

ANALYSIS 7
WISE ALLOCATIONS WILL
BOOST THE ECONOMY

MONEY 8
ECONOMY POISED TO DO BETTER,
INFLATION TO BE TAMED: FM

SPORTS 11
MEN IN BLUE'S TOP ORDER IN
FOCUS IN SERIES DECIDER

VIJAYAWADA DELHI LUCKNOW
BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
BHUBANESWAR RANCHI
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD
*LATE CITY VOL. 5 ISSUE 96
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

VIJAYAWADA, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



KAVYA THAPAR:
I MISS HAVING THE
GLOBAL EXPOSURE
WHEN I ENTERED
TOLLYWOOD
Page 12

UDAN IS GIVING BIRTH TO REGIONAL AIRLINES: SCINDIA

The government's regional air connectivity scheme, which has created a landmark, is giving birth to regional carriers in a country that in the last 20 years has seen closing down of airlines. Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Tuesday. After virtually flagging off regional airline IndiaOne Air's flight from Jamshedpur to Kolkata, Scindia said it will also be the first scheduled commercial air service from Jamshedpur, which earlier was limited to non-scheduled operations. The UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme is 'giving birth to new airlines in a country that over the last 20 years has only seen closing of airlines.'

EARTH LIKELY TO CROSS 1.5 DEGREE WARMING IN NEXT DECADE: AI STUDY

The world will cross the global warming threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius within 10 to 15 years, even if emissions decline, according to a study that employed artificial intelligence (AI) to predict the results. If emissions remain high over the next few decades, the study predicts a one-in-two chance that Earth will become 2 degrees Celsius hotter on average compared to pre-industrial times by the middle of this century, and a more than four-in-five chance of reaching that threshold by 2060. The research, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, employed AI to predict climate change using recent temperature observations from around the world.

ARMED FORCES CAN TAKE ACTION AGAINST THEIR OFFICERS FOR ADULTEROUS ACTS: SC

The Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled that armed forces can take action against their officers for adulterous acts, as it clarified the landmark 2018 judgement that decriminalised adultery. A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Justice K M Joseph said its 2018 judgement was not concerned with the provisions of the armed forces acts. The top court, on a plea filed by NRI Joseph Shine, in 2018 had struck down Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code dealing with the offence of adultery, holding it unconstitutional. The Tuesday order by the bench came after Additional Solicitor General Madhavi Divan, submitted a plea seeking clarification of the 2018 judgement.

FESTIVAL TO PROMOTE INDIA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE ACROSS ART FORMS

The upcoming Mahindra Roots Festival will aim to explore unique and lost forms of Indian cultural heritage through theatre performances, folk, classical, Sufi and contemporary music recitals. The three-day festival will be organised at Bandra Fort Amphitheatre, Rang Mandir and Anti Social club from February 24. Organised by Mahindra Group, the multi-discipline cultural festival will see sessions of immersive storytelling, classical music and poetry in multiple Indian languages, Marathi devotional poetry form of 'abhangas' and Bengal's Baul music tradition, among other performances.

CM woos global investors

Says AP is the fastest-growing State in the country with a GSDP of 11.43%

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Explaining the advantages of investing in the plug-and-play industrial ambience of the fastest-growing Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has called upon the nations to invest in the State and be part of its economic growth. Addressing the International Diplomats Alliance Meet here on Tuesday, the Chief Minister extorted them to participate in the Global Investors Summit (GIS) scheduled to be held at Visakhapatnam on March 3 and 4.

Today's meeting in which diplomats of various countries, company representatives, and officials of the State and Central governments have participated, is a certain raiser for the GIS. Elaborating on the facilities and resources available in the State for industrial growth, he said that out of the 11 industrial corridors being developed by the Centre across the country, AP shares space for three of them - Hyderabad to Bangalore, Visakhapatnam to Chennai and Chennai to Bangalore.

As the fastest-growing State in the country with a GSDP of 11.43%, AP has achieved the number one rank in the Ease of Doing Business



“Having a long coastline of 974 km, the State has vast natural resources with 48 minerals. The State has a single desk portal to clear licences in 21 days.”



(EoDB) and also retained it for the third successive year, he said. Having a long coastline of 974 km, the State has vast natural resources with 48 minerals, he said, adding

that the State has a single desk portal to clear licenses in 21 days. He underscored the fact that the availability of various industrial clusters like textile, cement, medical,

renewable energy, food, and automobiles would offer plenty of opportunities for industrialists to make investments in the State and grow their businesses besides providing employment to the youth. The State has excellent connectivity with six seaports and six airports with four more seaports to be added soon, said the Chief Minister, outlining that the State stands as the gateway of South East Asia due to its strategic location having the added advantage of inland waterways.

Vizag will be State capital soon: Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday said the State capital would be shifted to Visakhapatnam. Addressing the preparatory meeting for the Global Investors Summit to be held in Visakhapatnam in March, CM Jagan said he would be shifting his office to the port city in the months to come. "Here I am to invite you to Visakhapatnam which is going to be our capital, in the days to come. I myself would also be shifting over to Visakhapatnam in the months to come as well," he said.

It may be recalled that in November last year, the Jagan Mohan Reddy government repealed the controversial AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act, 2020 intended to establish three capitals for the State. The State government had pro-

posed three capitals, Visakhapatnam (Executive capital), Amaravati (Legislative capital), and Kurnool (Judicial capital). It is to be noted, after forming the State government in 2019, the YSRCP announced the formation of three State capitals. During the Assembly Session in December 2019, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy proposed Kurnool, Visakhapatnam and Amaravati as the three capitals of Andhra Pradesh.

Visakhapatnam would be the executive capital, Kurnool would be the judiciary capital and Amaravati would be the administrative capital. However, the proposal of the government did not go down well with the people of Amaravati, especially farmers who gave up their lands to form Amaravati as the State Capital during the TDP regime.

“Here I am to invite you to Visakhapatnam which is going to be our capital, in the days to come. I myself would also be shifting over to Visakhapatnam in the months to come as well.”

Capital issue raised to divert attention from Viveka case: TDP



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) State president Atchannaidu has said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced that Vizag will be the State capital while the issue is in the Supreme Court only to divert the public attention.

Atchannaidu recalled that before the 2019 elections, Jagan made it clear that Amaravati is the only capital of Andhra Pradesh and built a house in Amaravati. He further recalled that Jagan went to elections saying this and won, trying to create a rift among the people of Andhra Pradesh after the election and divide the State again.

1 killed, 3 hurt in blast at pharma SEZ

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A reactor exploded in Atchutapuram Pharma SEZ in the Anakapalle district of Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday morning claiming the life of a contract worker and leaving three injured. According to Parawada police, the blast occurred in GMFC labs on Tuesday morning. As per initial reports, the blast triggered a fire with huge smoke from the factory creating a panic situation. Workers ran out of the factory for safety.

The reactor blast at the GMFC Labs Pvt Ltd triggered a huge explosion leading workers and the nearby public to panic. Several factory workers at the pharma company were seen running out of the unit after a loud sound from the



blast. Enormous clouds of smoke emerged out of the GMFC Labs unit. The officials have closed down the factory, and the firefighting teams have swung into action. The Anakapalle district police reached the accident spot in Atchutapuram SEZ to control the

situation after the reactor blast at the pharma company. Workers at the surrounding units were asked to vacate the place, and GMFC Labs employees were rushed to the hospital. Further details regarding the blast are yet to be known.

High Court reserves verdict

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday issued orders to the State government not to initiate any action against the government employees who recently complained to the Governor against the State government. The High Court, after the conclusion of the arguments, from either party reserved the verdict.

A few days ago, the leaders of the AP Government Employees Association (APGEA) submitted a petition to the Governor saying that the government is not paying the salaries and other dues. The government has issued show cause notices to the employees for complaining to the Governor against the government which was against the rules of ROSA.



The leaders of the employee association filed a petition in the High Court. The High Court heard the arguments of both parties and reserved the verdict. The court ordered that no action should be taken against the leaders and employees of the Government Employees Association on the basis of the show cause notice till the final judgment is given. Later in the day, APGEA president

KR Suryanarayana, and general secretary G Askara Rao in a release demanded that the government should respond to the pending bills of the employees. They said that a meeting will be held on February 2 attended by eminent employees union leaders and give their valuable suggestions and comments on the legality of the pending issues.

