





# Clouds of alliance over disqualification dust!

The Surat trial court judgement convicting Rahul Gandhi of criminal defamation charges couldn't have come at a more opportune time for the Congress and the so-called 'Non-Congress, non-BJP' front of regional parties. The judgement imposed a two-year jail term as punishment, thus immediately disqualifying Rahul Gandhi as a Member of Parliament, in line with the 2013 Supreme Court judgement in the Lily Thomas case.

The judgement came just around when Rahul Gandhi concluded that the Congress, fighting only with its UPA alliance partners, would face the same outcome in 2024 as it had in the last two elections. The Congress couldn't win enough seats to qualify for the Leader of the Opposition position both times. With this

realisation, Rahul had just completed a trip to London, where he tried to enlist support from foreign powers to drive a narrative that democracy was in danger in India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

At the same time, various anti-BJP regional parties, which had grown in their states at the cost of Congress, had tried to project a 'Non-Congress, non-BJP' grouping and failed to get any traction. Major parties in this grouping were Trinamool Congress (TMC), led by Mamata Banerjee; Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), led by Arvind Kejriwal; Janata Dal-United (JDU), led by Nitish Kumar and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), led by TS Chief Minister Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR). In addition, these parties have recently taken severe blows to

**Yet, leaders of these political parties were quick to portray the disqualification of Rahul as Modi's handiwork and BJP's attack on democracy. Mamata Banerjee of TMC called Rahul's disqualification a "new low for democracy in PM Modi's New India". AAP's Arvind Kejriwal called it a "dictatorial move" and requested everyone to "come together and save our democracy".**

their image due to allegations of large-scale corruption. Given the zero-tolerance stand taken by PM Modi on corruption, they had concluded that their only option was to paint the investigations as political targeting and vendetta by the BJP.

It was clear from the beginning that the BJP had no role in Rahul's disqualification. The specific law was on the statute for a long time; the earlier SC judgement in the Lily Thomas case and the current trial court judgement were delivered by

the independent judiciary; it was Rahul himself who had torn and trashed an ordinance that Mannohan wanted to bring to stay the disqualification in such cases. Legal luminaries, including Kapil Sibal, a confidant of Rahul Gandhi and Minister of Law and Justice in the Mannohan Singh Cabinet, were quick to point out that the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi was automatic upon the judgement.

Yet, leaders of these political parties were quick to portray the disqualification of



KISHORE POREDDY

Rahul as Modi's handiwork and BJP's attack on democracy. Mamata Banerjee of TMC called Rahul's disqualification a "new low for democracy in PM Modi's New India". AAP's Arvind Kejriwal called it a "dictatorial move" and requested everyone to "come together and save our democracy". BRS

supremo and Telangana Chief Minister, KCR, who earlier called Rahul Gandhi the "biggest buffoon" in the country, accused Modi of being a dictator and called it a "black day in the history of Indian democracy".

It is easily discernible that these parties had already concluded that their very survival depended on them uniting. These parties were waiting for an excuse they could use for joining forces with Congress, a party they had claimed to be fighting until then.

On the other hand, even Rahul was aware of the consequences and did not want to clarify and apologise for his offensive remarks. Congress, filled with legal luminaries like no other party, did not try to secure an immediate stay on the conviction from a higher court. Both facts lead to the

conclusion that the Congress saw it as an opportunity to unite all anti-BJP parties who were until then reluctant to accept Rahul's primacy under the leadership of the same Rahul Gandhi.

Coming to Telangana, after failing to get traction on his non-Congress, non-BJP initiative and renaming TRS to BRS and relaunching it as a national party, options for KCR and BRS had narrowed down. With BJP becoming a potent alternative and growing even more robust by the day in the state, KCR had concluded that alliances are the only option for survival. The alliance with Communist parties in the Munugode by-election, and the narrow victory margin of the BRS candidate in it, had validated the necessity of alliances. His son Rama Rao's presence with Rahul

Gandhi at Yashwant Sinha's nomination, his defence of Nehru's and Mannohan's performance as Prime Ministers in the Assembly, his daughter Kavitha's invite to Congress president Mallikharjun Kharge and party supremo Sonia Gandhi to join her Jantar Mantar dharna were all apparent overtures to the Congress for an alliance. Rahul's disqualification was the opportunity KCR was waiting for, and he quickly pounced on it.

It's time for senior Congress leaders in the state, who claim to sincerely fight against KCR's misrule, to decide where they stand. The only force that will be fighting the Bharat Rashtra Samithi in the Assembly elections this year-end will be the Bharatiya Janata Party.

*(The author is BJP TS spokesperson)*

## MLA Vikram Reddy slams TDP for false campaign

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MLA from Atmakuru Mekapati Vikram Reddy reacted strongly to the false propaganda by the opposition TDP campaign that he was going to quit the ruling YSRCP. In a scathing remark, Vikram Reddy said that instead of 'shouting like stray dogs they should post correct news and information. He said that for any decision I call Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and take his support. He also expressed confidence that the YSRCP will win all the seats in the district in the coming elections.

Vikram Reddy dismissed such rumours and stated that if his uncle M Chandrasekhar Reddy left the YSRCP party, he would eventually know what his power is and that the action would be initiated against anyone if they cross the party line.

The YSRCP MLA made it clear that Mekapati's family



will always be with CM YS Jagan and follow him. Unable to face him directly, the TDP was campaigning against him using his allied media. Vikram Reddy said that CM Jagan's position in the hearts of the people could not be wrested no matter who tries to, whether it's the TDP or the yellow media, he stated. Mekapati Vikram Reddy, in response to the developments in the district, exuded confidence that the YSRCP will win ten out of ten seats in the Nellore district in the 2024 elections and give it as a gift to CM YS Jagan.

## HUGE DEMAND FOR SC GURUKULS

# Proposals sent to govt for additional seats: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Social Welfare Minister Merugu Nagarjuna has said that there is a huge demand for seats in SC Gurukul as students are achieving excellent results at all levels. Keeping this demand of students in mind, it has been revealed that proposals have been sent to the government for granting additional seats.

On Friday, the minister visited Dr. BR Ambedkar's social welfare gurukul schools in the Kokkirapalli and Nakkapalli villages of the Anakapalli district. Various departments including the computer lab, kitchen, and classrooms were closely inspected. He talked to the students and teachers and inquired about the problems in the Gurukuls.

Minister Nagarjuna stated



that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is keen on the welfare of children more than their own parents and is taking all steps to pave the way for them to have a good future. He said with the steps taken by CM Jagan, there was a huge competition for the seats in SC Gurukuls last year.

He recalled that in the past,

seats in SC Gurukuls were left unfilled. As the demand has increased proposals were sent for the sanction of additional seats.

He said that special measures have been taken to achieve 100% results in Class 10 and Intermediate examinations. He said that it is the responsibility of the teachers of

the respective subjects to ensure that all the students in the gurukuls pass in all the subjects.

He further said that for those who do not pass, the teachers of the respective subjects should provide tuition to the students and ensure that they pass.

He said that teachers will also be given special training as part of achieving 100 percent results.

Minister appreciated Kakarapalli school Principal RV Krishnatara for keeping the school premises clean, and later he distributed the hall tickets to the class 10 students of the Gurukul.

DCO Rupavathi, along with local public representatives, and officials of social welfare and revenue departments also participated.

## KTR's dig at Modi; ready to display his certificates

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Industries Minister KT Rama Rao took a dig at Modi and said that he is ready to display his academic certificates publicly.

In a Tweet, he said, "I have a Masters in Biotechnology from Pune University. I also have a Masters in Business Administration from the City University of New York. I am ready to display both certificates publicly. Just saying."

The BJP attacked Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday and accused him of "peddling lies" against Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the Gujarat HC set aside the CIC order asking the Gujarat University to provide information on Modi's academic degree to him.

The Gujarat High Court on Friday set aside the seven-year-old order of the Central Information Commission (CIC) asking the Gujarat University to provide information on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's degree to

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Allowing the Gujarat University's appeal against the CIC order, Justice Biren Vaishnav also imposed a cost of Rs 25,000 on Kejriwal and asked him to deposit the amount within four weeks to the Gujarat State Legal Services Authority (GSLA).

Justice Vaishnav also refused a request by Kejriwal's lawyer Percy Kavina to stay the order. In April 2016, the then CIC, M. Sridhar Acharyulu, directed the Delhi University and the Gujarat University to provide information to Kejriwal on the academic degrees Modi had received.

Three months later, the Gujarat High Court stayed the CIC order after the variety approached it against that order. The CIC order came a day after Kejriwal wrote to Acharyulu, saying he has no objection to government records about him being made public and wondered why the commission wanted to "hide" information on Modi's educational qualifications.

## 'End survey by May 20'

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Officials of the Municipal Department said that they are making preparations to take up the survey in urban areas and data analysis is going on presently. Panchayat Raj Department officials told the Chief Minister they would complete the survey in 300 villages by the end of the third week of April and in all villages by the end of December.

Mines and Geology Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Principal Advisor to the Chief Minister Ajay Kallam, Special Chief Secretaries G Sai Prasad, Y Sri Lakshmi, Dr Rajat Bhargava, B Rajasekhar, Principal Secretary (Panchayat Raj and Rural Development) Gopalakrishna Dwivedi, senior IAS officers Siddharth Jain, A Md. Intiaz, Praveen Kumar, and Shan Mohan were among those present.

## Kotamreddy joins...

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Senior Telugu Desam leader Kanna Lakshminarayana, APCC president Gidugu Rudraraju, MLC Panchumarthi Anuradha, former minister Adinarayana Reddy, and other leaders demanded the government to roll back the three capitals' decision and continue Amaravati as the only capital of AP. Kanna Lakshminarayana stated that the future of the State is dependent on Amaravati and with the consensus of all political parties including the YSRCP, Amaravati has been named the capital. He further claimed that many stakeholders have come to Amaravati and the people of this State, together with the people of Amaravati, have given the power to CM Jagan Mohan Reddy to honour the sentiments of the people.

Suspended YSRCP MLA Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy said Amaravati belongs to the Telugu people across the world and not just the 29 villages of AP. He asked CM Jagan Mohan Reddy why he supported Amaravati while as Leader of the Opposition and took a U-turn after coming to power. He said that the YSRCP government had not moved even a single brick to construct Amaravati in the past four years and predicted that the anti-Amaravati forces will be defeated in the next election.

MLC P Anuradha criticised the government's response even though the farmers of Amaravati have been fighting for 1200 days. CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna, P Balakotayya, president of Amaravati Bahujan JAC, Jada Shrawan Kumar, founder of Jai Bheem Bharat Party, BJP leader Y Sathya Kumar and others demanded that the government continue Amaravati as sole capital of AP.

## Trump indicted by NY grand jury...

Continued from Page 1

The indictment remains under seal and it is not clear what crimes and how many criminal counts Trump has been charged with. CNN reported that the former president has been charged with more than 30 counts.

The office of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, who has been pursuing the investigation for years, confirmed that it had contacted Trump's lawyers on Thursday evening to "coordinate his surrender" on unspecified charges.

"This evening we contacted Mr. Trump's attorney to coordinate his surrender to the Manhattan D. A.'s office for arraignment on a Supreme Court indictment, which remains under seal. Guidance will be provided when the arraignment date is selected," a spokesperson for District

Attorney Bragg said.

The New York Times termed Trump's indictment "a historic development that will shake up the 2024 presidential race and forever mark him as the nation's first former president to face criminal charges." Trump, the 45th US President from 2017 to 2021, is expected to fly from his home in Florida to New York on Monday and be arraigned in court on Tuesday.

The proceeding is expected to be brief. The charges in the indictment will be read to him at the hearing, which is set to last about 10-15 minutes.

Trump has denied all wrongdoing in connection with the payments made ahead of the election. In a statement responding to news of his indictment, the former president called it "Political persecution and election interference at the highest level in history," and

accused Democrats of "weaponising our justice system to punish a political opponent, who just so happens to be a President of the United States."

"The Democrats have lied, cheated and stolen in their obsession with trying to 'Get Trump,' but now they've done the unthinkable - indicting a completely innocent person in an act of blatant Election Interference," Trump said.

He lashed out at Bragg, the Manhattan district attorney, calling the prosecutor a "disgrace", and accused him of "doing Joe Biden's dirty work".

"This is third-world prosecutorial misconduct. It is the opportunistic targeting of a political opponent in a campaign year," Trump's son Eric tweeted. President Biden, a Democrat, repeatedly declined to comment on the indictment of former President Donald Trump as he departed.

## Metro Rail extends 'off peak hours' offer from today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

L&T Metro Rail announced 'off peak hours' offer on contactless smart cards (CSC) and will continue the super-saver offer from April 1.

A 10 per cent discount will be available on notified fare on CSC only, from 6 am to 8 am and 8 pm to 12 pm.

The super-saver offer (SSO-99) which was widely

appreciated by Hyderabad Metro Rail passengers, and which saw more than 1.3 million rides, ends on March 31. L&TMRHL will continue it starting from April 1 to March 31, 2024. Passengers can travel unlimited on 100 notified holidays at Rs 99 only.

Pre-existing SSO-59 smart cards can be used for SSO-99 offer.

## BJP natl secy Satya...

Continued from Page 1

The YSRCP and BJP activists clashed on the road for some time after the attack but the police dispersed them.

BJP leader P Suresh told the media that the YSRCP activists enquired about the former minister and BJP leader C Adinarayana Reddy who was not in the car.

Later talking to the media, Satya Kumar alleged that the ruling YSRCP activists attacked his car with stones. He would not be scared of such attacks.

The BJP activists could counter the attacks but did not since the BJP wants to protect the democratic system. When thousands of farmers were organising a dharna, very few police were deployed there, he flayed.

Satya Kumar alleged that the attack on his car took place as per the directions of MP Nandigam Suresh.

He said that he would take the incident to the notice of BJP central leaders.

He appealed to the State DGP to take stringent action against those who attacked his car.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Sukla Paksha

Tithi:Ekadashi:

Apr 01 01:58 AM to Apr 02 04:48 AM

Dwadashi:

Apr 02 04:50 AM to Apr 03 06:24 AM

Nakshatram:

Ashlesha:

Magha:

Apr 01 01:57 AM to Apr 02 04:48 AM

Rahukalam:

9:17 AM to 10:48 AM

Yamagandam:

1:51 PM to 3:23 PM

Varjyam:

06:06 PM to 07:52 PM

Gulika:

6:14 AM to 7:46 AM

Amritakalam:

03:01 AM to 04:48 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham:

11:55 AM to 12:44 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast:

Scattered thunderstorms

Temp:

36°

Humidity:

63%

Sunrise:

6:03 AM

Sunset:

6:20 PM

Updated:

MARCH 31, 2023 5:00 PM

## Infertility's impact on mental health...

Continued from Page 1

A large number of couples reach the brink of divorce. In one instance, the husband's family threatened the wife to give a child or face separation over her inability to conceive.

