them. Kaala Bhairava's background score and Satyadev's ferocity in the teaser have further increased the expectations of the film. Looking at the teaser, it seems that this is an action drama. Satyadev fans are eagerly waiting for the release of the movie. Their wish to see their favorite hero in a full-length action movie will soon be fulfilled. Presented by renowned director Koratala Siva, Krishna Kommalapati, *Krishnamma* is being produced under the banner of Arunachala Creations under the direction of VV Gopala Krishna. Preparations are being made to release the movie in theaters soon. Kala Bhairava has composed the music, and the post-production activities of this film are going on at a fast pace.

Prabhas: A movie theatre is like a temple

Star Prabhas, who was at the pre-release event of the upcoming Dulquer Salmaan-starrer *Sita Ramam*, spoke highly of the movie and the entire film industry.

Prabhas, who graced the event as the evening's chief guest, said, "The trailer looks incredible. One of the nation's most attractive heroes is Dulquer. What a fantastic movie *Mahanati* is, and Dulquer in the movie is just so flawless."

The *Baahubali* actor, requested all of his fans and other movie lovers to watch *Sita Ramam*, and said, "Even though we all have deities in our households, we still visit temples to pray to God. For me, theatres are like temples. Despite the OTT releases, a true movie lover can only watch such great movies at the theatre only."

Prabhas then continued, "The performances of Dulquer and Mrunal are being praised by everyone. All I want to do is watch the movie soon. Making a movie with such passion and a big budget is not simple."

"It appears that the movie will also have a war scene in addition to the love story. Simply put, the movie has other components and is not a love story."

Prabhas talked about the *Sita Ramam* director and said, "I saw movies by Hanu Raghavapudi. He makes a gorgeous director."

His presentation of the movie is poetic. He is one of the most attractive directors in the business," Prabhas remarked.

Sita Ramam stars Mrunal Thakur and *Pushpa* actress Rashmika Mandanna as the female lead opposite Dulquer Salmaan, and is all set for its grand release on August 5.

Dulquer Salmaan's film *Sita Ramam* banned in Gulf countries



Sita Ramam, directed by Hana Ragahavapudi and starring Dulquer Salmaan, has been banned within the Gulf international locations, previous to its launch on August 5. The film is a

romantic drama, revolving across the lifetime of lieutenant Ram, performed by Dulquer.

The film is the Mollywood actor's second stint in Tollywood, after *Mahanati* that includes Keerthi Suresh. The film is banned from releasing in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE. Although the precise cause is unknown, it's assumed that the ban is in place on grounds that it damage non secular sentiments. The makers have utilized for a re-censoring of the movie. The transfer is predicted to be an enormous blow because the Gulf international locations are an enormous marketplace for Dulquer Salmaan's movies. His romantic hero picture

has additionally elevated his attraction amongst followers, globally. The film has been shot in Kashmir and Hyderabad. Mrunal Thakur and Rashmika Mandanna play the feminine leads, whereas Gautham Menon,

Prakash Raj, and different actors are additionally a part of the solid. The movie will launch in three languages — Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam. The film is bankrolled by Vyjayanthi Films.

RRR actress Alia Bhatt faces boycott calls !

RRR actress Alia Bhatt awaits the OTT release of her next film, *Darlings*. The Hindi-language film is going to stream on Netflix from August 5. #BoycottAliaBhatt has been trending on Indian

Twitter on Thursday. Netizens are angry with the *Brahmastra* actress for doing a film that allegedly normalizes domestic violence. As noted by a website in its trailer review, "Badrunissa Shaikh beats her husband Hamza Shaikh violently and repeatedly, all

of which is supposed to be revenge for the latter abusing her in the past. Domestic violence scenes in the neo-noir dark comedy are played by laughs. Netizens are miffed with the trailer of the film and are pre-judging the content of the film based on the trailer.