They further asked the State government to announce a schedule regarding the pending payments. They appealed to all the employees' associations to come together for a collective movement for the employees' welfare. They said that under PFMS the arrears are to the tune of Rs 12,000 crores and said that details are not being disclosed by the officials.

Jagan to appear before NIA court on February 15

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The NIA court in Vijayawada on Tuesday ordered the physical appearance of CM Jagan Mohan Reddy and Visakhapatnam Airport Asst Commandant Dinesh Kumar in the chicken knife (Kodi Katti) attack case. The hearing in the case started on Tuesday and Dinesh Kumar had to appear before the court. However, he did not appear as Dinesh Kumar's father passed away.

The court ordered Dinesh Kumar, Jagan Mohan Reddy, and his PA to appear before the court on February 15.

Social media post on Veerraju exposes rift in AP BJP

P2

Two YSRCP MLAs raise banner of revolt

While one sees plot to kill him, both make phone-tapping charges

PNS ■ NELLORE

The ruling YSRCP, perhaps for the first time, has witnessed a revolt from two senior MLAs-Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy and Anam Ramanarayana Reddy - who made sensational comments against the YSRCP leadership.

YSRCP senior leader Nellore Rural MLA Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy and Venkatagiri MLA Anam Ramanarayana Reddy came down heavily on the YSRCP leadership and have given an ambiguous indication of quitting the YSRCP. Talking to the media here on Tuesday, Ramanarayana Reddy said that his security was curtailed and said there is a conspiracy to physically eliminate him. He said that his two phones were being tapped for the last two-and-a-half years.

"I fear plans are being hatched to eliminate me physically. My gunmen were removed. There are Maoist-infested areas under five police station limits in my con-



Anam Ramanarayana Reddy



Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy

stituency as per the Central agencies report. Unmindful of this, my security was reduced. I have been in politics since 1983 but I have never seen such a situation," Ramanarayana Reddy lamented.



World acknowledging India's tough stand on terror: Murmu

P5

Hospital denies reports of ECMO support to Taraka Ratna

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Actor-turned-politician Nandamuri Taraka Ratna is still in critical condition and on a ventilator, according to a recent update from the hospital. Megastar Chiranjeevi recently updated his fans on Twitter about Taraka Ratna's health.

Chiranjeevi expressed relief that Taraka Ratna is recovering well and thanked the doctors for saving him. He wished Ratna a full recovery and a long and healthy life.

Taraka Ratna, who is a Tollywood actor and related to Jr. NTR, fainted during a roadshow and was taken to hospital for treatment. He was later transferred to a specialised cardiology department in Bengaluru. The hospital authorities issued a statement denying reports of ECMO support and requested privacy for the patient. The family of Taraka Ratna is being updated on his health status.



Economy to slow to 6-6.8% next fiscal: Eco Survey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's economy is projected to slow to 6-6.8 per cent in the fiscal year starting April - still remaining the fastest growing major economy in the world - as extraordinary challenges facing the globe will likely hurt exports, the Economic Survey said on Tuesday.

The projection of India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth is higher than the 6.1 per cent estimate of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and compares with the survey's estimated 7 per cent expansion in the current fiscal year (April 2022 to March 2023) and 8.7 per cent in the previous year. The survey that details the state of



the economy was tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman a day before she presents Union Budget 2023-24. "At least three shocks have hit the global economy since 2020," the report, prepared by Chief Economic

Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran, said. Starting with the pandemic-induced contraction of the global output, the Russian-Ukraine conflict last year led to a worldwide surge in inflation. And then, central banks across economies led by the US

Federal Reserve responded with synchronised policy rate hikes to curb inflation. The rate hike by the US Fed drove capital into the US markets causing the US dollar to appreciate against most currencies. This led to the widening of the Current Account Deficits (CAD) and increased inflationary pressures in net importing economies like India. "The Indian economy, however, appears to have moved on after its encounter with the pandemic, staging a full recovery in FY22 (April 2021 to March 2022) ahead of many nations and positioning itself to ascend to the pre-pandemic growth path in FY23."

Administering overdose of welfare at the cost of development!

Everybody would welcome a welfare state. But none would countenance what is happening in Andhra Pradesh in the name of matchless welfare measures. In view of the umpteen welfare schemes launched by the YSR Congress Party government headed by YS Jaganmohan Reddy, lakhs of poor people and those from disadvantaged sections do feel much relieved, even if they are not content. They no longer have to worry about getting two square meals a day. Community pensions have changed the attitude of most people; many think it is no longer necessary to toil for meeting their daily needs. The availability of food grains and money for meeting various

needs at regular intervals, regardless of one's labour, has made many people complacent. The AP government has placed on record that funds to the tune of Rs.1,92,938 crore have been distributed among lakhs of beneficiaries across the state by crediting their bank accounts. This has made poor people happy. But what is happening to the state's fiscal position? The present debt burden in itself cannot be tackled in an easy manner for several years to come. The AP government appears to be in an extremely precarious state. It has to make requests to the Union government to relax the restrictions and limitations

The AP government has placed on record that funds to the tune of Rs.1,92,938 crore have been distributed among lakhs of beneficiaries across the state by crediting their bank accounts. This has made poor people happy. But what is happening to the state's fiscal position? The present debt burden in itself cannot be tackled in an easy manner for several years to come.

placed on borrowing of loans by States; for, AP's borrowings have reached an alarming stage, as stated by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament recently. In this backdrop, further borrowings might deepen the financial crisis, though the Jagan government wants to retain power in the 2024 elections 'at any cost'. The development of the state has been relegated. The promised Special Category Status could have helped, had it been incorporated in the AP Reorganisation Act 2014. Political blame game for not securing SCS for AP apart, even major projects, including the multi-purpose Polavaram, are not getting their due. The Polavaram project is designed to meet both agricultural and drinking water needs of the



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

early completion of the Polavaram project, though it has been pumping huge funds for welfare schemes to secure vote banks. The total estimates for the Polavaram project have reached Rs.53,000 crore. If one takes into account the sum of Rs.1.92 lakh crores already deposited into the accounts of lakhs of beneficiaries of the AP government's ongoing welfare schemes, and if the state government's priorities had been right, it is clear that the state could have completed the Polavaram project even without seeking financial assistance, irrespective of its national project status. The State government might still be in a position to complete the project by shifting its focus from welfare measures

to infrastructure. Thrust on infrastructure can take the state to new heights. The common man may soon come to the conclusion that the state government has spent on welfare programmes Rs.1.92 lakh crore, which could have otherwise funded the Polavaram project. The maxim 'A politician would think about the next election, while a statesman would think about the next generation' is particularly relevant in Andhra Pradesh. The government seems to have no enthusiasm to complete the project before the completion of its tenure. Such lack of zeal and commitment will not serve the purpose of the state. Despite mounting political accusations day after day, the crucial subject of thrust to

infrastructure seems to have no place in the agenda of the present rulers. People really want statesmen, not mere politicians. Soon this could be the strong message from the electorate to the warring factions on the political landscape in the state. Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, by portraying himself as a lion and describing his political opponents as wolves, has escalated political heat besides inviting criticism from the general public. Terming opposition leaders as wolves is nothing but degrading the stature of fellow politicians; it is wholly unwarranted! Voters, given their wise thinking, are capable of turning the tables on both lions and wolves tomorrow.

Social media post on Veerraju exposes differences in AP BJP

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM
VIJAYAWADA

At a time when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is struggling to gain strength in Andhra Pradesh, infighting in the party has become a big headache to the central leadership. The latest in a series of tussles among AP BJP leaders is caused by a social media post on the health condition of Somu Veerraju.

A social media post recently said that State president Somu Veerraju was hospitalised in a serious condition. The post on Somu Veerraju's hospitalisation was uploaded from the IP address of BJP senior leader Yarlagadda Ramkumar, who unsuccessfully contested the Assembly elections twice. The post on social media said that Somu Veerraju was admitted to the AIIMS and was undergoing treatment in serious condition.

The episode took an interesting turn as BJP State spokesperson and BJP social media in-charge Lakshmiipathi Raja had complained to the DGP about the posting against Yarlagadda



The episode took an interesting turn as BJP State spokesperson and BJP social media in-charge Lakshmiipathi Raja had complained to the DGP about the posting against Yarlagadda Ramkumar and demanded action

Ramkumar and demanded action. A BJP senior leader lodged a police complaint against another BJP senior leader which exposed the pathetic state of affairs in the BJP, a BJP leader regretted.