Then, most infertile women compare themselves to their friends/ relatives with kids and feel isolated and stressed about it.

Finally, excessive interference of parents/ in-laws drastically affects the couple's mental health. In one instance, a mother-in-law kept a check on her daughter-in-law's timing of sex, and even dared to ask her did you have sex previous night'. This created acute mental stress because of a grave violation of privacy.

Sadly, such cases are just the tip of the iceberg, with countless others under the carpet.

Dr. Meenakshi Ahuja,

Gynaecologist and Senior Director at Fortis La Femme said that it is unfortunate that women associate self-worth with being a mom which equates infertility to being not good enough'. Also many times, mothers /in-laws too, tend to make the woman feel incomplete' by constant bickering. Also, working women who choose to have children later in life, are put under additional pressure that this is the price being paid for prioritising career aspirations.

Many Indian men are unwilling to admit that they can have sexual problems because it hits their notorious male ego'. Dr. Surbhi Singh, Gynaecologist, highlighted that when female patients come for treatment, they're accompanied by their mother/ in-law. The husband's tests are delayed or never happen.

This is due to the social conditioning that manhood equals his sexual

performance. However, sexual performance and erectile dysfunction are quite common. And many men remain unaware of the treatment options available, the most powerful of them being Ayurveda.

"Herbs like Ashwagandha, Shatavari etc., can improve sexual health and help with infertility. Hemp is a very potent element too, it can improve sexual performance, quality and help avoid certain sexual challenges", said Mansi Sood, Ananta Hempcare.

Subject matter experts lamented about the lack of sexual education. The men are unaware of their desires, lack personal hygiene and miss out on the basics of pleasure for a woman. They project unrealistic expectations from porn which further distances their wives. Women, who have had a sheltered upbringing, accept this as something wrong with themselves.

Thus many marriages remain sex-

less even though couples are perfectly healthy and IVF is opted because they start seeing sex as a chore.

"Of late, sexual health educators & doctors, social media influencers and sexual wellness brands like IMBesharam have been trying to destigmatize pleasure and other taboos.

At IMBesharam we have been working tirelessly for a decade to open conversations between experts and seeking, husband and wife, parents and children. We showcase sex toys as a means of healthy adult pleasure. Basically, they are just pieces of rubber and silicone, it's our mind that makes it what we imagine it to be.

We are also trying to make access to sex toys easier because pleasure focus can greatly alleviate the mental health burden usually associated with sex and infertility."

Raj Armani, Founder IMBesharam, India's leading adult store.



# Over 52,000 students to appear for Class 10 exams in NTR, Krishna districts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Over 52,000 Class 10 students are set to take the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Public Examinations in NTR and Krishna districts from April 3 to 18. NTR district will host over 30,000 students and Krishna district around 22,000 students.

The district Education department officials in both districts have made all necessary arrangements for a smooth examination process. The District Collectors and DEOs have held review meetings and provided suggestions for the successful conduct of the exams.

To ensure the safety and comfort of the students, free bus travel and first-aid kits will be provided at the exam centres. The District Collectors have also issued orders to impose Section 144 at all examination centres.

In the NTR district, over 27,000 regular students and 2,800 private students will take the exams. To maintain order and prevent cheating, question papers will be stored in 35 police stations and five flying squads will be arranged. In Krishna district, over 19,900 regular students and 2,500 private students will take the exams. The district officials



have identified four high-risk examination centers, which will be monitored by CCTV cameras.

After the exams, spot valuation will take place from April 19 to 26 at the Bishop Azariah Girls' High School in Vijayawada. Section 144 will be in effect during examination hours and no Xerox centers will be allowed within 100 meters of the centers. Officials have reminded all concerned not to bring mobile phones to the examination centers and to

wear ID cards during the examinations.

Overall, the authorities have put in place strict measures to ensure a fair and peaceful examination process.

Krishna District Officials Confirm All Arrangements Made for SSC Exams

Krishna district collector P Ranjith Basha and DEO Tahera Sultana have announced that all necessary arrangements have been made to conduct the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Public Examinations

**The exams will be conducted from April 3 to 18. To ensure the safety and comfort of the students, free bus travel and first-aid kits will be provided at the exam centres. The District Collectors have also issued orders to impose Section 144 at all examination centres.**

successfully. Approximately 22,436 students, including 12,048 boys and 10,388 girls, will be appearing for the class 10 final examinations across 143 examination centres in the district.

Out of the total number of students, around 19,935 are regular candidates and the remaining 2,501 are private candidates. The exams will take place from April 3 to 18, with timings from 9.30 am to 12.45 pm. The officials have appointed 143 chief superintendents and departmental officers, along with 5 flying squads, to ensure the smooth conduct of the exams.

To prevent malpractices and mass copying, the authorities have made strong security arrangements and identified four high-risk examination centres in the district that will

be monitored by CCTV cameras. In addition, 20 route officers have been appointed, and 10 routes have been arranged for the transportation of exam materials.

Moreover, control rooms have been set up with phone numbers 9848530928, 9848232601, and 9966753718 for addressing any concerns or issues related to the exams. Officials have also directed everyone concerned not to take mobile phones into the examination centres and to wear ID cards during the examinations.

The district education department officials have made all necessary arrangements to conduct the SSC exams peacefully, and the Krishna district administration is well-prepared to ensure a successful outcome of the exams.

## SURPRISE V&E INSPECTIONS

# Many irregularities observed at NGO homes, centres

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vigilance and Enforcement department officials on Friday conducted surprise inspections across the state on Orphanages and Homes for women/children/trafficked persons/specially-abled persons/senior citizens & centers for drug addicts/beggars / destitute. During the inspection, 62 Homes in 26 districts across Andhra Pradesh were inspected, and observed irregularities in various homes and centres.

The V&E officials found that Doctors are not available to attend to the inmates. Fire-

fighting equipment was not available. A sufficient number of Toilets was not maintained for the present strength and no proper drainage system is maintained.

Compound wall/perimeter fencing is not available and many of the homes do not have separate rooms for kitchen and dining.

They also found that admission registers, Discharge registers, Donation registers, asset registers, cash registers, and stock registers are not maintained properly. Security personnel or guards are not provided. Proper beds and blankets are not provided to the

inmates. CCTV cameras are not in working condition. A few buildings require repairs and found roof leakages.

In a few homes and centres the officials found that accommodation was insufficient as per the number of inmates. Social workers/clinical psychologists are absent. Although registration has expired, the same was not renewed. Regular audits of accounts are not conducted for many years. Supervisory officers of concerned departments are not visiting the Homes on a regular basis, observed the V&E officials during their surprise inspection.



# PD Act will be invoked against ganja peddlers: CP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR Vijayawada Police Commissioner Kanti Rana Tata has said that the police will invoke the Preventive Detention (PD) Act to be invoked against ganja sellers who committed offences by importing and selling repeatedly. He made it clear the peddlers will face expulsion, if necessary, on the lines of rowdy sheeters being expelled from the city.

NTR district-level Narcotic Coordination (NCORD) meeting was held at the Collector's camp office in Vijayawada on Friday.

District Collector Dr. S Dilli Rao, Police Commissioner Kanti Rana Tata, Sub Collector Aditi Singh, and DCP Vishal Gunni attended.

Later, CP Kanti Rana addressed the media persons and said that the police would put a special vigil on the transportation of drugs and register cases against drug peddlers in the district. The Police department has focused on selling and consuming ganja for the past three months, he said.

The police identified several hotspots at Christurajapuram, Gangireddula Dibba, KL Rao Nagar, Railway Yard, Vambay Colony, Bhavanipuram, Ibrahimpatnam, Singhnagar, Kotturu Tadepalli and other places, he added.

He said 159 persons were arrested in 69 cases, of them, 8 persons were suppliers.

Rana said that ganja sellers import the weed from Chintapalli, Alluri Sitarama Raju district, and other Agency areas. After receiving the contraband, they sell it in 50 grams and 100 grams



NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao and Commissioner of Police Kanti Rana Tata are addressing a press conference about Narcotics control in Vijayawada on Friday.

Photo by **Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar**

packets, he said. "We identified 20 persons who are habitually smuggling ganja. They are receiving up to 20 kg and later selling 1 kg packets to peddlers," he said.

At this stage, to prevent ganja transportation and sales, the police are conducting awareness programmes at all schools, and colleges, he said. As of now, 150 awareness programmes were conducted, he said. With this, consumption of ganja came down by 30% to 40%, he said.

He said the Vijayawada police are talking with Visakhapatnam Range DIG and Alluri Sitarama Raju district SP to control ganja smuggling from the agency.

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao said that illegal transporters are adopting new ways to bring ganja to Vijayawada.

# Steps taken to prevent stray dogs menace: Mayor

PNS ■ GUNTUR

City Mayor Kavati Manohar Naidu and Municipal Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri said that effective steps were taken to check the stray dog menace in the city.

The mayor and the Civic Chief inaugurated the Animal Birth Central (ABC) located at Etukuru road here on Friday. They inspected the operation theatre and post-surgery hall in the centre. They also saw the veterinary medical equipment. Later talking to the media on the occasion, the civic chief said that the rabbi's vaccine is being administered to the stray dogs in the ward secretariat wise.

The Mayor said that the people in the city are facing problems due to stray dogs. Keeping this in mind, the city administration has asked ABC to control the stray dogs and give them an anti-rabies vaccine. He said that the ABC has been modernized and the public health authorities



have been directed to take special measures to take special care of dogs undergoing surgery at the centre until they recover.

Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri said that the modernized ABC could perform around 50 surgeries every day to stray dogs to regulate their population.

"The ABC has advanced facilities to deal with the stray dog menace. Stray dogs should be identified in every secretariat in the city and they

must be given ABC and anti-rabies vaccine and sanitary inspectors have been ordered to pay special attention," she directed the officials.

Keerthi Chekuri instructed the contractor to hire special staff to perform surgeries on the stray dogs to regulate their population. CMOH Dr. Vijaya Lakshmi, MHO Dr. Bhanu Prakash, DEE Hanif, and AE Durga Prasad were among those who accompanied the Mayor and Civic chief.

# Left parties plan campaign against 'anti-people' Union govt

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Left parties will conduct a campaign to create awareness among people across the State against the 'anti-people' rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy from April 14 to 30.

CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna and CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao addressed the media persons at the Balotsav Bhavan in Vijayawada on Friday.

CPI State secretary Ramakrishna said that there seems to be a dangerous situation in national politics and he alleged that Prime Minister Modi has no respect for Parliament. The entire world is discussing Adani's financial irregularities, but the Modi did not announce the Joint Parliament Committee to probe

in this regard, he commented.

He further said that during his Chief Minister's tenure, Modi had used Adani and reached the Prime Minister post. Corporate people's assets increased drastically during the nine years of Modi's regime, he felt. Anyone questioning the government is being harassed with raids by central agencies like Enforcement Directorate (ED), CID, and others, he alleged.

CPM state secretary Srinivasa Rao said that the BJP-led central government accepted the capital Amaravati and announced the Polavaram project as a national project, but funds have not been released so far.

Further, he said if the TDP, YSRCP, and Jana Sena Party have any sympathy for the people, they should come forward to fight against BJP.



# Focus on increasing milk collection: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao has directed the officials concerned to lay special focus on increasing milk collection under the 'Jagananna Pala Velluva' scheme in the district. To provide affordable prices and financial inclusion to the women dairy farmers, he said.

The District Collector conducted a video conference with concerned officers on the 'Jagananna Pala Velluva' from the camp office in Vijayawada on Friday.

He said that the officials concerned should implement the

'Pala Velluva' scheme. The scheme is being implemented in G Konduru, Mylavaram, Gampalagudem, Tiruvuru, Vissannapet, Reddigudem and A Konduru mandals, he said. As many as 15,334 women dairy farmers were registered and of them, 4,673 are supplying milk, he said.

Every centre should collect 100 litres of milk every day and for that officials should conduct meetings with women farmers, he suggested and said the government is paying Rs 85.80 per litre and officials could create awareness among farmers to increase milk collection, he added.

# Ex-bureaucrat expresses concern over GVMC's CRZ violations

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

E A S Sarma, former Secretary to Government of India, has written to the Union Secretary of Environment and Forests, Leena Nandan, regarding the extensive Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) violations committed by the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) along the beach in the name of beautification works for the ongoing G-20 meetings.

In his letter, Sarma enclosed a copy of his earlier letter dated 27-2-2023, highlighting the CRZ violations committed by the GVMC.

He also stated that the Ministry had asked the Andhra Pradesh Coastal Zone Management Authority (APCZMA) to inspect the area and submit a report, but they have not responded to his letter.

Sarma expressed concern over the inaction of the local authorities in enforcing the CRZ norms and the delay of the APCZMA in taking action. He further called for the 'polluter pays' principle to be enforced, with the costs and penalties recovered from the officers concerned.

The former Secretary stated that the illegal structures in Visakhapatnam, including multi-

storeyed buildings constructed within the CRZ area, deserve demolition as per the landmark directions issued by the Supreme Court in the case of Maradu apartments in Kerala in 2019. He accused the APCZMA of becoming a willing abettor of the offence by remaining inactive in such cases.

Sarma demanded that the Ministry take immediate action and become alert to the CRZ violations that have taken place within the CRZ-II area in Visakhapatnam, including the recent beach levelling works and illegal buildings constructed.

# Amaravati will remain people's capital: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP general secretary, Nara Lokesh, expressed confidence that Amaravati will remain the people's capital. As the agitation of the farmers who donated their lands for Amaravati reached 1200 days, Lokesh, during his pada yatra, thanked them for their relentless battle and said that the ultimate result will be in their favour.

On the 56th day of the 'padayatra' on Friday, Lokesh was given a rousing welcome

at the Raptadu Assembly segment. The pensioners complained to Lokesh that their pension has been withdrawn as their monthly power bills are more than the limit set by the Government. Lokesh promised the petty traders and local women that their problems will be resolved after TDP is back in power.