The core committee members have already complained against Somu Veerraju to the high command for not convening meetings and discussing important issues. Now, the BJP spokesperson lodging a police complaint against another senior leader caused embarrassment among the senior leaders in the party. Lodging a police complaint

irked Yarlagadda Ram Kumar, who responded by saying that he is a software engineer who worked in the USA and later joined the BJP.

"How can I post fake news on social media against the BJP State president? How can Lakshmiipathi Raja confirm that the posting was uploaded from my IP address? Only the police can confirm from which IP address the posting was uploaded on social media after an inquiry," Ram Kumar said.

Ram Kumar argued, "If some familiar person creates a fake IP address how would he be

responsible for that, and added that it is like phone tapping?" Lakshmiipathi Raja's act of complaining to the police against him dented the reputation of not only the BJP but also his.

Yarlagadda Ram Kumar demanded that Somu Veerraju suspend Lakshmiipathi Raja from the party, otherwise, he would file a defamation suit against Somu Veerraju and other office bearers and Ram Kumar wrote a letter to Somu Veerraju in this regard. Ram Kumar recalled that Lakshmiipathi Raja was suspended from the post earlier when Kanna Lakshminarayana was the State president.

The social media post issue has now snowballed into a major issue in the State BJP. Senior BJP leaders expressed displeasure over the Sanghatana Mantri Madhukar Jee not responding on the issue.

Somu Veerraju is in dilemma now whether to suspend Lakshmiipathi Raja for lodging a police complaint against Ram Kumar or face a defamation case being filed by Ram Kumar.

Volcanic ash discovered in Hastalpur village

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Ash heaps of volcanic lava were discovered by Kotha Telangana Charitra Brundam's researcher BV Bhadra Girish in Hastalpur village in Narsapur mandal of Medak district. He inspected the ash mounds recently, when he went to see the prehistoric rock art paintings on Pandavula Gutta in Hastalpur village after being told by the villagers that there are ash pits locally called suddaguttas on the outskirts of the village.

At a distance of one kilometer to the south-east of Narasimha Swamy Gutta on the outskirts of the village, an ash bed was found spread over a radius of about half a kilometer, two feet deep. It is said that the locals used this ash as chalk. However, the presence of prehistoric rock paintings on the mound of the Pandavas at Hastalpur village, the presence of microlithic stone tools in the vicinity and the presence of iron-smelting ingots have previously suggested that the ash came from iron-smelting furnaces.

CM's announcement on capital draws flak from Opposition

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Opposition leaders strongly condemned CM Jagan's announcement of shifting the capital to Visakhapatnam on Tuesday at Delhi.

CPI secretary V Srinivas Rao said that the announcement regarding the state capital and Chief Minister's residence will be shifted to Visakhapatnam is cheating the people. He said that the high court has issued orders to develop the capital Amaravati and the government moved the Apex court against the HC orders. While

the case is still in the Supreme Court, passing such comments is Contempt of Court. He said the CM was deceiving the North Andhra people with such statements.

BJP leader Kanna Lakshminarayana condemned Jagan Mohan Reddy's comments regarding the state capital at the Global Investors Conference in Delhi.

He said that it is ridiculous for the Chief Minister to make such an announcement while the capital issue is in the Supreme Court. He said "The people's desire to have

Amaravati as the state capital will be fulfilled."

BJP national general secretary Satya Kumar expressed anger over CM Jagan's announcement on capital shifting to Vizag. It is very objectionable for the CM to say that the capital will be shifted to Vizag as the issue was still in the court. He alleged that the CM was making such an announcement to cover his failures.

He said that the CM's popularity has decreased in India Today's voter survey, said Satya Kumar.

TS ASSEMBLY BUDGET SESSION

Guv issues notification, advises govt

K VENKATESHWARLU
HYDERABAD

Another notification has been issued for the commencement of the budget session for the year 2023-24.

However, the latest notification has been issued as decided in the earlier notification, which was issued on January 22 by the Assembly Secretary that the budget session will commence on February 3.

However, as per the latest notification issued by Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan both the Legislative Assembly as well as the Legislative Council session will start on February 3. The budget session will start at 12.10 pm on February 3 as a joint session

which the Governor will address.

The new notification has been issued as per "Article 176(1) of the Constitution at the commencement of the first session after each general election to the Assembly and at the commencement of the first session of each year the Governor shall address both the Houses of the Legislature and inform the reason for its summons."

The new notification says, "In exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 174 of the Constitution of India, I, Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan, Governor of Telangana, hereby summon the Second Telangana Legislative Assembly and Council to meet

for its Fourth Meeting of the Eighth Session at 12.10 pm on Friday, the 3rd of February, 2023, in the Assembly Hall, Public Gardens, Hyderabad.

However, experts said that the authorities are misinterpreting Constitution provisions regarding the Governor's address although the Constitution clearly mentioned everything. With this misinterpretation, there was no Governor's address last year (2022-23) in the name of pro-rogue, they said.



It is learnt that Governor has asked the government to prepare the Governor's speech on the basis of facts.

Economy to slow to 6-6.8% next fiscal: Eco Survey

Continued from Page 1

"Yet in the current year, India has also faced the challenge of reining in inflation that the European strife accentuated," the survey said.

However, the challenge of the depreciating rupee, although better performing than most other currencies,

persists with the likelihood of further increases in policy rates by the US Fed.

The widening of the CAD may also continue as global commodity prices remain elevated and the growth momentum of the Indian economy remains strong, it said.

The survey stated that the

inflation projection by RBI at 6.8 per cent for current fiscal (FY23) is above the central bank's tolerance limit but the pace of price increase is not high enough to deter private consumption or low enough to weaken investment.

According to the survey, the pressure on the Indian rupee could continue due to

the tightening of monetary policy. CAD may also remain elevated as imports could remain high due to a strong local economy while exports ease due to weakness in the global economy.

India's CAD was 4.4 per cent of GDP in July-September period, higher than 2.2 per cent a quarter

ago and 1.3 per cent a year ago, as rising commodity prices and a weak rupee increased the trade gap.

The survey said there has been an improvement in employment conditions in India due to stronger consumption but a pick-up in private investment is essential to creating more jobs.

HC invites applications for civil judges

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday invited online applications for the post of civil judge in the Telangana State Judicial Service.

Eight of the vacancies will be filled through direct recruitment while the other two will be filled through transfers. The application forms will be available in the High Court's website. It is to be noted that the applications will be open from February 1 to March 1. The screening test will be conducted on April 23 and the candidates will take up a computer-based test. The hall tickets can be downloaded from April 1 and the exam timing will be mentioned on the hall tickets.

| CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG | |
|--------------------|------|
| Dressed/With Skin | ₹176 |
| Without Skin | ₹176 |
| Broiler at Farm | ₹165 |

| EGG RATES ₹/100 | |
|-----------------|-------|
| VIJAYAWADA | 532 |
| HYDERABAD | 460 |
| VISAKHAPATNAM | 460 |
| RETAIL PRICE | ₹5.32 |

CM woos global investors Vizag will be State capital...

Continued from Page 1

In 2015, the TDP government declared that Amaravati, on the banks of River Krishna, would come up as the new capital. However, when the YSRCP came to power, the new government planned to have three capital cities. The farmers and the Opposition party opposed the plan of the YSRCP government and moved the Andhra Pradesh High Court. In a recent hearing, the Andhra Pradesh High Court reviewed the petitions filed against the three capitals and stay the same.

Soon after, CM Jagan Mohan

Reddy said that capital will be shifted to Vizag, TTD chairman and YSRCP Visakhapatnam in-charge SV Subba Reddy made some interesting comments. He said that very soon the administration will be shifted to the port city overcoming administrative and legal hurdles. He said that arrangements are government offices and residences for ministers and officials in the available government buildings. He said that the Global Investment Summit and G-20 summits are being organized in Vizag as the city is ideal for organizing such programmes. Subba Reddy said that if the administrative capital is Vizag

it will be convenient to all the people, especially to the people of North Andhra. He said that whoever wishes to invest in Andhra Pradesh will first come to Vizag which is an ideal place for every investor to organize meetings and meet the officials and ministers.

He strongly condemned the allegations made by the Opposition saying that the ruling party was grabbing lands in Vizag.

He said that if TDP had grabbed land in and around Amaravati, in the name of land pooling, it does not mean everyone will follow them.

Jagan to appear....

Continued from Page 1

The accused in the case Srinivas Rao has filed a memo that he will be writing degree exams and asked the court to exempt him from appearing during the exam dates which was intimated to the court. The court told the NIA to prepare a schedule to ensure that all of them appear for the next hearing. It may be recalled that Jagan Mohan Reddy was attacked with a chicken knife in Visakhapatnam Airport in 2019 before the general elections and on Tuesday the hearing of the case began.

Capital issue raised to divert...

Continued from Page 1

He commented that YSR leaders and Jagan are enacting the three capitals drama.

Atchannaidu claimed that the High Court itself has said that the government has no power to legislate in the matter of State capital and HC clarified that Amaravati is the only capital. He said that the Supreme Court is hearing the Amaravati case and now the Chief Minister went to Delhi and changed his word at

Two YSRCP MLAs raise banner of...

Continued from Page 1

Without intimation to him his two gunmen were removed, he said, adding that his Venkatagiri constituency is affected by Naxalism and red sanders smuggling.

He said that three months ago, the red sanders smugglers killed a youth at Kalvai mandal, adding that in this situation his security was withdrawn by the government without informing him.

"I fear that some leaders, who are unable to face me politically, are planning to eliminate me physically.

My cut-out was set on fire in Venkatagiri by miscreants. I fear that conspiracies are hatched against me to not only oppress me politically but also eliminate me physically. The YSRCP elders should answer why my security was withdrawn," Anam Ramanarayana Reddy asked.

"My phones are being tapped and I am telling this 'on record'," he said. Ramanarayana Reddy said that he is a six-time MLA and he contested the Assembly nine times and he has a vast political history.

Meanwhile, another YSRCP MLA Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy alleged that his phone is being tapped. His phone conversation with a leader went viral on social media in which Sridhar Reddy was heard telling that he was planning to quit the YSRCP and join the TDP.

A follower of Sridhar Reddy said that the YSRCP leadership is contemplating appointing a constituency coordinator in the place of Sridhar Reddy. Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy expressed his agony that the YSRCP high command does not trust him.

Significantly, the YSRCP high command has taken damage control measures by trivialising the comments of the two MLAs.

MLA Balineni Srinivasulu Reddy described the dislodgement as a storm in a teacup. He ruled out the possibility of tapping the phones of any leader. Balineni also said that Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy had spoken to the TDP leaders and now he is making phone-tapping allegations. He asked him why he had not complained about the photo-tapping till now.

Uproar in VMC Council meet over community pensions

Mayor suspends TDP's Balaswamy, Mummineni Prasad, Ummadi Venkateswara Rao and CPM's Satya Babu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) council meeting held on Tuesday witnessed a heated discussion between the ruling YSRCP and Opposition parties TDP and CPM over the cancellation of community pensions, allotment of food court stalls, conducting unauthorised food courts on the BRTS road and other issues.

A war of words took place at the council meeting between the YSRCP and TDP-CPM members, which led to a protest in front of the Mayor's podium and Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi suspending four members. Amidst the suspension and walkout by the Opposition members, the council passed all items on the agenda unanimously.

CPM's floor leader Boyi Satya Babu, TDP's floor leader N Balaswamy and TDP member Mummineni Prasad raised the issue of the cancellation of community pensions in the name of electricity bills, meters, cars and other causes. In January, around



2,300 pensions were cancelled in the three assembly constituencies in Vijayawada, they said.

"The State government cancelled the pension of a daily wage labourer explaining that he has three electricity meters, while only one meter was sanctioned by the Electricity Department," said Satya Babu. He asked the VMC officers what the reason for the action was. However, Mayor Bhagyalakshmi was angered by Satya Babu's question. "Without knowing the cause of the pen-

sion, how can a member raise such a question at the council meeting," she asked.

Meanwhile, N Balaswamy invited the attention of the council to the cancellation of 2,300 pensions in Vijayawada. YSRCP member Adapa Seshagiri Rao replied that because of the Sadihikara Survey, several poor people's pensions had been cancelled, and alleged that the Opposition TDP was the reason for the cancellation of pensions. He said the State government was giving pen-

sions to all eligible people and if there were any mistakes, they would be corrected at the sachivalayam.

Meanwhile, an Urban Community Department (UCD) official said that the State government increased the number of pensions from 52,855 to 69,233 in Vijayawada. The UCD had given notices to 4,060 pensioners for cancellation, of which 2,300 were reinstated and the remaining 1,690 were under investigation, the official added.

Lok Adalat on February 11

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The National Lok Adalat is scheduled to be held on February 11 throughout the State of Andhra Pradesh. M Babitha, Member-secretary of AP State Legal Services Authority (APLSA) in a release on Tuesday said, "Under the directions of Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra, Chief Justice and Patron-in-Chief of APLSA, Justice Praveen Kumar, Executive Chairman, APLSA and Justice Akula Venkata Sessa Sai, Chairman, AP High Court Legal Services Committee for settlement of pending cases such as criminal compoundable cases, cheque bounce cases, family disputes, property disputes, bank recovery cases, etc.," she added.

The Lok Adalat Award is final and no appeal lies. The court fee paid to the pending civil cases in the courts is refundable if such cases are settled before Lok Adalat. No fee need be paid for the settlement of cases in Lok Adalat, she added.

Secretary Babitha further urged the public and all stakeholders to come forward and settle their cases amicably in the National Lok Adalat. For any assistance or details, the public may approach the Legal Services Institution situated in the court compound, she said.



'Govt ignoring Kaigal reservoir'

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Tuesday during his ongoing 'padayatra' 'Yuva Galam' was given a rousing reception by the villagers of Kaigal of V Kota mandal. After a brief chat with the villagers, Lokesh visited the plaque at the Kaigal reservoir for which the foundation stone was laid on February 21, 2019, to meet the drinking water needs of the people of Boyareddypalli and V Kota mandals.

Later, Lokesh said that the TDP government after laying the foundation stone for the reservoir also acquired the necessary land and allotted

funds for its construction. This government, however, completely neglected it as it does not have any intention to meet the drinking water needs of the locals here, he said and added that the condition of the roads is very bad and the Government did not initiate any measures to fill the potholes on the roads.

Before visiting Kaigal, Lokesh met the petty traders at the local market at Kasturi Nagar of V Kota mandal where the locals narrated their cup of woes to him. From there Lokesh moved to Kommaramadugu village where he interacted with the locals. The farmers in the village said that the investment per acre is now about Rs 3 lakh as the

prices of fertilisers and pesticides besides the labour charges have gone up heavily. The returns are very poor, Rs 1.5 lakh or so per acre and they are suffering huge losses in agriculture.

Lokesh promised to take their problems to the notice of the State Government and will continue his fight till justice is done for them. He felt that the farmers are suffering heavy losses in the absence of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for the farm products. The TDP general secretary said that soon after the TDP is back in power, special attention will be given to the problems being faced by the farmers and steps will be initiated to resolve them.

Council flays unauthorised food courts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Both the ruling and Opposition members criticised the conduct of night food courts in Vijayawada without taking permission from the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, and they asked officials about the money collected from food court stalls by organisers in the name of permission.

VMC renovated the food court 'Eat Street' with its general funds beside the Indra Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium adjacent to MG Road. The members alleged that there were around 200 vendors doing business from 9 pm to 2 am, instead of the permitted 90 stalls.

Before the start of the council meeting, during the question hour, CPM floor leader Boyi Satya Babu enquired about the income of the food court stalls, permissions and money collection.



Discussion on funds

Later, a discussion was held on the funds released from the State government. B Satya Babu asked the ruling YSRCP whether the stormwater drain funds of Rs.289 crore would be sanctioned or not. He alleged that the VMC officials failed to provide the details of grants from the Central and State governments. N Balaswamy asked about the grant of Rs.150 crore which was released in two phases. Due to the non-sanctioning of funds from the State government, contractors do not come forward to take up development works in Vijayawada, he said. Later, Chief Engineer Prabhakar said that the fund for the stormwater drain of Rs.289 crore was credited to the Public Health Department. Around Rs 380 crore was sanctioned by the 14th Finance Commission of which Rs.302 crore was spent for various development works and about Rs.38 crore was to be spent, he said. Also, Rs.190 crore was sanctioned by the 15th Finance Commission, of which Rs.30 crore was spent so far, he added.