The representatives of Valmiki and Boyas met Lokesh with an appeal to include them in the BC list. The Kurubas also complained that the Rs 2 lakh loan facili-

ty for them has been withdrawn by the government. He said BCs are being harassed by foisting even petty cases against them and those cases will be lifted by the TDP as soon as the party forms the government.

Lokesh said unable to bear the torture by the local MLA, the Jockey company left Andhra Pradesh leaving 6,000 jobless. Those who have given their land for the Jockey company met Lokesh and wanted him to bring the company back to Raptadu.

# Eda Sulochana elected TFI Jt secy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Throwball Association general secretary Eda Sulochana has been elected unanimously as joint secretary for the Throwball Federation of India (TFI). The TFI general body meeting was held in the Bihar state recently.

In the general body meeting, the new body was elected unanimously. Interestingly, Eda Sulochana of Andhra Pradesh is the only woman who was unanimously elected as joint secretary for the new executive body. Also, she is the only woman in the entire TFI new body.

Throwball Federation of



India (TFI) Secretary General Naresh Mann specially felicitated Sulochana for her rendering services for the game development in Andhra Pradesh.

Speaking to 'The Pioneer', Sulochana said that the TFI joint secretary post would put an additional responsibility

on her. The new post made her proud of her, she said.

"I will work harder to produce more Throwball players in Andhra Pradesh. After the state bifurcation, AP state conducted Senior Nationals successfully in Vijayawada," she added.

# Jersey out for 'Ahimsa Run' in city tomorrow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jain International Trade Organisation (JITO) is going to organise an 'Ahimsa' run with the technical support of the Andhra Pradesh Athletic Association (APAA) in Vijayawada on April 2 (Sunday) at 5.30. Olympian and Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president PT Usha, who is also a Rajya Sabha member, will be inaugurating the run for Peace and Non-Violence at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium.

The run, organised across 65 different cities in 22 countries, aims at promoting non-violence, peace and brotherhood among people. "The run



Members of the Jain International Trade Organisation (JITO) released a poster and jersey on 'Ahimsa Run' to be held on April 2, at a press conference in Vijayawada on Friday.

Pic by **Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar**

will be held in three categories - 3km, 5km and 10km. The run will be flagged off by Olympian and President of Indian Olympic Association (IOA) P T Usha, who is also a Rajya Sabha member, along with ministers and district admin-

istrators," said JITO Vijayawada Chapter chairman Ashok Golecha.

In view of the JITO Ahimsa Run, JITO Vijayawada Chapter Chairman Ashok Golecha, chief secretary Manish Doshi, Ladies Wing chairperson Trapti

Jain, chief secretary Sangeeta Nenawat and Andhra Pradesh Athletic Association general secretary Akula Hyma unveiled jersey and posters at a hotel in Vijayawada on Friday.

Later, JITO chairman Ashok Golecha addressed the press

and said that prize money of Rs 2 lakh will be given away to the top three winners in the three categories.

Further, he said a registration fee of Rs 300, Rs 400 and Rs 500 will be collected for the three categories in which men, women and children (above 12 years) will be taking part.

The JITO 10km run will start at the IGMC stadium and pass on MG Road, Benz Circle and take a u-turn at Trendset Mall, MG Road, Police Control Room, Flyover, Vinayaka Temple and return to the stadium. APAA secretary Hyma said that the association was offering technical support for the smooth conduct of the event.



# Aqua farmers demand subsidised power tariff

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam District Shrimp Farmers' Association convenor Gopinath has appealed to the government to provide a subsidy on power tariff to the aqua farmers.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, he demanded that the Central government implement the CIA Act to hatcheries in the aqua sector as per the CRZ guidelines.

Gopinath said that aquaculture was cultivated in the Prakasam district on about 30,000 acres of land. But the aquaculture cultivation has been reduced to 6,000 acres now since the aqua farmers are unable to bear the high power tariff.

The exorbitant hike in power tariff forced the aqua farmers to pull themselves out of shrimp cultivation.

Gopinath said that they had invested huge money in the cultivation of shrimps and incurred losses. He said that



due to this, the production of prawns has decreased. He recalled that last year, India had stood at the top in the world in exporting shrimp, but due to reduced production, it fell to the second position now.

"If the situation continues like this, India will fall to the

fourth position. Besides, last year there AP achieved a turnover of Rs 50,000 crore in the export of shrimp. Due to the decrease of shrimp exports, the aqua sector in AP achieved only Rs 30,000 crore worth of exports this year," he stated.

He urged the state government to provide electricity

subsidies to small farmers. S Anjibabu, President of Prakasam Prakasam District President of Prawn Farmers Association, General Secretary Subba Rao, Joint Secretary Chaudhary, Former Presidents Mohan Kumar, and Thota Venkat were among those who were present.

# Suspense in YSRCP as Min Seediri gets a call from CMO

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Animal Husbandry Dr Seediri Appala Raju rushed to CMO after getting a call from the chief minister's office on Friday. The call to minister raised many eyebrows among the YSRCP leaders and political circles. Sources say that the minister was informed by the CMO to come to Tadepalli to meet Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday evening. The minister cancelled all his programmes in Vizianagaram district and rushed to Tadepalli.

The suspense still is in the air as the exact reason for Jagan's call to Appala Raju is not known. It led to speculations that Jagan is contemplating reshuffling his cabinet by dropping some ministers and inducting a few others. However, Appala Raju might be one of the ministers who are likely to be dropped from the ministry. Before doing that, Jagan wants to talk to him personally and explain to him why he has been compelled to take the decision.



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Minister Appalaraju said that he has no information about removal from the minister post. He affirmed that he will not be bothered whether he has a ministerial post or not. He made it clear that public service is more important to him than

minister posts. He stated that he belongs to the BC community and CM Jagan has given him the post of minister. He added that he will obey the orders of the CM and there is no information that he will be removed from the minister post.

## Senior journalist Payam no more

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Senior journalist Payam Sudhakaran passed away on Friday afternoon while undergoing treatment in a city

hospital.

Born on April 28, 1970 in Kerala, Payam Sudhakaran had worked in a string of leading English newspapers and magazines including the *Times of India* and *Deccan Chronicle* etc. He carved a niche for himself in the field of journalism with his scholarly writings and impeccable language teaching skills.

Suave and amiable, Payam Sudhakaran endeared himself to the people's cause and was always at the forefront to groom novices in the journalism field into perfect journalists.

His funeral held at Bansilalpet cremation grounds on Friday evening was attended by a large number of journalists and people from different walks of life.



# YSRCP leader dares Mekapati for debate

PNS ■ NELLORE

Tension prevailed in Udayagiri town on Friday as YSRCP leader Vijay Kumar Reddy squatted on the road near the bus stand challenging the rebel YSRCP MLA Mekapati Chandrasekhar Reddy for an open debate.

It may be mentioned here that on Thursday, the rebel YSRCP MLA Mekapati Chandrasekhar Reddy squatted on the road, near the bus station, challenging the YSRCP leaders to counter him.

Accepting the rebel MLA's challenge, YSRCP leader Vijay Kumar Reddy, along with his large number of followers Friday squatted on the road. The activists started raising slogans leading to a tense situation.

The police made elaborate security to regulate the crowds. If rebel MLA Mekapati

Chandrasekhar Reddy had come to the place, a big clash would have taken place between the two groups, a YSRCP leader said.

Three of the YSRCP leaders who were suspended from the party for voting against the party whip in the graduate quota MLC elections are in Nellore district and they are Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy, and Mekapati Chandrasekhar Reddy. The challenges and counter challenges by the rebel MLAs are causing law and order problems, a police officer said.

Interestingly, the police detained Mekapati Chandrasekhar Reddy in his house when he was preparing to go to the bus station to face Vinay Kumar Reddy. Mekapati family members later said that the MLA fell ill and doctors attended to him.

# 'Take steps for paddy procurement'

PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has directed the officials concerned to make all required arrangements to purchase paddy produce from the farmers during the Rabi season.

The Collector held a district Agriculture Advisory Board meeting which was presided over by Agriculture advisory board chairman Vejju Venkateswara Rao and MLAs Puppala Vasu Babu, Dulam Nageswara Rao, and Kotari Abbayya Chowdary attended the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Prasanna Venkatesh said that keeping in mind the experience of purchasing paddy during the last Kharif season, the officials should take effective measures to procure paddy during the ensuing rabi season.

"About 60 lakh gunny bags should be kept ready for paddy



produce procurement in the district. The problems in purchasing paddy produce from the farmers should be monitored every day and steps should be taken to resolve problems. The equipment to measure the moisture content should be kept ready," the Collector told the officials.

The Collector also asked the officials to allocate 25 acres of land for the establishment of an oil palm factory at Ramasingavaram village and

another 25 acres to set up an oil palm nursery.

The Kisan drones should be grounded through Rythu Bharosa Kendras. At the Rythu Bharosa Kendra level, if the youth who have got diplomas are identified locally to manage drone services, the eligible candidates should be selected and sent for drone pilot training, he said.

The authorities concerned should determine how many drones are needed within the

respective RBKs. The requirement of 'pachi rotta' fertilizer should be collected from all the mandals of the district and proposals should be submitted to AP Seeds, the Collector said, adding that the distribution would start as soon as the prices of 'pachi rotta' fertilizer are finalized in the district.

Denduluru MLA Kotharu Abbayya Choudhary said that necessary measures should be taken for irrigation in the Denduluru constituency, adding that 800 cusecs of water will be released from Krishna from Saturday to irrigate the canal suburbs. MLAs Dulam Nageswara Rao and Puppala Vasu Babu asked the Collector to take effective steps to produce paddy procurement during the ensuing rabi season. District agriculture office Y Rama Krishna, Micro irrigation PD Ravi Kumar, LDM Venkateswara Rao, and fisheries and MarkFed officials were present.

# Pawan condemns attack on Satya Kumar's car

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena Party chief K Pawan Kalyan has condemned the attack on BJP national secretary Satya Kumar's car by the YSRCP activists.

In a statement here on Friday, he said that the YSRCP attacked Satya Kumar on the reason that he extended support to the agitating Amaravati farmers. The attacks of YSRCP activists reached a peak and all democrats should condemn such violent acts, he said.

The attack on Satya Kumar exposed once again the YSRCP's anarchy has reached its peak, he said and asked whether the ruling YSRCP is giving a message that if political parties extend support to the Amaravati farmers, they will be attacked. The JSP would

respond to such acts in a democratic way, he made it clear.

Pawan Kalyan demanded that the police should arrest those who were involved in the attack. "The BJP central leadership should take the attack

seriously. The Centre should order for a comprehensive inquiry on the incident," Pawan Kalyan said. Pawan Kalyan pointed out that YSRCP MP told

Adinarayana Reddy escaped today and demanded an inquiry on the same.

"The people rejected the YSRCP three capital concepts in the three graduate elections. The Chief Minister and YSRCP leaders are treating the opposition party leaders, who are extending support to the agitating farmer, as enemies," Pawan Kalyan lashed out.



# Officials directed to issue notices to land grabbers

PNS ■ BAPATLA

District Collector Vijaya Krishnan has directed the officials concerned to issue notices to those who encroached on the assigned lands.

She held a meeting with the officials and reviewed the government lands, land resurvey works, and graveyard lands. Speaking on the occasion, the

district Collector said that she wants to ensure that the government lands in the district are not alienated.

The lands in the hands of encroachers should be taken and given to the deserving poor. The government lands required for graveyards in the district should be acquired, the Collector told the officials.

The revenue officials, who

are supposed to protect the government lands, are looking at the court. The Collector warned the Tehsildars that such a thing would not be tolerated. At the time of allocation of government lands for mining, the NOC should be issued after taking the opinion of surrounding farmers, Collector Vijaya Krishnan instructed the officials. The Collector expressed

anger that while sending land transfer proposals, the proposals prepared by lower-level staff, are being sent without at least looking at the files. Joint Collector K. Srinivasulu, District Revenue Officer Lakshmi Siva Jyoti, Revenue Divisional Officers Ravindra, Sarojini, Parthasarathy, Tahsildars, and others participated in this programme.



# 900 grams ganja seized, one held

PNS ■ ELURU

The police seized 900 grams of ganja and arrested one person at MR Appa Rao colony in Nuzvid mandal.

Special Enforcement Directorate CI Gopala Krishna told the media on Friday that on a tip-off, the police team conducted a raid and arrested Matangi Sanjay who was selling ganja.

The police seized 900 grams of ganja from him. The arrested boot-legger was being produced before the court, the CI said.



# Simpliforge, IIT Hyd develop a prototype 3D printed bridge

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A prototype 3D printed bridge has been developed and printed in collaboration between IIT Hyderabad and Simpliforge Creations.

The concept and design were developed and evaluated by Prof KVL Subramaniam and his research group, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT, Hyderabad. The bridge was printed by Simpliforge, a startup company specialising in providing 3D concrete printing solutions. Designed as a pedestrian bridge, the prototype bridge is undergoing load testing and evaluation for functional use.

The bridge has been designed at IIT Hyderabad broadly following form optimisation to minimise the use of concrete and reinforcement. The concept of the bridge was developed following the con-



cept of 'Material follows Force'. Simpliforge Creations developed an extrusion and software system specifically for the project to fully exhibit the merits of their 3D printing system. Using the Industrial robotic arm 3-D printer, the bridge was printed off-site in little under 2 hours at Simpliforge Printing facility and assembled on site at Charvitha Meadows, Siddipet.

Enlisting the uniqueness of the 3D printing technology, Prof KVL

Subramaniam, IITH, said, "3D concrete printing is an emerging technology that has the potential for transforming the construction industry with the promise of rapid, efficient, and free-form construction. Technology application in this space requires advancements in design methodologies, material processing, and delivery systems."

"We are proud to have been a part of this ground-breaking project" said Hari Krishna Jeedipalli, Managing Director, Simpliforge Creations. "This bridge is a testament to the capabilities of 3D construction printing technology and its potential applications in infrastructural requirements, defense, and disaster scenarios owing to its speed and ease. We hope that this project will inspire others to explore the possibilities of 3D concrete printing in infrastructure and other industries."

# Medico commits suicide

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD



In a tragic incident, an MBBS student committed suicide by hanging in the hostel room here on Friday. The Medical College

authorities and the police have been puzzled over the incident because the third-year medical student, identified as Sanath, did not leave any suicide note. He reportedly spent with his friends till the early hours of Friday and he was found hanging from the ceiling fan in his hostel room on Friday.