All-religion prayer held for MLC's recovery

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP leaders conducted an all-religion prayer for the speedy recovery of TDP MLC and Gannavaram Assembly constituency in-charge Batchula Arjunudu at the party office at Gannavaram in Krishna district on Tuesday. Batchula Arjunudu is undergoing treatment at Ramesh Hospital following a heart attack.

TDP leaders of Vijayawada Rural, Gannavaram, Bapulapadu and Unguturu mandals attended the prayer. Speaking on the occasion, TDP State secretary Dontu Chinna hoped that MLC Arjunudu would get well soon. "He has been working hard for the development of the party in the Gannavaram constituency," Dontu Chinna.

Murder mystery cracked, 1 held

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Nuzvid police arrested an accused Lavuri Yuva Raju alias Poriya (21) who was involved in a murder case held at Kotturu Tanda on January 29, at the Annavaram Crossroad near Nuzvid on Tuesday. Keeping in mind the old factions, the accused Yuva Raju murdered Banavathu Yesu alias Heele with a sharp knife on January 29.

On the complaint of Mangamma, wife of the deceased Heele, the Nuzvid rural police registered a murder case.

Under the directions of Eluru Superintendent of Police Rahul Dev Sharma, Nuzvid Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Ede Ashok Kumar Gowd formed special teams to nab the accused.

During the investigation, a tip-off was received by the police stating that the accused Yuva Raju was at the



Annavaram Crossroad which led to the arrest of the accused.

Speaking on the occasion, DSP Ashok Kumar Gowd disclosed to the media at his office that the accused Yuva Raju quarrelled with Heele at a function in Hariya Thanda three months ago. Later, the accused, keeping in mind the

old rivalry, murdered Heele with a sharp knife on January 29, he said and had since been at large, he said.

The police produced the accused before the judge and sent him for remand, he said.

DSP Ashok Kumar appreciated the Nuzvid Rural police for cracking the murder case.



Lorry catches fire, cabin destroyed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A timber-laden lorry caught fire and the cabin of the lorry was destroyed at Ponnavaram village in Kanchikacherla mandal in the NTR district on Tuesday.

Police said that flames erupted in the cabin of the lorry and spread immediately destroying the cabin of the lorry. However, the fire tenders put out the flames. The lorry driver and cleaner escaped unhurt as they jumped off the vehicle after noticing flames. A short circuit is suspected to be the reason for the fire mishap.



Sarada Peetham pontiff lauds TTD's 'Dharmic' activities

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The 'Chaturveda Havanam', which commenced in Sarada Peetham at Visakhapatnam on January 27, concluded with 'Purnahuti' on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Pontiff of Visakha Sarada Peetham Swarupanandendra Saraswati Maha Swamy said the 'Chaturveda Havanam' was

organised for global well-being.

Later, he lauded the various 'dharmic' activities of TTD including temples construction in backward areas, Vaibhavotsavams, Srinivasa Kalyanam, Gopuja, etc. and the umpteen pilgrim initiatives taken by TTD board and EO AV Dharma Reddy.

Later, TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy said TTD will organise 'Chaturveda Havanam' across the country in the future.

Junior Pontiff Swatmanandendra Saraswati Swamy, HDPP Special Officer Vijayalakshmi, SV Higher Vedic Studies Project Officer Dr Vibhishana Sharma and others were also present.

Collector orders raids on spas, beauty parlours

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao has directed the officials to keep an eye on unauthorised massage centres (spa) and beauty parlours in Vijayawada. He suggested that the officials concerned form special teams to inspect those centres frequently to prevent illegal activities.

The District Collector convened a meeting to discuss the implementation of the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act with the Revenue, Police, Women and Child Welfare, Labour, Municipal Corporation and Fire departments at the Collectorate here on Tuesday.

He asked the officials to form four teams for conducting inspections frequently in all massage centres and beauty parlours in Vijayawada. "There



were several complaints against these centres that they were leading the youth towards illegal activities," he said.

He further directed the officials to cancel the licences of those spas and beauty parlours that were run without permission. He said he should not tolerate negligence regarding the raids on spas and beauty parlours.

US-bound students defer plans due to lack of F1 visa slots

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Many students planning to move to the USA to pursue higher education began to defer their plans to next terms due to inadequate number of F1 non-immigrant study visa slots released by the US consulates.

Amidst the relocation works of US Consulate in Hyderabad to the financial district, consultants stated that only half of the applicants received a visa slot and joined the universities on time, while the rest are on hunt for slots, possibly for the next six months.

First-time visa applicants who received their admission into American universities for fall 2023 had to defer to spring 2023, upon failing to get a slot for a visa interview.

Christy Meeniga, a student planning to move to pursue Masters, said, "I got accepted into George Washington University, Washington DC for spring cohort 2023. I have been

trying to book a visa slot since the second week of November, 2022. It's been over three months and I still couldn't book a visa slot due to high demand and low availability. I had to defer my admission to the fall semester. Many of my friends who had the same plans had to either defer their admissions or cancel their plans on studying in the USA." Subhakar Alapati, Founder Director, Global Tree overseas Careers, said, "This is primarily happening because post-covid, many embassy officers had to relocate and the consulates have been understaffed ever since. There is higher demand from students in 2022, a wave of students who could not move during the two years of covid are beginning to apply. There is an unprecedented growth in the number of students applying, so the number of slots seems lower." Sanjay Gupta, from Vyasa Consultancy, said, "The embassy is prioritising first-time applicants.

Nine-day prayers at Gunadala shrine begin

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The nine-day prayers at Gunadala Mary Matha church in Vijayawada began on Tuesday evening on a grand note. Vijayawada Catholic Bishop T Joseph Raja Rao, Monsignor Muvvala Prasad, Vicar General Gabriel, and Rector William Jayaraju hoisted the Mary Matha flag at the church.

Speaking on the occasion, Bishop Raja Rao said that the Mary Matha festival is being organised since 1923 in Gunadala and from February

9 to 11 the 99th Mary Matha festival will be held.

He said that before the three-day Mary Matha festival, nine-day prayers will be organised on the Gunadala hill.

Rector Jayaraju said that for the past nine decades, the shrine has been showering blessings on the devotees abundantly. The devotees who visit the hill are enjoying the fruit of the blessings of mother Mary, he said.

Later, the members of the church visited the shrine on the hill and offered prayers.

Polytechnic Games Meet in city

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Government Polytechnic, Vijayawada, is all set to conduct the 25th Inter-District Polytechnic Sports and Games Meet from February 1 to 3.

Around 1,700 players and officials will come from all four regions in the State to participate in 19 events.

Minister for Finance and Commercial Taxes Buggana Rajendranadh will inaugurate the three-day tournament on February 1.

According to the Technical Education Department Commissioner Ch Naga Rani said that the Andhra Pradesh State Technical Education



Department is organising the sports and games meet.

Buses will be arranged to transport layers from the Railway Station and Bus Station, she said.

The government is providing food and accommoda-

tion for the players, she added.

Government Polytechnic Principal, Vijayawada, I Vijaya Saradhi said that 914 boys and 651 girls would participate in the three-day tournament.

School, college buses asked to take alternative routes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The NTR Vijayawada Police Traffic Wing organised a meeting with the headmasters and principals of the private colleges and schools along with respective school bus operators at KS Vyas Traffic Complex in Vijayawada on Tuesday to discuss traffic-related issues. Vijayawada Traffic DCP K Srinivasa Rao convened the meeting at the behest of Police Commissioner Kanthi Rana Tata.

The traffic wing officials gave the headmasters, principals and bus operators some suggestions which were to be followed to control the traffic problems in the city.

DCP Srinivasa Rao asked them to operate buses on other routes than Mahatma Gandhi Road (MG Road). Students should get on/off



the buses at the educational institution's premises. It would help in bringing down the traffic problems as well as keeping the students safe, he informed. The Traffic DCP further stated that all the school/college buses must be parked on the school premises, not on public roads. He suggested arranging sign boards, speed breakers and zebra crossing lines on the premises of the schools/colleges. The bus drivers should stay away from alcohol and other intoxicants. Traffic ADCP T Sarkar and others attended the meeting.

BJP demands Rs 1,500 cr for Veligonda project

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State executive committee member Shirasanagandla Srinivasulu has demanded that the government allocate Rs 1,500 crore to complete the Poola Subbaiah Veligonda Project.

Addressing a press conference, flanked by district president PV Shiva Reddy here on Tuesday, Srinivasulu said that the least rainfall recorded in the region indicates the need for the completion of the project.