# Officials directed to make foolproof arrangements for SSC exams in WG

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector P Prashanthi has directed the officials concerned to make foolproof arrangements to conduct SSC examinations which begin on April 3.

The Collector held a meeting with the officials here on Friday and reviewed the arrangements being made to conduct the SSC examination.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that 24,586 students would appear for the SSC public examinations in the

WG district. Out of these, 12,929 boys and 11,657 girls, 20,619 regular and 3,967 are private candidates.

As many as 121 examination centres were allocated for the student to write the examinations. The Collector said that question papers would be preserved in 22 police stations. 121 chief superintendents, departmental officers, 12 additional departmental officers, 44 custodians, 6 flying squads, 50 sitting squads, 44 route officers and 1,190 invigilators have been appointed to monitor the

conducting of examinations, she stated.

"Besides disciplinary action, strict criminal action will be taken against the malpractices in conducting the examinations. All the officials and staff should work hard to conduct the SSC examinations without any flaws in the district," she told the officials.

"Tahsildars should monitor the implementation of Section 144 in designated places. Actions should be taken to ensure that xerox and internet centres within 100 meters of



the examination centres are closed compulsorily. Cell phones and other electronic

devices are not allowed inside the examination centre and only the Chief Superintendent

is allowed to have a cell phone," Collector Prashanthi said.

Apart from setting up medical camps and keeping staff and ORS packets ready, medicines prescribed by DMHO should also be made available at the examination centres as part of precautions, she told the officials. Collector Prashanthi directed the Tahsildars, MPDOs and Municipal Commissioners to inspect the 50 'C' class examination centres which were identified in the district on a daily basis.

She said that 14 examination centres have been set up to conduct the SSC and Intermediate

public examinations under the 'Open School Society'. Out of them, 5 have been allocated for SSC exams and 9 for conducting intermediate exams, she said, adding that a free bus facility has been arranged for the students who appeared for the exams. The student can travel on the bus by showing a hall ticket. DRO K Krishnaveni, DEO R Venkata Ramana, GSWS office KCH Appa Rao and DMHO D Maheshwara Rao were among those who were present.



INDIA CORNER

## 1 crore mobile numbers linked with Aadhaar in February

Over 1 crore mobile numbers were seeded in Aadhaar following requests from residents in the month of February, an official statement said on Friday. The linking of mobile numbers with Aadhaar jumped 93 per cent in February from 56.7 lakh registration in January, according to the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). "Over 10.97 million mobile numbers were seeded in Aadhaar following requests from residents in the month of February 2023, a jump of more than 93 per cent over the previous month," the statement said. Linking of Pan number with Aadhaar is considered to be one of the key factors that pushed the growth of seeding mobile numbers with Aadhaar. Till date 90 crore Aadhaar holders are estimated to have linked their mobile numbers with their unique ID. "The UIDAI has been encouraging residents to link their Aadhaar with mobile number for better and effective communication while availing welfare services and accessing multitude of voluntary services," the statement said.



## Indore temple tragedy: 8 families rise above grief, donate body parts of deceased kin

The families of eight of the 36 persons killed in the Indore temple stepwell roof collapse overcame deep sorrow to donate vital body parts of their deceased kin. The large-hearted families agreed to donate the skin and eyes of their loved ones whom they lost after the roof of the stepwell collapsed during a havan held on the occasion of Ram Navami at the Beleshwar Mahadev Jhulelal temple, said voluntary organisation Muskan Group. "After persuading the kin, we coordinated with doctors and bureaucrats. With a heavy heart, the families under grief gave their nod for organ donation to see their deceased kin in others," said Sandipan Arya of the organisation. "So far, family members of Indra Kumar, Bhumiika Khanchandani, Jayanti Bai, Daksh Patel, Laxmi Patel, Bharati Kukreja, Indar Chandki and Kanak Patel have given their written consent for eye and skin donation," he said. Their eyes have been donated to an organisation working in this field, MY hospital and Sankara Eye Bank. Choithram Hospital authorities have received the skin donated by the kin of the deceased, Arya said.



## Mumbai: 21 held, 300 booked for clash during Ram Navami procession

Police have registered a first information report (FIR) against nearly 300 persons and arrested 21 so far in connection with a clash between two groups during a Ram Navami procession in Mumbai's Malvani area, an official said on Friday. The incident occurred on Thursday night at Malvani in suburban Malad (West) when the procession was going on and some people objected to high volume DJ and loud music accompanying it. Those involved in the clash are being identified with the help of drone and CCTV footage of the area at the time and action is being being according to their role, he said. While nearly 300 persons have been booked, police have arrested 21 persons so far and more arrests are likely, the official said, adding that the probe in the case underway. In the FIR, police have pressed charges under Indian Penal Code sections 353 (assault or use of criminal force to deter a public servant from discharge of his duty), 324 (voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means).



# Russia to enhance strategic partnership with India

PNS ■ MOSCOW

Russia will focus on strengthening its strategic partnership and trade ties with India in Eurasia and ensure their resistance to "destructive actions" of unfriendly states and their alliances, according to an updated foreign policy doctrine approved by President Vladimir Putin on Friday. The ties between India and Russia remained strong notwithstanding Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. India's import of Russian crude oil has gone up significantly in the last few months despite increasing disquiet over it in many Western countries.



According to the updated Concept of Foreign Policy, one of Russia's focus areas in Eurasia is strengthening strategic partnership and developing trade and other ties with India. "Russia will continue to

build up a particularly privileged strategic partnership with the Republic of India with a view to enhance and expand cooperation in all areas on a mutually beneficial basis and place special emphasis on

increasing the volume of bilateral trade, strengthening investment and technological ties, and ensuring their resistance to destructive actions of unfriendly states and their alliances," according to a paragraph on Eurasia. The concept was approved amid tension between Russia and the US over the war, with the US slapping thousands of sanctions on Russia, while militarily, economically and diplomatically supporting Ukraine. India has not yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and it has been maintaining that the crisis must be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue.

## Guj: Eight AAP workers held for putting up anti-Modi posters

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Eight workers of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have been arrested for allegedly putting up posters saying "Modi Hatao Desh Bachao" in different parts of Ahmedabad city in Gujarat, police said on Friday. The Gujarat unit of AAP condemned the arrests saying the action has proved their point that "democracy is in danger". In a release, the city crime branch said eight persons have been arrested on the charge of damaging public property by putting up posters with the text "Modi Hatao Desh Bachao" in areas like Isanpur, Maninagar, Vatva, Narol and Vadaj.

## Steps by Beijing along India-China border 'provocative'

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Some of the steps being taken by Beijing along the India-China border has been "provocative", a top White House official has said while reaffirming that the United States is "destined" to work more closely with India. Kurt Campbell, the Deputy Assistant to the US President and Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, told a Washington-based think-tank on Thursday that India is not an ally of the United States and will never be so. "But it does not mean that we will not be close partners and share many things. That's how we need to understand the role that India will play as a great nation on the global stage. "We want to encourage that



and support that and deepen this relationship, which is already very strong, probably the strongest people-to-people relationship of any country that the United States has on the global stage," he said. Campbell said that the India-US relationship "is the most important bilateral relationship for the United States in the 21st century". "I believe we are destined to work more closely together. I believe that our people-to-people ties are strong, animate in a relationship that is becoming deeper, richer and more strategically important," he said.

The think tank -- Centre for a New American Security (CNAS) -- in a report said that the India-China border intrusions and clashes have become more frequent and threaten to lead to all-out conflict. The increased prospect of India-China border hostility has implications for the United States and its Indo-Pacific strategy between the two Asian giants, it said. India's engagement with China is "complex" and Chinese attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh starting from April-May 2020 seriously disturbed the peace and tranquility in border areas and impacted overall ties, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a report this month.



## Calling 'sarbat khalsa' is Akal Takht's prerogative

PNS ■ AMRITSAR (PUNJAB)

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) said on Friday that the convening of a "sarbat khalsa" congregation is the sole prerogative of the Akal Takht chief, after fugitive radical preacher Amritpal Singh sought such a meet to discuss issues concerning the Sikh community. In his two video messages that surfaced on social media on Wednesday and Thursday, Amritpal Singh has asked the jathedar (chief) of the Akal Takht, the supreme temporal body of Sikhs, to call "sarbat khalsa" -- a congregation of the faithful. He also appealed to the jathedar to take out a "khalsa vaheer" (religious procession) from the Akal Takht in Amritsar to the Damdama

Sahib in Bathinda and hold the congregation there on Baisakhi day. Responding to the demands, SGPC general secretary Gurcharan Singh Grewal told PTI, "It is personal wish of Amritpal Singh.... To call or not to call 'sarbat khalsa' is the sole prerogative of Akal Takht jathedar and no one else." Since the jathedar is leading the Sikh community, he takes each decision with deep thought followed by the opinions of Sikh scholars and intellectuals, Grewal said. "The jathedar would see what needs to be done in the light of prevailing circumstances.... There is no doubt that many Sikhs who are close to Amritpal Singh were arrested under the National Security Act which is also a matter of grave concern," he said.

## 2014 DEFAMATION SUIT

## Since Rahul is not MP any more he can appear in person

PNS ■ THANE

An RSS activist, who had initiated criminal proceedings for defamation against Rahul Gandhi, has informed a court here about the Congress leader's disqualification after his conviction in a similar case in Gujarat, and opposed his application seeking permanent exemption from appearance. The complainant, Rajesh Kunte, had in 2014 filed a private complaint before the Bhiwandi magistrate's court after watching Gandhi's speech where he allegedly



accused the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Kunte claimed this statement slandered the reputation of the RSS. Gandhi had appeared

before the court in June 2018 and pleaded not guilty. Last year, he had filed an application seeking permanent exemption from appearing in the court on the ground that he was a member of Parliament who had to visit his constituency, attend the party work and travel a lot. Two days back, Kunte, while opposing Gandhi's application, submitted a pursis (written note/information) to the court saying after Gandhi's conviction by a Surat court in a defamation case, the Congress leader was disqualified.

## Birla calls for deepening India-Israel ties to combat terrorism

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday called for deeper cooperation between India and Israel to combat terrorism, saying a common strategy will give a new direction to the world in the fight against the scourge. Birla also said that in the changing global dynamics, the relations between India and Israel have become more important. He made these remarks

while welcoming an Israeli parliamentary delegation to India. The delegation, led by Amir Ohana, Speaker of the Knesset (Parliament) of Israel, is in India at the joint invitation of Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar and Speaker Birla. The delegation is visiting India between March 31 and April 4. This is the first visit of Ohana to any country after assuming office of the Speaker, the Lok Sabha Secretariat said

in a statement. Birla said that Israel and India have traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations and underscored that the two countries share a robust democratic heritage and as fellow democracies both have many similarities, including respecting diverse cultures and following democratic values. He observed that in the changing global dynamics, the relations between India and Israel have become more important.

## BSF seizes narcotics in Punjab's Amritsar, Tarn Taran districts

PNS ■ AMRITSAR (PUNJAB)

The Border Security Force on Friday seized huge quantities of contraband from two Punjab districts, officials here said. Troops deployed at the India-Pakistan border recovered two stuffed black socks in fields close to the border fencing near Daoke village around 6.30 am, a BSF official said in a statement issued here. Inspections revealed that the socks contained three packets of heroin weighing about 1.7 kilograms and a Pakistani currency note, he said.

## HC quashes CIC order to Gujarat govt on Modi's degree

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court on Friday set aside the seven-year-old order of the Central Information Commission (CIC), asking the Gujarat University to provide information on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's degree to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. Allowing the Gujarat University's appeal against the CIC order, Justice Biren Vaishnav also imposed a cost of Rs 25,000 on Kejriwal and asked him to deposit the amount within four weeks to the Gujarat State Legal Services Authority (GSLSA). Justice Vaishnav also refused to stay his order as requested by Kejriwal's lawyer Percy Kavina. In April 2016, the then CIC M Sridhar Acharyulu had directed the Delhi University and the Gujarat University to provide information to Kejriwal on the degrees that Modi received. Three months later, the Gujarat High Court stayed the CIC order after the varity approached it against that order. The CIC order came a day after Kejriwal wrote to Acharyulu, saying he has no objection to government records about him being made public and wondered why the commission wanted to "hide" information on Modi's educational qualifications. Based on the letter, Acharyulu directed the Gujarat University to give records of Modi's educational qualifications to Kejriwal. During the past hearings, the Gujarat University vehemently objected to the CIC's order saying "irresponsible childish curiosity" of someone cannot become public interest under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.



## 2 hybrid militants arrested in Shopian

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Two hybrid militants of The Resistance Front (TRF) were arrested in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir for their alleged involvement in an attack on a social media journalist last year, police said on Friday. During the course of investigation of the case, a special investigation team (SIT) was constituted, which, on the basis of oral, circumstantial and technical evidences, rounded up a number of suspects, a police spokesman said. During questioning, two suspects identified as Suhail Reyaz and Anayat Ullah Iqbal, both residents of Saidapora Payeen village of

Shopian, admitted their involvement in the terror attack, the spokesman said. He said it also came to fore that the duo was working as hybrid terrorists of proscribed terror group TRF - an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). On their disclosure, the weapon of offence - a pistol along with its magazine and five pistol rounds besides, an IED were recovered by the security forces in the orchards of Saidapora Payeen, the spokesman said. Waseem Ahmad Wani (27), a resident of Heerpura area of Shopian, who ran a YouTube news channel, escaped unhurt after two motorcycle-borne militants shot at him on December 25 last year.

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Security was tightened in the steel city on Friday ahead of Ramanavami processions being taken out in the evening while an Akhara Committee has called for a Jamshedpur 'bandh' (shutdown) on April 1 over seizure of a truck with a music system and trailer. The district administration however said it has no information about the bandh called so far. "We have called a dawn to dusk bandh in Jamshedpur on April 1 in protest against seizure of DJ (truck with music system) and trailer ....Many akharas will not take out processions this evening," Central Ramnavmi Akhara Committee



and senior BJP leader Abhay Singh told PTI. However, many akharas were seen taking out colourful processions headed for the river front. "A Nagaland registered trailer with national permit and DJ

has been seized as it cannot be used for procession in narrow lanes. We had already prohibited use of DJ., The entire city cannot be taken to ransom for some people's interest. No person has come forward so far to claim the trailer," Jamshedpur

deputy commissioner Vijaya Jadhav told PTI. Asked about bandh call, Jadhav said the administration has no information on this so far and that the situation in the industrial city is normal. Dhalbhum sub-divisional officer Piush Sinha said around 200 licensed akhara committees will take out Ramanavami immersion processions in the city on Friday. The official said the deputy commissioner Jadhav and senior superintendent of police Prabhat Kumar inspected all routes of the processions, including sensitive and super sensitive areas and issued directions to senior officials.