The BJP leader said that the Veligonda project if completed, would provide irrigation water to lakhs of acres and drinking water to over 10 lakh population.

"We demand the government to allocate Rs 1,500 crore to complete the pending works of the project. The head regulator works should be completed during the summer and the



tunnel works should also be completed expeditiously. The compensation to the evacuees should be disbursed immediately to remove the major hurdle in completing the major irrigation project in the drought-prone area," the BJP leader said.

Stating that the BJP has been carrying out various agitations since 1982 for the project, Srinivasulu said that the website is showing that only 33% of Veligonda project works had been completed so far. One of the major issues of

the project, the disbursement of compensation to the evacuees, has not been completed so far, he lamented.

The BJP will carry out agitations on the issues in the coming days, he said, criticising that the government has no minimum knowledge of the minor irrigation projects and the importance of the Veligonda project.

"Though Rs 360 crore was allocated for the irrigation projects in the Prakasam district, no irrigation tank has been modernized. Two promi-

nent YSRCP leaders-former minister Balineni Srinivasulu Reddy and minister Audimulapu Suresh- are in the district but they are giving importance to their individual issues like religious conversion and running poker clubs but not focussing on the irrigation project.

The erstwhile TDP regime also neglected the completion of the Veligonda project, he flayed. District Kisan Morth vice-president PV Krishna Reddy and other leaders were present.



15 children injured as RTC bus hits school bus

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRCILLA

AT least 15 students were injured when a speeding TSRTC bus hit their school bus from behind at Yellareddy town in the district on Tuesday morning.

A Palle Velugu bus hit the school bus carrying 20 students from behind. The schoolchildren screamed for help. The students had a miraculous escape. The children sitting on the last row of the bus suffered bruises. Two passengers, too, were injured.

The local resident ferried the injured to nearby hospitals.

The accident caused panic among parents. The parents and the relatives of the students rushed to the scene of the accident. Minister for Municipal Administration K T Rama Rao, who represents the Sircilla constituency, called the District Collector to find out the details of the accidents.

TDP leaders plant saplings in protest against felling trees

PNS ■ NARASARAO PET

The TDP activists, led by former MLA GV Anjaneyulu, planted saplings at Vinukonda on RTC bus station premises and the government junior college campus on Tuesday.

The TDP leaders took up the programme of planting trees in protest against the indiscriminate felling of trees as part of security to Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy during his visit.

Speaking on the occasion, GV Anjaneyulu said that felling a large number of trees citing security to the Chief Minister as a reason is objectionable. Many Chief Ministers had visited the town previously but trees were not felled, he claimed.

"There are over 15,000 belt liquor shops in the Palnadu district. The Jagan Reddy-led government is spoiling the health of people by selling poor quality 'J' brand liquor," he alleged, claiming that thousands of people died after con-



suming sub-standard liquor. The ex-MLA took strong exception for mentioning TDP chief and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu as an 'old man' by the YSRCP leaders, lashing out that the Chief Minister is also old in this age itself.

Anjaneyulu said that the assurance of completing the Varikapodisela and Tangirala reservoirs had not been fulfilled. The Chief Minister also made hollow promises of pro-

viding drinking water, and establishing colleges and industries in the area but had not done so. The TDP leader also objected to the Chief Minister comparing the opposition leaders with wolves.

"Jagan Mohan Reddy has joined hands with K Chandrasekhar Rao who caused the unjust bifurcation of the combined AP state doing grave injustice to the people of AP," he lambasted.

Ambati calls on girl students at hospital in Guntur

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Irrigation Ambati Rambabu visited the girl students of BR Ambedkar residential school in Sattenapalli who fell ill after having food and undergoing treatment in the GGH here on Tuesday.

Ambati Rambabu, accompanied by Chief Whip in the Legislative Council Dokka Manikyavara Prasad, visited the girl students in the GGH and inquired with the doctors about their health condition.

Talking to the media, the minister said that the best treatment is being provided to the girl students and they would be discharged after they completely recovered from illness. All the stu-



dents are out of danger, he said. Ambati Rambabu said that over 200 girl students of the gurukul school fell ill after hav-

ing food of which 94 are undergoing treatment in Sattenapalli government hospital and seven students are undergoing treat-

ment in the GGH in Guntur.

A committee was set up to conduct an inquiry on the food poisoning in the gurukul school and action would be taken against the persons responsible for the incident as soon as the committee submitted its report, the minister stated.

The Chief Minister's office is keenly monitoring the incident and the Collector and the Joint Collector of Palnadu district were directed to monitor the health condition of the students and extend help to them.

MLC Manikyavara Prasad termed the food poisoning incident as an unfortunate, adding that the Chief Minister directed to provide the best treatment and ensure that all the students

get well as soon as possible. GGH Superintendent Dr. Prabhavati, civil surgeon, and RMO Dr.Satish were among those who accompanied the minister.

Meanwhile, Minister for Health Vidadala Rajani said that the principal, cook and PET of the Gurukul school were suspended, holding them responsible for the food poisoning incident.

The Health Minister said that 208 girl students fell ill after having food at the school. She said that five paediatric doctors, and 47 staff nurses were adopted to Sattenapalli GGH to provide medical treatment to the students adding that 15 specialist doctors are treating the girl.

Guv inaugurates SZ V-Cs' meet

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan on Tuesday inaugurated the South Zone Vice-Chancellors Meet 2023 at Andhra University here.

The conference was organised by the varsity at its convention centre in the city under the auspices of the Association of Indian Universities.

Addressing the vice-chancellors who came from different states, the Governor said that India is one of the fastest growing economies with growth witnessed in the education sector, more job opportunities and better medical services.

He said IT industry trade chamber NASSCOM has



reported that India boasts of the third largest startup ecosystem in the world.

"By 2022, there were more than 80,000 startups in the country. Higher education is very important for the devel-

opment of the country. They want to build the nation by imparting advanced knowledge and skills to prepare future leaders. As a result, a strong socio-economic system can be built," Harichandan said.

Providing quality higher education is the main issue today, he said, adding that as part of the New Education Policy, emphasis has been given to research. He said there is also a need to increase investments in the field of research.

Association of Indian Universities President Suranjan Das and Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education chairman K Hemachandra were also present on the occasion.

CRIME BEAT

300 litres of jaggery wash destroyed

BAPATLA: The police conducted cordon and search operations at various places and destroyed 300 litres of jaggery wash meant for brewing country-made liquor. The Chirala Two Town police and SEB officials conducted a cordon and search operation at Ramnagar colony and other places on Monday. The police teams found 300 litres of jaggery wash meant for distilling country-made liquor and destroyed it. The police teams found the jaggery wash was buried in the soil and they brought it out and destroyed it. The police teams also seized 400



litres of illicit liquor. Inspectors G Somasekhar, A Mallikharjun, SEB CI and 5 Sub-inspectors and 70 police personnel participated in the cordon and search operation. SP Vakul Jindal warned of stringent action if illicit liquor is brewed, sold and consumed.

3 injured as car falls into gorge

VISAKHAPATNAM: Three persons were injured when the car in which they were travelling fell into a gorge near Rampachodavaram on the Chinturu-Maredumilli ghat road on Tuesday. The injured persons V Srinivas, V Anusha, and Nagababu went to Bhadrachalam

and were going back to their native village Parnasala when the mishap took place. The injured were extricated from the ill-fated car and shifted to the GGH in Maredumilli. The condition of two of the injured is said to be critical and they were shifted to the KGH here for better treatment.



Massive security for TS Secretariat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari discussed security arrangements at the Dr BR Ambedkar Secretariat Complex which is being inaugurated on February 17 and the arrangements for the Formula E racing being held on February 11 at a high level meeting held at the BRKR Bhavan on Tuesday.

The meeting decided that traffic will not be allowed on the Telugu Thalli Flyover to Khairatabad Flyover road and from Mint Compound to I-Max from February 5 in view of the Formula E race being held on February 11.

The meeting decided that the public should be informed about alternative routes and they should be made ready to avoid delaying Secretariat works due to the Formula E race. The meeting also decided to provide high level security to the New Secretariat building being inaugurated on February 17.

The Police, R&B, GAD, the Telangana Special Police and IT departments should work in

300 CCTV cameras & 60 Sentry posts Traffic to be stopped on Telugu Thalli flyover for Formula E



close coordination. Three companies of the Telangana Special Police and 300 city police personnel will take care of security at the Secretariat building, the meeting decided.