FIRST COLUMN

THE HYBRID  
WORKPLACE PUZZLE

Post pandemic, 'hybrid' will define the employer-employee relationship



ARNAB GHOSH

Post-pandemic commercial real estate professionals are grappling with the word "hybrid." The agile workspace is dead. A hybrid workplace is the new holy grail of office design. How we interpret this new word will define the employer and employee relationship now. The perfect solution will take some time to arrive. Meanwhile, we can only attempt to solve this hybrid jigsaw with our eyes and ears open wide.

Designing a hybrid workplace involves creating a flexible work environment that allows employees to work remotely and on-site. As a design brief, it is a challenge and thus needs a structured approach.

The first step is to assess the needs of your workforce, including their work styles, preferences, and job requirements. One-to-one interviews with senior leaders, online surveys, and real-time occupancy data from existing workplaces will help establish the baseline.



The second step is to evaluate your technology infrastructure. A hybrid workplace relies heavily on technology, including communication tools, collaboration software, and video conferencing systems. After evaluation, we need to do a gap analysis and ensure the proposed new technology infrastructure is robust enough to support remote and on-site work.

Once the above is done, the designer is ready to start with his design thinking process. A few approaches which might work for the designer while designing a hybrid office space are as follows:

1. Redesign your physical office space to create a more flexible work environment that supports remote and on-site work. This may include the conscious selection of flexible work furniture, which can be rearranged for different work environments, dismantlable partition systems, formal and informal meeting spaces, and quiet spaces.
2. Today, it is essential to understand that the purpose of the office has changed dramatically—accordingly, the spaces it used to contain need also to evolve. The ambience of an office today is designed to provide a positive and inclusive environment for all employees. The use of wallpapers, curated artwork, designer work furniture, and decorative light fixtures today help designers to achieve that desired reality. The new trend of serviced offices is forcing the new office design to be strongly influenced by hospitality design principles.
3. While we do all the above, let us remember the imminent climate change disruption expected soon. Energy efficiency and wellness thus need to be default goalposts for designers today—no compromise on those aspects.
4. Finally, please continuously evaluate your hybrid workspace's effectiveness and adjust as needed. Gather feedback from employees and make changes based on their input.

By following the above steps, you can physically create a hybrid workplace that is flexible, productive, and supportive of your employees' needs. However, in addition to the physical execution, certain managerial aspects need to be part of this change management.

A key aspect of a hybrid workplace is to not have dedicated workstations for employees. This can be a major change to adjust employees. Please establish clear policies around remote work, including work hours, communication, and productivity expectations. Organizations must be cognizant of today's new reality and establish their design briefs accordingly. Design and project professionals should look at the workspace through all lenses before recommending solutions to their clients.

(The writer is Managing Director, Corporate Fitouts, Colliers India)

# Reforming the capital gains tax a smart move



UTTAM GUPTA

It is perfectly justified if the rich class is made to pay more which, in turn, helps the Government provide services to the poor



In the Finance Bill, 2023 passed by the Lok Sabha on March 24, 2023, an amendment relates to a change in the tax treatment of capital gains from non-equity or debt mutual funds (DMF). This has led to consternation in the investor fraternity including high net-worth individuals (HNIs), corporate, and so on who argue this will undermine efforts to deepen the bond market which is crucial for financing the long-term development needs of the economy.

They also say such a change should have been introduced in the Union Budget. This would allow for thorough discussion in Parliament, instead of an official amendment. Now that it is part of the Finance Act, any discussion on the procedure adopted is merely academic. Before discussing the amendment that will take effect from April 1, 2023, let us look at the existing position. DMF is a scheme that invests in fixed income instruments, such as corporate and government bonds, corporate debt securities, and money market instruments etc. that offer capital appreciation. Debt funds are also called income or bond funds.

Currently, any capital gain on redemption of units in a debt fund held for three years or longer is treated as long-term capital gain (LTCG) and is taxed at a flat 20 percent with the benefit of indexation (it adjusts the cost of a person's investment to account for inflation, effectively reducing her capital gains and in turn, her tax liability). Any capital gain on redemption of units held by investors before three years is treated as short-term capital gain (STCG) and is taxed at an individual's income tax (albeit personal) slab rate.

The amendment does away with this distinction in the case of 'Specified mutual funds' (SMFs) which essentially refer to mutual funds where not more than 35 percent of their total proceeds are invested in equity shares of domestic companies. As a result, gains arising from SMFs irrespective of the period for which the units



WE NEED TO LOOK AT THINGS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT WHICH IS EXPECTED TO MAKE LAWS WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF INCLUSIVE GROWTH THAT ADDRESS THE CONCERNS OF ALL SECTIONS OF SOCIETY

(The writer is a policy analyst)

are held by investors are deemed STCGs and hence, liable to tax at the rate applicable to the slab in which their total income falls.

Given the way SMFs are defined, the new tax treatment will also apply to exchange-traded funds (ETFs), international funds, gold/silver funds, outbound mutual funds and even equity funds etc. wherein the gains will be taxed at the personal income tax (PIT) slab rate. The amendment will be applied prospectively from April 1, 2023. This implies that all MF units already in possession of the investors as well as those acquired before this date will continue to be covered by the old dispensation.

#### IMPACT ON INVESTORS

Consider a high-income earner earning Rs 2 crore per annum. The applicable effective tax rate in her case is 39 per cent. Assume she has invested Rs 100 in DMF units which yield a return of 10 percent per annum. Further, assume that inflation is 5 percent. With these basics, under the old regime i.e., 20 per cent LTCG tax with indexation benefit, her gain at the end of three years would be Rs 17.4 (value of investment Rs 133.1 minus inflation adjusted cost Rs 115.7). Tax @20 per cent on Rs 17.4 comes to Rs 3.5. Under the new regime i.e., tax rate in the relevant slab (39 per cent in this example) and no benefit of indexation, capital gain at the end of three years will be Rs 33.1 (value of investment Rs 133.1 minus cost Rs 100). Tax @39 per cent on Rs 33.1 will be Rs 12.9 which is almost 4 times the tax under the previous regime. It is this steep increase in the tax burden that is hurting the high-income earners.

We need to look at things from

the perspective of the government which is expected to make laws with the objective of inclusive growth that address the concerns of all sections of society and not just pander to the interests of a particular class. If the rich class is made to pay more resulting in more revenue for the government. This in turn, helps it cater to the majority of the poor, this is perfectly justified.

Even so, the existing taxation regime was arbitrary, inequitable and customized to grant undue benefit to HNIs/corporate etc. Income earned by a person has no colour. Irrespective of the source from where earnings are made be it salary, profit from business, investment in shares, bonds or mutual funds and so on, these add to her income. Therefore, the tax treatment must be uniform. It can't vary depending on the source.

Yet, the regime gave preferential treatment to income generated from DMF investment by taxing capital gains from these at 20 percent against the applicable slab rate of 39 percent. It was discriminatory even compared to investment in other avenues. For instance, interest income from investment in fixed deposits (FDs) in banks or bonds issued by governments or companies is taxed at an individual's income tax slab rate. These earnings don't also benefit from indexation.

While HNIs should have no grudges about paying more tax, those earning less, especially the middle class, will not stand to lose in the new dispensation. Under the proposed PIT regime as per the 2023-24 Budget, a person with annual income up to Rs 700,000 pays 'nil' tax. For those earning Rs 700,001-Rs 900,000, the tax rate is

10 percent and for those earning Rs 900,001-Rs 1,200,000, it is 15 per cent. For all investing in DMFs, the switch to taxing capital gains at the applicable slab rate will be beneficial. Under the earlier regime, these were taxed at a higher rate of 20 percent.

The Finance Bill, 2023 also addressed another anomaly. This one relates to a fancy instrument called market-linked debentures (MLDs). Unlike a normal debenture on which a fixed return is paid, MLD holders get a return linked to stock price movement, say the Nifty 50 Index. Earlier capital gains from listed MLDs were taxable at 10 per cent if held for more than a year. They were also taxable at a slab rate if held for up to 1 year. Now, these will be taxed at the slab rate even when owned for more than one year.

To conclude, the 2023-24 budget has ended DMF preferential treatment by taxing all capital gains — irrespective of the holding period — at the slab rate and withdrawing the indexation benefit. It has created a level playing field by aligning their tax treatment with other avenues such as FDs and bonds etc. It would be naive to believe that this would lower the shine of such instruments (read: debt MFs) as investment in these units is liquid; it can be withdrawn at any time unlike FDs where premature withdrawal attracts a penal interest rate. Besides, the former offer investors the possibility of setting off capital gains in some units by short-term capital losses in others thereby reducing tax liability. Any fear that the amendment would impact funding the long-term development needs of the economy is without any basis.

# Fill top vacancies at 3 important institutions for PwDs

The Government must ensure that three institutions funded by it for the welfare of the disabled population function properly and deliver in right earnest

In a welcome move which though, comes much after dilly dallying for years, the Government has now promised to fill by April-end the top-level vacancies at the three statutory institutions — Chief Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities (CCPD), National Trust (NT) and Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) — of the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

The Secretary of the Persons with Disability Department, Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in a recent submission before a Parliamentary Panel said that the process is on to fill the posts. He submitted that the candidates were being shortlisted and interviews will be held in the first week of the



ARCHANA JYOTI

(The writer is a special correspondent with The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

next month i.e., April.

He also expressed confidence that by the end of April month they will send three proposals to the DoPT. After that the final accreditation will come from the ACC (Appointment Committee of the Cabinet), the Secretary submitted before the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment when asked about the vacancy position in the offices of the three statutory bodies. Headed by Lok Sabha MP Rama Devi, the panel submitted its report last week in Parliament.

However, disability rights activists are not impressed. In fact, they have dismissed these promises as just lip service. They argue that advertisements for appointments have been published from time to

time over the past years, but the posts were never filled up.

To corroborate their points, in this regard, they have drawn attention to a reply to a query in Parliament in 2021 when Union Social Welfare and Empowerment Minister of State, Pratima Bhounik, while admitting that the post of Chairperson, RCI, has been lying vacant since September 15, 2015, the steps were being taken to fill the post.

However, it is needless to say that this has not happened till date. Presently, Secretary Rajesh Aggarwal is the officiating head of the RCI and NT. This speaks volumes of how serious the Government is for the welfare of the sector. The CCPD is headed by bureaucrat Upma Srivastava, an

additional secretary in the Ministry.

In the absence of appointments of a candidate through a transparent process, new policies, existing programmes and funds remain half-heartedly implemented. Focus of the NT, RCI and CCPD has lost in between, leaving the sector to fend on its own, laments activist Alok Bhawan from Manovikas Charitable Society.

This apathy also leads one to doubt government's intention if it is really keen for transparent appointments for the sensitive posts or wants to put its cronies who toe the government's line. The delay in appointment is also strengthening the doubts that the government is just doing lip service but not keen in

actually taking steps to empower, handhold the sector which has big potential if given the chance. As per the latest report, India has 3 crore people with a wide range of disabilities.

The Council formed under the Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 is mandated to regulate and monitor the training of rehabilitation professionals while the activities of the National Trust include training, awareness and capacity building programmes and shelter, caregiving and empowerment to the people with intellectual disability. Similarly, CCPD has been conceived with an aim to ensure legal rights of the sector enshrined in the Persons with Disability Rights Act.

Bhuvan maintains that it's high time that the government adopts a right-based approach instead of the Charity Model. Charity model of disability views the person with disabilities as the problem and dependent on the sympathy of others to provide assistance in a charity or welfare. This model treats the disabled as dependent upon society. Thus, leaving them hapless and helpless, dependent on the benevolence and charity of the so-called 'abled' in the society.

In contrast, the Rights-based model of disability regards disability as a normal aspect and that the disabled are equally entitled to rights as others, ensuring that criteria for support programmes are prioritized by people

themselves respecting their autonomy and freedom of choice. The disability rights model focuses on equality and non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, accessibility, breaking down barriers, equal participation and inclusion and private and public freedom, says Dr Dilip Kumar Upadhyay, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, Madhav University, Rajasthan.

By ensuring that the three important institutions seriously deliver what they are meant to, the Government will be implementing what has been enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948. That is 'all human beings are born free and equal in rights and dignity'.



MONEY MATTERS

## Rupee rises by 17 paise to 82.17 against US\$ on forex inflows

The rupee appreciated 17 paise to 82.17 against the US dollar on Friday as foreign capital inflows and a rally in domestic stocks bolstered investor sentiment. Besides, easing global crude oil prices and rising appetite for riskier assets also supported the domestic unit, forex traders said. However, a strong dollar against major rivals overseas ahead of US inflation data capped the rupee's gain, they added. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the domestic unit opened strong at 82.12 and touched an intra-day high of 82.09 and a low of 82.26 against the greenback. The local unit quoted at 82.17 at 1530 hrs, registering a gain of 17 paise over its previous close of 82.34. The forex market was closed on Thursday for Ram Navami. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, gained 0.25 per cent to 102.08 ahead of the release of the US inflation data later in the day.



## IFFCO-Tokio crosses Rs 10,000 cr gross written premium in FY23

IFFCO-Tokio General Insurance on Friday said it has achieved a milestone of generating Rs 10,000 crore of gross written premium for the current fiscal. IFFCO-Tokio General Insurance Company Limited is a 51:49 joint venture between Indian Farmers Fertilizer Co-operative (IFFCO) — one of the world's biggest cooperative societies — and Tokio Marine Group, the largest listed insurance group in Japan. HO Suri, Managing Director and CEO of IFFCO Tokio, said there are many segments of the business, which represents growth. However, Health Insurance and Crop Insurance verticals are the top most segments, witnessing a growth of 28 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively, he said. In terms of geographical growth, Suri said Assam, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh and West Bengal have shown remarkable growth. "Besides, our active policyholders figure has also been improved significantly."



## Sebi extends compliance period for 3 yrs for large corporates

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Friday extended the compliance requirement to three years for 'large corporates' to raise at least 25 per cent of their incremental borrowings through debt securities to a contiguous block from two years at present. This comes after the board of Sebi approved a proposal in this regard on Wednesday. Currently, the rules mandate large corporates to mobilise a minimum of 25 per cent of their incremental borrowings in a financial year through the issuance of debt securities which has to be met over a contiguous block of two years. In a circular, Sebi decided that the contiguous block of two years over which large corporates need to meet the mandatory requirement of raising minimum 25 per cent of their incremental borrowings in a financial year through issuance of debt securities will be extended to a contiguous block of three years (from the present requirement of two years) reckoned from FY 2021-22 onwards.



# India unveils 'dynamic' foreign trade policy

### Eyes US\$ 2 trillion exports by 2030

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday came out with a 'dynamic and responsive' foreign trade policy with the objective of raising the country's outward shipments to USD 2 trillion by 2030, making Indian Rupee a global currency and incentivising e-commerce exports.

The approach of Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023 is to move from 'incentive to remission' based regime; encourage collaboration between exporters, states, districts and Indian Missions; reduce transaction cost; and develop more export hubs. India is likely to cross USD 765 billion merchandise and services exports in financial year 2022-23 which ends on Friday. The total exports were USD 676 billion in previous fiscal year.

Unlike the practice of 5-year FTPs, this time the government has come out with a dynamic



and responsive trade policy without any end date, and will be updated as per the emerging global scenario.

"We have ensured there is no end date to this policy, it will be updated from time to time," said Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Santosh Sarangi while briefing media

on the salient features of FTP 2023 unveiled by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. Goyal said Department of Commerce will be making a massive focused outreach to the world, either sectorally or country-wise, over the next 4-5 months. Ministry of External Affairs and Indian Missions

abroad will work with the department.

"We have to meet our exports targets going forward. We will achieve USD 2 trillion in exports by 2030, but it should not be that merchandise exports are outperformed by services exports," the minister said.



### Gold climbs Rs 380; silver declines Rs 280

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices climbed Rs 380 to Rs 59,680 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid a jump in prices of the precious metal in global markets, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal had ended at Rs 59,300 per 10 grams.

Silver, however, declined by Rs 280 to Rs 71,300 per kg.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 59,680 per 10 grams, up Rs 380 per 10 grams," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the overseas market, gold was trading higher at USD 1,975 per ounce while silver was down at USD 23.75 per ounce. Gold prices turned bullish after weaker US GDP data for the fourth quarter of 2022, Gandhi said.

## Global headwinds to deeply impact IT revenue growth

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Global macroeconomic and financial sector headwinds are set to take a deep toll on the domestic IT companies' revenue growth in FY24, a report said on Friday.

The Rs 10 lakh crore sector is likely to witness revenue growth plunging by up to 9 percentage points to 10-12 per cent in FY24 as against the nearly 20 per cent growth estimated in FY23, Crisil Ratings said. "Headwinds in key markets, especially the BFSI (banking, financial services and insurance) segment in the US and Europe, will affect the revenue growth of domestic IT services companies," it's senior director Anuj Sethi said.

The BFSI segment, which has seen quite a few instances of stress after the Silicon Valley Bank collapse, will see revenue growth getting halved to mid-single digit, the agency said, adding that this impact would be marginally offset by 12-14 per cent growth in the manufacturing segment and 9-11 per cent growth in other segments.

IT Industry lobby grouping Nasscom has ceased its practice of giving a revenue growth esti-



mate for the next fiscal. The sector, which supports over 50 lakh people directly, has witnessed a slew of changes lately including some top companies reporting a decline in head count.

The rating agency, which analysed data from 17 companies which account for 71 per cent of the Rs 10.2 lakh crore Indian IT sector revenue, said the last two fiscals have been one of the best for the industry as it had put out a 19 per cent growth in FY22. Going ahead, healthy growth in cost-optimisation deals, along with strong digital solutions, cloud, and automation capabilities, and a wide range of offerings

will support the demand scenario, it said. IT spends by clients are witnessing a shift towards cost optimisation and vendor consolidation away from discretionary spends by most end-user industries, the agency said.

The banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) segment accounts for 30 per cent of the sector's revenues, followed by retail and consumer packaged goods with 15 per cent with the balance almost equally contributed by life sciences and healthcare, manufacturing, technology and services, communication and media, and others, it said.

## Markets end last trading day of FY23 in style; Sensex Nifty rally 2%

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended the last day of 2022-23 fiscal with nearly 2 per cent jump on Friday in line with firm trends in the global markets and heavy buying in index major Reliance Industries.

Fresh foreign fund inflows also added to the positive momentum in the equity market.

The 30-share BSE Sensex zoomed 1,031.43 points or 1.78 per cent to finish at 58,991.52. During the day, it jumped 1,108.38 points or 1.91 per cent to 59,068.47.

The broader NSE Nifty climbed 279.05 points or 1.63 per cent to end at 17,359.75.



Among the Sensex firms, Reliance Industries emerged as the biggest gainer as it jumped over 4 per cent. Nestle, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Tata Motors, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, Tech

Mahindra and Axis Bank were the other major winners. Sun Pharma, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finance and Titan were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Japan, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the green.

## BoM opens branch for startups

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) on Friday said it has opened its first dedicated branch for startups in Pune. The dedicated branch will provide all kinds of support to a startup during its growth journey, BoM said in a statement.

During the inauguration, BoM MD and CEO AS Rajeev said, "India is one of the growing hubs for startups and unicorns in the world. It is imperative for us to start our own dedicated branch for startups, where we shall cater to all their needs — right from the inception to the issuance of IPO/FPD". Pune is strategically important for us to venture into, considering the technological and industrial advancement of the city and the expertise the bank has, the lender said.

This will begin a new vista for the bank and also for startups in Pune city and Maharashtra state, he

added. Speaking at the occasion, BoM ED Asheesh Pandey said startups are entrepreneurial ventures in an early stage of business operation, which if properly nurtured, becomes an integral pillar of economic growth and employment generation while satisfying evolving needs of its clients with innovation.

There are so many startups in the country, which have become global names and added glory to the nation's progress, the lender said. India is the largest talent pool in the world, and youth energy is the driving force of the nation, it added. "As the Amrit Kaal is upon us driven with Atmanirbhar, startups and youth energy are the best bet where we can invest. A vibrant startup ecosystem is a roadmap to achieve Atmanirbhar Bharat in totality," Pandey said. During the event, BoM signed a pact with SIDBI venture capital for proactive financing of startups.

## Registration of properties in Mumbai city set to fall 26%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Property registration in Mumbai municipal area is set to fall by at least 26 per cent year-on-year in March to 12,421 units on higher base and rise in mortgage rates, according to Knight Frank India. The registration data is up to 10.30 am on Friday and the numbers would increase by end of the day.

Real estate consultant Knight Frank India said the property registration in March 2023 was highest during this fiscal year.

"Mumbai city (area under BMC jurisdiction) saw property sales registration of 12,421 units in March 2023, contributing over Rs 1,143 crore to



the state revenues," real estate consultant Knight Frank India said in a statement.

Of the total properties registered, 84 per cent were residential while 16 per cent were non-residential properties.

In March last year, as many as 16,726 properties were registered.

However, registration of properties rose 28 per cent from 9,684 units in February this year.

Knight Frank India Chairman & Managing Director Shishir Bajjal said: "Notwithstanding recent interest rate increases, the strength of Mumbai property market was on display in March. The market saw an increase in property registrations as it recorded its highest registrations for fiscal year 2023 in March 2023, driven by the resolute homebuyer desire for ownership."

This reflects the buoyancy of the Mumbai property market, which remains strong in the face of headwinds, he added.

## Revamped loan guarantee scheme for micro, small enterprises from April 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A revamped credit guarantee scheme for India's micro and small enterprises will come into effect from Saturday, with the annual guarantee fee for loans up to Rs 1 crore getting reduced from the peak 2 per cent to 0.37 per cent, reducing the overall cost of credit for small businesses.

The limit on ceiling for guarantees has also been enhanced from Rs 2 crore to Rs 5 crore. Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro & Small Enterprises (CGTMSF)

has issued guidelines in this regard. "The limit on ceiling for guarantees has been enhanced from Rs 2 crore to Rs 5 crore. For settlement of claims in respect of guarantees for loan outstanding up to Rs 10 lakh, initiation of legal proceedings will no longer be required," the MSME ministry said.

In Budget 2023-24, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the revamping of credit guarantee scheme for micro and small enterprises with effect from April 1, 2023.

## Citigroup CEO explores Global Capability Centres landscape

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Citigroup CEO Jane Fraser along with top management officials visited the company's Citi Solutions Centre here and held discussions about the landscape of Global Capability Centres (GCC) in the country, the company said on Friday.

On her maiden visit to Chennai and to any Citi Solutions Centre in the country, Fraser during her brief visit was engaged with teams across operations and tech-

nology on their projects and capabilities managed out of the Citi Solutions Centre.

"Jane's visit to the Citi Solutions Centre in Chennai was her first to any CSC in India. For more than a decade, our CSCs have extended stellar support to Citi businesses in more than 80 countries (of Citi's total footprint in 95 countries)," Citi India CEO Ashu Khullar said in a company statement.

"This visit was a reaffirmation of Citi's focus on capturing the India opportunity by



growing its institutional clients businesses and building scale and expertise with the exceptional talent that we have across Citi in India," Khullar said.

The Citi Solutions Centre in India houses teams across global consumer banking, markets and securities, risk

and capital management, cash management among others.

"We had productive discussions on the growing landscape of the Citi Solution Centres in India and the value they create for Citi globally. We will continue to invest in high-quality and diverse talent, upskilling and state-of-the-art infrastructure to further boost our capabilities..." Citi Solutions Centres head of South Asia Operations and Technology, Balaji Nuthalapadi said in the statement.

# Untimely rains, hails damage about 20% of mango crop

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The mango crop in the country has been damaged up to 20 per cent because of untimely rains, hailstorm and strong wind, according to senior ICAR officials.

Many mango growers said the damage has been huge in North India due to hailstorm and thunderstorm.

Mango is an important fruit crop in India and popularly called the 'King of Fruits'. India is a major mango growing country, contributing nearly 42 per cent of the world's production.

Since last few days, unseasonal rains, hailstorm and gusty wind due to the western disturbance have impacted both foodgrain and horticultural crops in some parts of the country.

"First untimely rains did not cause damage, but later rains and hailstorm have badly impacted the mango crop. We anticipate the total damage to be about 20 per cent as of now," Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Deputy Director General (Horticulture) A K Singh PTI.

The frequency of the mango



crop loss has been more in North India, especially Uttar Pradesh which is a leading

mango producing state in the country. The anticipated mango crop loss in North

India alone is about 30 per cent, while in South India the damage is less than 8 per cent, he said.

However, the fresh data is awaited from states, he added.

Lucknow-based mango grower Upendra Singh, who owns a 5-hectare mango orchard, said, "There has been up to 75 per cent damage due to hailstorm in Maal-Malihabad mango hub area. In places where there was only untimely rains and no hailstorm, the damage has been less."

"The mango crop condition till March 19 was best in last 30

years. From March 20, unseasonal rains and hail have brought huge damage," he said and added that high moisture during flowering stage has led to black fungus.

Tafari Farmer Producer Company Director Atul Kumar Awasthi said, "Fruits had set but strong thunderstorm and strong wind led to fruit drops and the crop damage is estimated to be about 25 per cent."

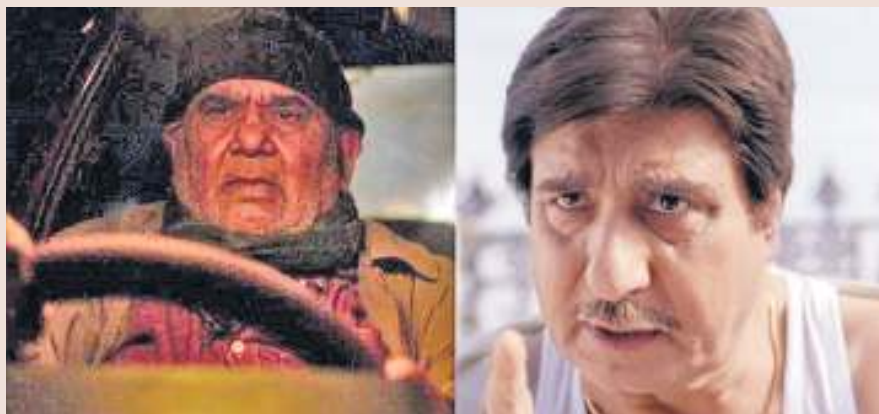
The high moisture has caused pest infestation in mango trees in some parts. This will affect availability of quality mangoes for export purpose, he said.



*what's brewing?*

when  
Richard's  
character is tracked

Excited about the upcoming season, Sonu said, "MTV Roadies has consistently redefined the meaning of adventure for viewers across the country. I'm thrilled to be back with a new season of MTV Roadies. It's going to be a thrilling and twisted ride of entertainment, courage, and adventure - I can tell you that!"



Speaking about *Mirg*, actor Raj Babbars said, "I thoroughly enjoyed shooting for this film. We had a blast. Tarun is a brilliant director; he really gives his actors a free hand to grasp the characters their own way. This technique gets you much more attached to the character and you grow a sense of responsibility to really do justice to it. Every actor in this film has delivered nuanced performances".

Actor Anup Soni added, “*Mirg* is many films within a film. The story line is unpredictable and the treatment is very fresh. It was a dream

come true for me to be in a film with such brilliant actors like Satish Kaushik Sir and Raj Babbar ji. Tarun is a visionary; I blindly followed his lead and I'm glad I did. Now I can't wait for it to hit the screens."

*Mirg* is majority financed by UK based Studio RA and Produced by Rishi Anand, NaMa productions (Shwetaabh Singh) & OneShot Films (Tarun Sharma), *Mirg* is shot in Districts of Himachal like Una, Hamirpur, Govind Sagar Lake and jungles of Himachal.

Vikrant Massey's starer thriller *Gaslight* is finally being released and the actor has yet again given a testament to his proficient acting. Vikrant can be seen playing a character named Kapil who dwells into different shades of a nice guy and the bad guy in the film. Starring with two strong performer ladies

Sara Ali Khan and Chitrangada Singh, Vikrant very brilliantly marked his presence on the screen and has left the audience impressed who just could not stop flooding the internet with their praising comments for the actor.