The Traffic Police have allotted 22 personnel for the purpose. Security gadgets like baggage scanners, vehicle scanners, body scanners etc will be kept ready, the meeting decided.

The Secretariat complex which is spread over 28 acres has parking facilities for 560 cars and around 900 two-wheelers.

Six sentry posts have been set up around the Secretariat and 300 CCTV cameras have been installed to ensure security. A special command control room has been set up to oversee security arrangements. Monitoring

already arranged water supply and sewerage works are in progress.

DGP Anjani Kumar, Special CS MAUD Arvind Kumar, IT Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan, R&B Secretary Srinivas Raju, CP CV Anand, SPF DG Umesh Sharaf, Additional DG Sanjay Kumar Jain, DG Fire Services Nagi Reddy, Addl. DG Intelligence Anil Kumar, R&B E-in-C Ganapathi Reddy and other senior officials attended the meeting.

of visitors will be done through special identity cards. Two fire engines with 34 staffers have been deployed on the Secretariat premises. Special arrangements have been made for physically challenged people. Visitors will be allowed on all floors except the sixth floor. The HMWSSB has



SC panel detects huge membership fraud in HCA

Supreme Court-appointed Supervisory Committee reveals startling facts

DEEPIKA PASHAM ■ HYDERABAD

The Supervisory Committee appointed by the Supreme Court has unearthed a deep rooted membership fraud in the Hyderabad Cricket Association. The report revealed startling facts like that there is no record of memberships, no documentary evidence on how the electoral roll of HCA was drawn up in 2019 by the election officer.

The third point mentioned in the report said that some members own 7-8 clubs and are subverting democratic norms by using their votes to manipulate the Apex Council and to blackmail all institutionalised processes provided by the Justice Lodha Committee's reforms incorporated in the by-laws to manipulate selections to state teams, the buying and selling of teams, leasing of cricket teams under their control to brokers who pose as cricket lovers in Hyderabad for lakhs of rupees. These brokers,

in turn, fleece cricket players' parents and make them pay thousands of rupees every year to buy an opportunity for their child to play in the league matches hosted by the HCA.

The committee also noted that there is an imbalanced democracy in HCA, which is recognised by the BCCI as the sole representative of the cricket game in Telangana. This is because mostly clubs from Hyderabad City form the electoral college of the HCA while the remaining districts of Telangana do not have an equal say in the electoral college.

The committee is working on a suitable model of memberships that is equitable.

The report also mentions that memberships are fraudulent with the names of member clubs changing



from time to time, raising a strong suspicion of clubs being sold for crores of rupees which is against the fundamental ethics of societies memberships, which are non-transferable.

The report also reflects complaints filed by the State Government alleging large scale frauds in HCA memberships, lack of intent to provide equal membership rights to districts and has also highlighted disappearance of the clubs allotted to the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad and institutions over the years.

The committee report highlights the disappearance of hundreds of clubs that existed 35 years ago and there is no record of how these clubs disappeared and who fraudulently took them over.

Finally, it is also seen that the chairman of the committee was appointed as the Ombudsman in 2021 by a rival

group opposed to Md. Azharuddin, the President of HCA.

This was done in utter disregard of the TS High Court orders which upheld the appointment of Justice Deepak Verma as the Ombudsman of HCA.

The Chairman of the committee has not signed the Committee's report. Usually, frauds in membership have to be looked into by the Ombudsman and under the by-laws there is no time limit prescribed for the Ombudsman to complete his enquiry.

HCA sources said that membership frauds have existed in HCA since 1990 and have increased over time. The beneficiaries of fraud have stonewalled all efforts to clean up the HCA by appointing an Ombudsman of their choice by using their majority to make sure that complaints regarding fraudulent memberships, multiple clubs and other frauds are never acted upon and are swept under the carpet until the tenure of the Apex council is completed and after keeping these issues pending for years.

It appears that the group of interested members felt threatened by the appointment of the Justice Deepak Verma committee that their frauds would get exposed and therefore fought tooth and nail to oppose his appointment.

In fact, if their intentions were clean, it should not have mattered to them on who the Ombudsman of HCA is.

So, the story goes on and the report is before the Supreme Court. It is now impossible to fathom how an association responsible for managing cricket in Telangana can be filled with fraudulent doings at its very structure are memberships. This has led to growth of corruption, nepotism, favouritism and systematic destruction of process.

It is also appalling to note that the BCCI has been funding HCA that is, built on such deeply structured fraud. Is this the way cricket, the most popular game in India, has to be run in states, which are the feeding grounds of talent to the national team, questioned the report.

IT raids on real estate and pharma firms

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Income Tax officials are conducting searches at Rajpushpa, Vertex and Muppa real estate companies, officials conducting raids at more than 50 Vasudha Pharma places in Hyderabad and other places. Officials are also conducting searches at BRS MLC Venkat Ram Reddy's residence.

IT searches were also conducted in the offices of the Vasudha Group of Companies located in Hyderabad.

15 companies are doing real estate business. It has been found that profits from the pharma company have been invested in the real estate sector. During the previous raids on many real estate offices, evidence related to many investments were found and now IT officials are conducting searches based on them.

Gidimetla in Hyderabad and participated in IT searches.

Two teams are conducting searches in Vengal Rao Nagar and four teams in another corporate office in Madapur.

Vasudha Pharma Chairman Venkataramaraj along with director were also searched. There are allegations that he is doing real estate business in the name of Vasudha Pharma.

It seems that around 15 companies are doing real estate business. It has been found that profits from the pharma company have been invested in the real estate sector. During the previous raids on many real estate offices, evidence related to many investments were found and now IT officials are conducting searches based on them.

INDIA CORNER

Home guard arrested for extorting money from woman in Bengaluru

A home guard attached to the Bengaluru civic agency has been arrested for extorting money from a Delhi-based woman who had come to meet her friend in the city here, police said on Tuesday. Police said Manjunath Reddy V (47), a home guard, has been arrested on a complaint by Arsha Latif. Latif had taken to Twitter on Monday to explain the traumatic experience she had undergone. According to her, she was sitting with her friend at Kundanahalli lake when Reddy came there and threatened to register a case against them for sitting there without permission. He then demanded Rs 1,000 to let them go. After Latif's friend Lakshay Hooda transferred the money into his account through online payment, the home guard left the place. "I have received an update that the identified person Manjunath Reddy V has been arrested. He works for BBMP - Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike - and was impersonating the police to extort money. Thank you @BIRCityPolice for escalating the matter and taking swift action," Latif tweeted on Tuesday.



Ex PM Manmohan Singh conferred Lifetime Achievement Honour in UK

Former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh was recently conferred a Lifetime Achievement Honour by the India-UK Achievers Honours in London for his contribution to economic and political life. The Honour, announced at an awards ceremony last week, will be handed over to Dr Singh in New Delhi by the National Indian Students and Alumni Union (NISAU) UK at a later date. The India-UK Achievers Honours by NISAU UK, in partnership with the British Council in India and the UK's Department for International Trade (DIT), celebrate the achievements of Indian students who studied at British universities and the Lifetime Achievement Honour is a nod to Dr Singh's academic achievements at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. "I am very touched by this gesture, which is especially meaningful coming from young people who are the future of our country and of the ties between our two countries," Dr Singh said in a written message. "The India-UK relationship is indeed especially defined by our educational partnership. The founding fathers of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Sardar Patel and many others studied in the UK and went on to become great leaders, leaving a legacy which continues to inspire India and the world."



Adoor resigns as chairperson of Kerala's film institute

Renowned filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan on Tuesday announced his resignation as chairman of the K R Narayanan National Institute of Visual Science and Arts, days after its director - Shankar Mohan - quit following complaints of caste discrimination against him by a section of students and staff. Gopalakrishnan - a Dadasaheb Phalke Award winner - while announcing his resignation, at a press conference here - from the institute, also threw his weight behind Mohan by saying the latter was a well respected and distinguished professional who has been at the helm of various government-run film institutions in the last four decades. The filmmaker further said Mohan had diligently worked with him during the last three years to bring the institution back from the edge of ruin and turn it into one of the best film institutes in the country. "It is such a professional whom we invited here and then forced him to leave by levelling baseless, false and derogatory allegations against him and insulting him," Gopalakrishnan said while speaking to the media here.



World acknowledging India's tough stand on terror: Murmu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has emerged as a country that is "connecting" today's "divided world" in some form or the other amid several global challenges and questions over relevance and efficacy of decades-old international institutions, President Droupadi Murmu said on Tuesday.