As Kapil, the estate manager in *Gaslight*, Vikrant Massey has yet again given a worthwhile justification to his character with his acting prowess and indeed proved himself one of the most talented actors of his era. The actor has successfully kept the audience hooked to their seats till the end while his portrayal of the bad guy in the climax is loved immensely by the audience and critics. This has certainly made the netizens drop their praising comments for the actor on Instagram. While some praised saying, "Your hardwork definitely pays off" many poured in their blessings, and said that they are sure the film is going to be a superhit.

As Vikrant is currently ruling the hearts of the audience with his brilliant performance in *Gaslight*, he has an extremely exciting lineup up ahead with projects like Maddock's *Sector 36*, Vidhu Vinod Chopra's *12th Fail*, *Phir Aayi Haseen Dillruba* and more.

**Satish Kaushik, Raj Babbar & Anup  
Soni starrer *Mirg* is ready for release**

**D**ubbed as one of veteran actor Satish Kaushik's last films, *Mirg* has completed post-production and gearing up for release. The film stars Raj Babbar, Anup Soni and Shwetaabh Singh along with Satish Kaushik in pivotal roles.

*Mirg* is a mountain leopard found in the lower regions of Himachal Pradesh. There are numerous myths surrounding this rarely-seen creature. Myths and stories are what separate *Mirg* from a normal leopard. Stories that are larger than life yet strangely believable. A genre bender, *MIRG* explores the journey of one man, Anil, a smart, yet caged, order following boy. Set in the jungles of Himachal, *Mirg* is a heist-gone-wrong revenge drama, a journey of realization that in the jungle the difference between the hunter and the hunted is just one letter.

Director Tarun Sharma said, "My main aim while approaching *Mirg* was to give the audience an engaging film. Every aspect of filmmaking should come together to create something engaging, transporting people into an alternate reality. That for me is the magic of cinema. I was blessed with a wonderful and involved crew. Having stalwarts like Raj Babbar, Satish Kaushik and Anup Soni in my debut film was a blessing. Satish Kaushik was the first actor on board and to my surprise he agreed to do the film within 2 hours of me sending the script. To this day I can't believe that he is no more. His childlike passion for cinema is something I shall never forget. I really wanted him to see the final product but that is one feeling that shall remain regretfully unfulfilled. I must also add, Shwetaabh gave a breakthrough performance standing up to such senior actors."

FUN

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT, HOBBER? MOM AND DAD ASKED ROSALYN TO BABY-SIT US!

**CONSPIRACY THEORIES**

YESTERDAY'S COMIC ABOUT A CONSPIRACY CLUB FOR DOGS WAS A FAKE! HERE IS WHAT A REAL DOG CONSPIRACY THEORY CLUB WOULD LOOK LIKE.

HEY! YOU GUYS GOT ANY CONSPIRACY THEORIES?!!

NOPE! WAIT!..... NOPE!

EVERYTHING IS GREAT! JUST SUPER!

HOWARD

A LITTLE PUG OF A KID HAD SHOWN UP TO CHALLENGE THE BULLIES

YOU'RE GONNA GET IT.

2/21

		9		4	7	8	5	
5	4		6	2				3
		3					2	5
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8	7	3	4	9	5	6	2	1
2	5	6	8	7	1	4	9	3
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- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

1 Large stone buildings built  
in ancient Egypt as tombs  
7 Steel pins knocked into wood  
8 Call in on  
9 Get  
10 A song sung by one person  
12 Have a lie down  
14 Thin cord for tying parcels  
17 Fabric  
18 Defrosts  
19 So smooth it is difficult to  
get hold of

- 1 Indicate direction with your finger
- 2 Moscow is in this country





# Vijayawada

## Serving l'il hearts with care

This week for our weekly edition of the Hyderabad, *The Pioneer* connects with Dr. Kanchan S Channawar, a consultant pediatrician at Kamineni Hospital, who shares with us her association with the city.



### Tech evolution to detect TB drug resistance

PNS| HYDERABAD

Tuberculosis has become another pandemic that's affecting city dwellers, as per our research. It is an infectious disease that is fatal. Many years ago, medical knowledge has made available the way to prevent this epidemic.

If you take the medication for the recommended amount of time and follow the doctor's instructions, you can achieve total health. But still many people do not know about this disease and every year 20 lakh people across the country and about one crore people around the world are affected by this disease. This is the epidemic that is killing the most people in the country!

"We are analyzing the increasing pollution, smoking as well as not detecting disease at the right time, and not using proper medicines are the main reasons for not being able to overcome this problem. Contrary to popular belief, tuberculosis can affect any part of the body, not just the lungs. This illness can also damage the intestinal system, meninges, lymph nodes, bones, and kidneys. But the disease mostly targets the lungs. Symptoms include prolonged cough for more than four weeks, strong cough with expectoration, fever in the evening and at night, abrupt loss of weight, and full lack of appetite. I advise using some standardized tests to diagnose the illness. Sputum smear, chest X-ray, and sputum culture tests can be used to diagnose this condition. However, the recently developed nuclear acid amplification test can now quickly and accurately diagnose this illness in just a hundred minutes. called NAAT, this test is based on DNA. Provides three times better results in detecting carries," said Dr. Sr. D.S. Sowjanya, a pulmonologist at Kamineni Hospitals, Hyderabad.

Youngsters with poor immune systems, elderly persons, people infected with HIV, and malnourished adults are in danger of developing tuberculosis easily. It is easy to avoid infection and fatalities with a few precautions. Up to 40,000 pathogens are present before he coughs or sneezes.

She continued, "They enter, mix with the environment, and spread to other people. They thrive when the immune system is compromised, and appears. For this reason, medical professionals advise keeping the patient segregated and under close observation until the illness is treated. It is vital to ensure that the tuberculosis patient is taking the medication appropriately and to supply them with sustenance to cope with the minimal side effects of the drug as part of this treatment. The TB germs may become more resistant to the antibiotic if the treatment is stopped before it has totally cleared the problem. As a result, the patient's illness becomes more resistant to treatment."

As technology advanced in healthcare, the development of drugs treating tuberculosis came rapidly. The genesis of TB vaccines and drugs brought along a beacon of hope that tuberculosis will end soon! However, the chances of ending it became slimmer and slimmer as more patients started becoming resistant to the drugs earlier responsible for treating them. And this led to a rise of greater concern as the aim to confine the disease remained underserved. It immediately sparked discussions on are we equipped to tackle TB drug resistance.

The question remained for many years till the diagnostic industry witnessed a technological revolution with advanced technology such as genotyping and molecular diagnostic facilities that started providing key results in tackling TB drug resistance!

"Several cutting-edge technologies are currently utilised for the identification of drug-resistant tuberculosis. While the traditional methods for identifying TB resistance involve testing samples using culture-based techniques, which can take several weeks to yield results, the evolution of rapid diagnostic tools, such as mflDxTM MDR-TB enabled the detection of drug-resistant TB within hours. These advanced techniques rely on molecular-based methods that target specific genes associated with drug resistance, thereby providing accurate and reliable results in a short period. Moreover, the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms has further improved the accuracy of TB drug resistance identification. These techniques enable the analysis of large data sets and the identification of patterns that would be difficult for humans to detect. Additionally, AI-based algorithms can predict potential drug-resistant TB strains by analyzing genetic sequences and predicting mutations that may lead to resistance. Therefore, the use of technological advancements in the diagnosis of drug-resistant TB has greatly enhanced the speed, accuracy, and effectiveness of TB management and control, leading to better health outcomes for patients. With an aim to end TB from the root level, the government of India is consistently working on National TB Elimination Program along with other initiatives. The emergence of TB drug resistance is a multifaceted issue which requires a comprehensive approach to accomplish the desired goals. Besides improvement in healthcare systems and infrastructure, the mission to eliminate it requires increased investment in research and development," says Dr. Pavan Asalapuri, co-founder of Empe Diagnostics!

TEJAL SINHA

Paediatrics is one of the most exciting professions in the field of a medical professional. Many people opt for a family doctor who sees people of all ages, while others exclusively prefer their little one to a paediatrician.

This week for our weekly edition of the Hyderabad, we interacted with Dr. Kanchan S Channawar, one of the most established consultant pediatricians in the region. After completing her MBBS studies, Dr. Kanchan came here to Hyderabad to complete her post-graduation, and that was when began her journey excelling in this profession. "I was working in Yashoda as a DMO (Duty Medical Officer) and later joined KIMS, Secunderabad DNB Pediatric. After 3 years, I continued working in KIMS, as well as in Lotus. At Lotus, I was there as a consultant and was also taking care of paediatric cardiac. After working till 2016 at Lotus, I joined Kamineni hospitals as a consultant, and



HYDERABOND

it been three years now that I completed my super specialisation in paediatric critical care scholarship," shared the doc about her prolonged alliance with the city of pearls adding, "I have had a lots of options and opportunities also. I'm very satisfied with the work I'm doing or the places that I worked I really had a good satisfaction."

From having lived in Mumbai, Pune, and Nagpur to growing in her profession in Hyderabad, she feels, "Compared to the other cities I feel Hyderabad is quite calm. It has a space and you can balance your work and life efficiently like for example in Mumbai it's like you have to be on your toes, here you can relax take your own time and work, you can have some time for yourself also. People here I feel are better professionally also."

Childhood tuberculosis or paediatric tuberculosis (TB) represents an important burden of disease worldwide. It is estimated that 210,000 children die each year from TB. Today, the main strategy for preventing TB among children is to perform household contact investigation complemented by the challenging diagnosis and treatment of latent TB. Highlighting more on the same, Dr. Kanchan shared, "Previously few decades back when they used to call TB, it was a social taboo like it is a bad disease and not curable but now TB is just like any other diseases only thing is you have to take treatment for a longer time and you have to adhere to the treatment and take care of yourself in terms of nutrition basically. Generally TB we see in rural population mostly since they have more overcrowding and since they interact more. And it's airborne."

So what's with paediatric tuberculosis? Parents! Here's what you need to pay attention to. Let's hear what the medico has to tell, "I would like to tell parents that whenever they feel their kids are having chronic cough and generally they say there should be a weight loss, but with the kids they are not gaining weight, we see either they don't gain weight, don't gain height and appetite will go down. That is when you'll have to think if it's a chronic thing if it's more than one-and-a-half months. The first thing that should come in your mind should be TB. Symptoms for this includes: cough, mild fever coming and going not eating properly or if there's some history of other family members suffering from TB or having chronic cough then we have to suspect TB and we have to get the basic tests done so we can rule out."

No surprise that Hyderabad has turned out to be the country's healthcare hospital. Within a few years of the state's formation, Hyderabad quickly emerged as the country's healthcare capital and has provided an alternative choice for medical tourism, which usually is a yardstick to measure the quality of healthcare services, when compared to other metro cities.

The doc agrees too, as she said, "Hyderabad is very good for medical, any medical super specialty or a specialty here you have multiple hospitals, you have single standalone paediatric hospitals where you'll get higher end treatment basically. In Hyderabad, you have a government paediatric hospitals for those who cannot afford and have financial issues atleast they can go there. Then you have Rainbow, KIMS cuddles, and Lotus they are the standalone facilities for the kids."

"I like the weather it's not very hot or very cold. Here the traffic is bad but since I travel from the outskirts but initially when I used to travel from the city traffic was very bad. Here people don't have a traffic sense and then there's traffic jams because of it so it's very difficult to reach on time. Even if you follow the traffic rules you don't know when and how someone can come from the opposite side in a very fast speed so you have to be careful on the roads," signed off the professional stating that Hyderabad is her heart because, "Hyderabad means a lot to me actually I have nurtured here been in a good profession achieved my height, I got married so it's everything for me."

## Gashmeer Mahajani: I believe none of my roles have changed me as an actor

AMARTYA SMARAN

Nearly five months ago, *Tu Zakhm Hai* season 1 was released on MX Player. The long form TV serial has done really well and the makers are back with season 2. The new season dropped on the streaming platform on March 23. Dashing actor Gashmeer Mahajani gained a massive following for his portrayal of Viraj Trehan on the show.

The actor quite certainly did not expect the kind of response the show has been getting. In conversation with *The Pioneer*, Gashmeer Mahajani schmoozed about *Tu Zakhm Hai*, how the show is different from other forms of content and what the craft of acting means to him.

There are certain roles that come searching for actors because it's just meant to happen. Can you imagine *Baahubali* without Prabhas? No way! The same goes with *Tu Zakhm Hai*. We asked the *Sarsenapati Hambirrao* actor as to what was the best compliment that he received for playing Viraj Trehan. He said, "When people say if you want to continue doing this show, Viraj Trehan can only be Gashmeer Mahajani. If he's not there, you don't do Viraj Trehan(haha); then you change the character or bring another character but nobody else can play Viraj Trehan. I think that's a huge thing and the biggest compliment that an actor can receive. I feel very flattered by such compliments."

He also informed us that many of them are watching season 2 first and then tuning into season 1 because they're intrigued by the show.

"I was quite surprised and overwhelmed at one point because after the first season, we came up with the second season after five months," began the actor. "I thought the audience was going to lose faith. There's so much content on the web now that people tend to deviate. Surprisingly that didn't happen. Right now wherever I see on social media, I'm getting feedback from the neutral audience; I've seen them tweeting and that feels nice. It's organically reaching people and they're feeling like talking about the show and the performances. They are not fol-

lowers or crazy fans as such. They are just neutral audiences who checked out a show on MX Player and now they are writing threads about it on Twitter."

Playing such intense characters is bound to have an impact on the actors who give everything to play these parts. It could sometimes bring a huge change in the way they perform as well. However, Gashmeer says it didn't change him as an actor.

"I believe none of my roles have changed me as an actor," explained Gashmeer. "I think I found a different side of mine while performing. I always get more attracted to characters which have damaged parts, which have some kind of trauma that they can associate with; which in turn decides or defines the way they behave in their current scenario. It becomes extremely deep and interesting. During that journey, I started finding things from my past. I start finding certain sides and dimensions of my own self as a human being. I feel every character only brings out a different side of you. It only makes you grow as a whole-some human being."

People are consuming content in different ways. The format keeps changing and actors must adapt themselves at any cost. *Tu Zakhm Hai* is a long format serial for the web, according to the actor. He says it's not a mini series of 8 episodes or 10 episodes.

Having done a lot of web shows, he puts *Tu Zakhm Hai* in the TV serial category. "This is an MX TV serial, but having said that it is not like working on the Indian daily soaps or anything because here we knew the show was going and where it's going in the end."

Underscoring glaring differences between regular soap operas and MX Player's TV serial format, he concluded: "In television things go nowhere after an episode.

The story can take any shape and form after a point. Even actors feel clueless because they get a new script everyday. It wasn't like that with this on this show. All of us knew where the story was going. We were working with a lot of clarity. Special mention to Aniruddha Rajderkar, who directed the first season and then came in Noel Smith. Especially Ani! His sensibilities are tremendous. I am looking forward to working with him either on the next season of this project or on some other project.

I think he played an important role in making *Tu Zakhm Hai* the way it is."

Following the success of the second season of *Tu Zakhm Hai*, actor Gashmeer Mahajani interacted with *The Pioneer* about *Tu Zakhm Hai*, how the show is different from other forms of content and what the craft of acting means to him





## Ruturaj scores 92 runs from 50 balls to help Chennai post a fighting total against GT



Titans' trump card Rashid Khan was introduced in the powerplay and as he often does, he got the wicket that his team was looking for

Kane Williamson injured his knee while fielding at the boundary and limped off the field.



## PTI ■ MELBOURNE

"It's a niggly one, the Achilles tendon. It's a slow process but it thrives on a bit of work, and I'd have to be bowling to prepare for the Ashes, so it may as well be in a game of cricket," Hazlewood said.

## PTI ■ MUMBAI

domestic circuit having played over 200 games with 69 of them in T20 format, taking 362 wickets in his career so far across formats," Mumbai Indians said in a statement on Friday afternoon.

## PTI ■ MOHALI

Other key PBKS players, who will miss Saturday's game are hard-hitting all-rounder Liam Livingstone, who is yet to get clearance from the ECB, following a knee injury, and South



PBKs squad is stacked with all-rounders, the most lethal among them being \$2 million plus buy Sam Curran, who is more than handy with the bat and is a very fine death bowler. Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza is another utility all-rounder.

## PTI ■ DUBAI

While spin played a key role

"I think there are still a lot of (India) seamers that are fantastic and enjoy bowling with the Dukes ball. Umesh Yadav also bowls 140-plus. They will relish the opportunity to bowl with the Dukes ball and in English conditions," Taylor added.

## PTI ■ LUCKNOW

DC head coach Ricky Ponting expects a lot from Shaw and on his day, he can butcher any attack. Shaw also likes to work with pace of deliveries and Mark Wood in the opposition ranks, with a speed in excess of 150 clicks, gives him that opportunity.

## AP ■ CHITTAGONG

Taskin Ahmed bowled Ross Adair for seven before Shoriful Islam dismissed Lorcan Tucker for four, but Stirling shared a 68-run partnership with Harry Tector for the third wicket to keep Ireland on course.

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Young and Henry Nicholls (44) shared an unbroken partnership of exactly 100 runs for the fifth wicket.

AP  LONDON

Yorkshire accepted in September 2021 that Rafiq, now 32, had been the victim of racial harassment and bullying during his time at the club.



# 'I am an opportunist, always looking for good performance based roles'

TEJAL SINHA

Veteran film director Relangi Narasimha Rao, who's best known for making rib tickling comedies such as *Dabbevariki Chedu* (1987), *Dagudumuthala Dampathyam* (1990), *Iddaru Pellala Muddula Police* (1991), and *Edurinti Mogudu Pakkinti Pellam* (1991), has a knack for getting the best performances from new comers. And he did it again with up-and-coming actress Hindola Chakravorty. She starred opposite Yash Kondapaneni in Relangi Narasimha Rao's 75th film titled, *Oo Antava Mava Oo Oo Antava Mava*.

"It was quite a journey," said Hindola, who has been a part of several creative fields including theaters, modeling, ads, comedy, webseries, and now movies. "Absolutely proud to be a part of the Telugu film fraternity. Can't thank enough to Chadalavada Srinivasa Rao sir for introducing me to the Telugu film industry, he is the producer of my first Telugu film (which is yet to be released), and *Oo Antava Mava Oo Oo Antava Mava* is my second film technically. I'm happy to have shared a screen space with such a respected cast. Learned so much from each and everyone of them."

It's important for actors to play characters that they relate to on a deep level because it

makes it easier for the audience to connect with it as well. And so, when we asked the actress about how relatable she felt her character was to her, she humourously replied, "I loved my character in the film. Soundarya is a very challenging, performance based character. This movie is not a very regular go-to horror movie, it's a completely different concept horror and comedy. I got to play many roles for one character. As far as how the character is relatable in real life, I have a devil mind deep inside me which I explored through this role (she laughs), otherwise I don't want to encounter ghosts."

Samantha's sizzling performance in *Oo Antava Mava* from *Pushpa: The Rise* has still been loved by the audience. In fact, people even call her the *Oo antava* girl. Not just this, actor Ranveer Singh had also said at *Koffee with Karan* that Samantha in *Oo Antava* is hotter than Katrina in *Tip Tip*. So on working on a film with a title of such a blockbuster hit, she said, "I was super excited when I heard the title of the movie from my producer Prasanna Kumar Tummala sir, already this title has become a word of mouth, and it brought some brownie points for the movie."

Being a Kolkata-native girl, how did she land up in Tollywood? Hindola gleefully shared, "I am an opportunist! I always look for good performance based roles. I like to

explore. I'm a multi-lingual actor. Honestly, Acting has no language. What connects an actor to the audience is the acting, not the language."

Coming to an industry with no godfather is definitely not an easy quest. And this was the same for the budding actress too. However, being smart to understand things well, Hindola handled all of it with ace. But she did recall, "I have come across many casting groups and casting directors who wanted money in order to get me a character in a movie or series."

The artiste is not here to settle for less, and confine herself to just one genre, or just one particular industry. She's here to explore all, right from more of Tollywood to even Bollywood. "I would love to go for challenging roles. Would love to play a cop, or a very rustic character, even a love story," said the wondrous artist, who was overwhelmed with the response that the southern audience had treated her, as she said, "Audience in the south are very warm and very loving. I feel loaded with love now!"

Going ahead, Hindola has a Telugu movie and a Bollywood single in the pipeline. However, without revealing much of the details she said, "I love to give and get surprises. I'm going to surprise you all soon with something. Stay intact with me!"

Actress Hindola Chakravorty, who recently made her debut on screen with Relangi Narasimha Rao's *Oo Antava Mava Oo Oo Antava Mava*, spoke about her Tollywood stint, type of roles she desires to play, and more in this exclusive chat with **The Pioneer**.



## Neelima Guna: *Mallika Mallika* is very popular among youth

With the massive success of *Yashoda* (2022), superstar Samantha made it clear that she's here to stay in Tollywood. Now she's back again to prove her mettle as a star and actor with Gunasekhar's *Shaakuntalam*. The trailer of the film has been receiving rave reviews for its visual effects, set pieces and the plot line. Mani Sharma is the music director and he enjoys a great reputation.

The makers released the *Mallika Mallika* video song from the much anticipated period drama on YouTube on March 31.

"I watched the movie and it felt great. Since the moment I watched the film, I've been eager to release the song. I even conveyed the same to Gunasekhar Garu. *Mallika Mallika* is my favourite song from the film. It feels great to watch the video song and I'm happy to present it to the audience," said the *Yashoda* actress.

Speaking of the film, the creator of *Shaakuntalam*, Gunasekhar said, "*Mallika Mallika* is special to some of the unit members. As much as we enjoyed recording the song, it felt equally good watching it on the screen. I believe this song is going to impress everyone when they watch it on the screen because it is visually appealing. Everyone who saw it said it was amazing and felt happy. On the 14th of this month, we will bring the movie *Shaakuntalam* to the pan-India audience."

"*Mallika Mallika* is a song that is very popular among youth," said Neelima Guna sharing how pleased she is with the song. "Ramya Behara sang wonderfully. Everyone who heard said it was good. Now the video song is getting a

good response. This song will be even better in the movie. Samantha's facial expressions coupled with other visual elements in the song will impress everyone."

Written and directed by Gunasekhar, *Shaakuntalam* is presented by Dil Raju under Sri Venkateswara Creations Banner. The film is being produced by Neelima Guna under Guna Team Works and is ready for a massive release on April 14. While Shekar V Joseph handled the camera, Prawin Pudi edited the film.



## Prabhas starrer *Salaar* to be shot at James Bond film locations

Prabhas starrer *Salaar* will be shot at the international location in Matera, Italy where the action prologue for the James Bond film *No Time to Die* was shot.

The Indian action movie *Salaar* starring Prabhas is currently ongoing in Italy. Pan-India star Prabhas will be

seen playing a dual role in the film according to sources. The highly anticipated movie, written and directed by Prashanth Neel and produced by Vijay Kiragandur's Hombale Films company, has been filming mid march in Matera, the old southern Italian town famous for its prehistoric whitewashed caves. Matera was the setting for the prologue action sequence for the James Bond film *No Time to Die*, among other international titles.

*Salaar* production has now moved to Naples, where preparations for filming in the southern port city's central Piazza del Plebiscito plaza are underway. The local police are assisting with the set preparations, which include the use of drones and lighting for night shooting. Aside from Matera and Naples, other *Salaar* locales include Rome and

Budapest.

Though plot details are limited, *Salaar* is about two young people from different nations who fall in love despite the distance and cultural differences, and overcome numerous challenges. The first installment of the thriller with a love undercurrent is set to be released internationally on September 23 in Telugu and dubbed in Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi, and English.

Meanwhile, it is being learnt that Hombale Films' *Salaar* has been mounted on a very huge scale and has been budgeted at a whopping 400+ crores. While the dynamic team and technicians of *KGF* are also a part of *Salaar*, we can certainly now say that the era of *Salaar* has begun! Releasing on 28th September 2023.

## Did Varun Tej reveals his look from his Bollywood debut ?

Actor Varun Tej's pictures from his recent Mumbai visit has been making the headlines and kept us wondering about his purpose of visit to Mumbai. The *VT 13* actor is all set to surprise audiences with back to back action packed projects that are currently untitled. *VT 13* also marks Varun's Bollywood debut. He has been extensively shooting for his films across the globe and the country and recently was spotted in



Mumbai which made us wonder if he is signing another Bollywood film.

The actor was seen in a new look that further piqued our interest if any Bollywood pro-

ject is on cards for him after *VT13*, and we can't wait to hear it from the actor himself.

Opening about his new look by ace celebrity stylist Aalim Hakim and visit Varun shares, "It was a wonderful experience to be in Mumbai and meet some of my fans. I am overwhelmed with all the love that I have been receiving and can't wait to take my audiences by surprise very soon."

Varun Tej has much awaited projects titled *VT 12* and *VT 13* (working titles) in 2023. Well, only time will tell what this new look is all about !

## Genelia Deshmukh grabs best popular actress Award at the Zee Chitra Gaurav awards



us prouder and proved that she is totally a people's favorite when she won the Best Popular Actress Award at the Zee Chitra Gaurav Awards 2023.

The 'Zee Chitra Gaurav', is considered to be the most respected one in the Marathi entertainment world.

Actress Genelia Deshmukh enjoys a huge audience base with millions of fans. She takes pride in her work and has given us multiple films as well as ads with her best performances. She's an impactful personality that really brings courage to aspiring women in terms of fitness to motherhood to setting a perfect work life balance.

The actress is popular for her work in multiple languages.

Famous for her beautiful portrayal of movie characters to her buzzing social media, Genelia is a total collection of all things wonderful. She recently made

## 'I'm not a film star,' said Sai Pallavi on coming to terms with the title!

The talented Sai Pallavi has undoubtedly left an impact on the audiences with her impeccable script choice and powerful performances on screen. The actor was recently in town and spoke exclusively with Anupama Chopra on Film Companion about film-making being a spiritual process, the success of her first film *Premam*, her biggest fear and many more things.

Sai Pallavi opened up on not having a manager and entourage she said to Film Companion "I like to speak to the director or producer myself to know what the film is for what it is. We're all going to work on the film together, so I don't need a middle person." She adds, "You can call me directly and we can talk and see how it goes. But also, I like doing things my way," and like to take care of herself for now.

Sai Pallavi's unique dancing style is quite famous amongst the youth. When asked about the roots of her dancing prowess, she said, "I've never learnt to dance, I grew up watching Madhuri Dixit ma'am, Aishwarya Rai ma'am and Saroj Khan ma'am's dances. I think, for 3 years,



I just danced to one song and that is *Re Dola Re Dola*. It was my go-to dance, I liked it so much. Even when you wake me up in my sleep, I'll be doing that step." She adds, "I didn't realise, growing up, that dance will play a major role in disciplining me or bringing some sort of rhythm

in my body. So, I owe it all to dancing, and Mum letting me do what I loved, even as a child."

When discussing her routine as a 'film star' who doesn't believe in the late-night lifestyle, Sai Pallavi finds it difficult to be called that term. "I'm not a film star, I'm just someone who's lucky enough to do what she loves and is getting so much love from the people around. I consider myself to be extremely blessed. But yes, I have made a few changes to be sane to stay up late at night." She recalls being a sleepy child on the sets of *Premam*. "For the last scene of the film, Alphonse (director) would say, "Pallavi, the shot is ready" and I would just wake up, do the shot & come back to nap. I was a child! Now, I think I've grown up to be a more friendly person."

When asked about the demand for female actors to wear makeup and look glamorous, she said "I think, it's maybe the person that I am...I don't know the other side...of how it might feel. Maybe there's a lot of pressure to look like your perfect version, and I'm not saying that makeup doesn't help. If it makes you feel confident, you should do it. I feel confident this way, and I think I'm doing.

## *Bathukamma* song an ode to Telangana's flower fest

The song *Bathukamma* from the upcoming Salman Khan-starrer *Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan* was released on Friday.

The track, which features Salman in traditional Telugu attire, celebrates the annual flower festival, *Bathukamma*, celebrated by women in Telangana for nine days. It was shot during the *Bathukamma* festival, making it an authentic representation of the event and a tribute to Telugu culture.

The song is an epitome of cultural richness and features a mix of traditional and modern music, with Pooja Hegde executing the dance in a graceful manner.

A source revealed that Telugu star Venkatesh Dagubati was the one who had suggested the festival and Salman loved the idea



on how the festival doesn't have a song dedicated to it and told the music director to come up with a song for the same.

The song has been composed by Ravi Basrur while the lyrics have been penned by Shabbir Ahmed, Ravi Basrur, Kinnal Raj and Harini Ivaturi.