In her address to a joint sitting of Parliament on the first day of the Budget Session, she said the world is acknowledging New Delhi's "tough stand" on terrorism, and described the current phase of India's global relations as the "best" one.

Murmu said the government "firmly" believed that lasting peace is possible only when the country is strong politically and strategically, and that it is the reason why constant emphasis is being put on the modernisation of the country's military strength.

In the around hour-long speech, Murmu touched upon India's ongoing presidency of the G20, chairship of the

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as well as its role in the Quad with a focus on working for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

However, there was no reference to India's frosty ties with Pakistan and China, though she mentioned the challenge of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

The world is looking towards India with "high hopes" and it is among those countries that are reinforcing the trust in the global supply

Murmu said asserting that the country's identity as a nation was immortal in the past, and will remain so in the future as well.

The president said the goodwill that India has generated benefitted it during the crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine, especially in evacuation of Indian citizens from these countries.

"Today, the world is also acknowledging India's tough stand on terrorism. Due to this, India's voice against terrorism is being heard seriously on

every global platform," she said.

"In October last year, a special meeting of the UNSC Counter-Terrorism Committee was organised for the first time in India. In this too, India made its position clear against terrorism," Murmu added.

She said the government is also "sincerely presenting" its concerns relating to cyber security before the whole world.

The president also highlighted several challenges facing the world and how New Delhi is playing an important role in connecting a "divided world".

"Today's world is witnessing many challenges. The relevance and efficacy of international institutions created decades ago is also being questioned," she said.

"Under these circumstances, India has emerged as a country that is connecting today's divided world in some form or the other.

Two killed as bus falls into roadside ditch

PNS ■ MALDA (WB)

At least two women were killed and 34 others were injured after a bus with over 40 passengers on board fell into a roadside ditch in West Bengal's Malda district, police said on Tuesday.

The accident occurred on Monday night when the speeding bus hit a goods carrier on National Highway 34 before falling into the roadside ditch, a senior officer said.

"Two women passengers have died in the accident and around 34 others have been injured. The injured people are undergoing treatment at the Malda Medical College and Hospital. The condition of a couple of them is critical," he said.

Most of the passengers of the North Bengal State Transport Corporation bus were believed to be Trinamool Congress supporters and were travelling to participate in party supremo Mamata Banerjee's scheduled meeting on Tuesday in Malda, the officer said.

Prez speech: Oppn says key issues remain unaddressed

○ Call it BJP manifesto for 2024 General Election

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Tuesday criticised the President's address alleging that the speech was like the "first chapter" of the ruling BJP's manifesto for 2024 and key issues related to price control, communal harmony and women were "missing".

In her maiden address to the joint sitting of Parliament on the first day of the Budget session, President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said the country has a government that is "stable, fearless, decisive", working for all classes without any discrimination and giving thrust to 'virasat' (heritage) as well as 'vikas' (development).

Murmu spoke of the government's relentless fight against corruption, the "biggest enemy of democracy and social justice".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said it is the "government's statement that has come through the



President" and there is nothing new in it.

"If the government is claiming that the country has progressed so much, then why do the poor people of the country continue to suffer due to unemployment and high inflation," he said and alleged that the schemes "renamed" by the Modi government are not reaching the poorest of the poor.

TMC Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien said that while it is "con-

vention" that the President's address is "written" by the government of India, key issues were absent in her speech.

"As is convention, President's Address to both Houses of Parliament is written by GoI. Any line in speech about controlling prices, creating jobs, strengthening (fiscal) federalism, promoting communal harmony, passing Women's Reservation Bill? Oh and 2 miserly lines about the North East," said Brien.

Court sentences Asaram to life imprisonment

○ Told to pay Rs 50,000 fine; defence to move HC

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

A court in Gandhinagar on Tuesday sentenced self-styled godman Asaram Bapu to life imprisonment in a rape case filed by a former woman disciple in 2013 after the prosecution argued for the strictest punishment saying he is a "habitual offender".

Additional sessions judge DK Soni also imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on Asaram which will be paid as compensation to the victim.

The defence said the order will be challenged in the Gujarat High Court.

The 81-year-old godman is currently serving a life term in a Jodhpur jail in another case of raping a minor girl at his ashram in Rajasthan in 2013.

He was produced in the Gandhinagar court via video link when the judge passed the order on Tuesday.

A day earlier, the court had

convicted Asaram in the case registered in 2013 for raping a woman disciple, who hailed from Surat, on several occasions from 2001 to 2006 when she was living at his ashram at Motera near Ahmedabad.

Six other accused in the case, including Asaram's wife Laxmiben, their daughter, and

four disciples who were accused of aiding and abetting the crime, were acquitted for want of evidence, the prosecution had said.

"The court on Tuesday sentenced Asaram Bapu to life imprisonment under sections 376 (2)(C) for rape and 377 (Unnatural offences) of the Indian Penal Code. He was also ordered to pay Rs 50,000 towards the compensation to the victim. In the remaining sections, he was sentenced to one year in jail under each count and slapped with a nominal fine," said special public prosecutor RC Kodekar.



Sonia alone attends joint sitting of Parliament as senior Congress leaders stuck in Kashmir

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi sat alone in her designated front row bench in Parliament's Central Hall during the president's address on Tuesday as senior leaders of her party remained stuck in Srinagar due to bad weather, after attending an event to mark the culmination of the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

However, a steady stream of leaders from across the aisle approached Sonia Gandhi and exchanged pleasantries.

Gandhi, who is usually flanked by senior party colleagues, was also greeted by both President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar.

Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, who was sitting near Sonia Gandhi, was also



seen leaning and speaking to her.

Gandhi, however, was seen engaged in a conversation for around half an hour with TMC's Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien who was sitting a row behind her.

Incidentally, the TMC had earlier said the party had not been called to join the Congress Bharat Jodo Yatra.

O'Brien and Gandhi were seen having a

lengthy conversation before Murmu's speech began.

Putting political rivalries aside, AIADMK leader M Thambi Durai and DMK's TR Baalu were seen smiling and hugging each other while having a conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

After the Economic Survey was presented and the Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day, PM Modi also enquired from Chirag Paswan about his mother's health.

In her first address to the joint sitting of Parliament on the first day of the Budget session, President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said the country has a government that is "stable, fearless, decisive", giving thrust to 'virasat' (heritage) as well as 'vikas' (development) and working for all classes without any discrimination.

K'taka HC warns of contempt proceedings against CS

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Tuesday warned that it would be forced to initiate contempt of court proceedings against the Chief Secretary if the State fails to implement its order of providing land for graveyards in all villages and towns within two weeks.

A Division Bench of the court is hearing a civil contempt petition filed by one



Mohammed Iqbal who has alleged that the State has failed to follow an earlier order of the HC in 2019 that had directed it to provide land for graveyards in all villages within six

weeks. In September 2022, the State had informed the HC in a compliance report that it had handed over 23,815 burial grounds to local authorities and the process of handing over 3,765 burial grounds was still pending.

The government was also in the process of identifying and purchasing land for burial grounds in 516 places where there were no government land available.

Air India urination case: Accused Mishra gets bail

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Tuesday granted bail to Shankar Mishra, accused of urinating on a woman co-passenger on an Air India flight from New York to Delhi. Additional Sessions Judge Hariyot Singh Bhalla granted the relief on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh. The judge was hearing an appeal filed by the accused against an order of a magisterial court that had denied him bail. The metropolitan magistrate had on Jan 11 denied relief to Mishra, saying the act was utterly disgusting and repulsive, shocked the civic consciousness and needed to be deprecated.



Oxford Dictionary adds Indian English pronunciation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pronunciation transcriptions and audio for more than 800 entries associated with Indian English, including words like 'desh' (country) and 'bindaas' (bold), are now available in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED).

According to Oxford University press, Indian English brings the total number of global varieties covered in the OED's pronunciations to 16 and the recent addition to the world English pronunciation audio archive fills a large gap for the 130 million Indian English speakers in the country.

"Ever since we started work to expand and include audio in our coverage of pronunciations for varieties of English besides British and US English, Indian English has been one of our biggest priorities and also one of our biggest challenges," said Dr Catherine Sangster, Pronunciations Editor for the OED.

"I am delighted that we

have developed a transcription model to capture its complexity and can now offer pronunciations for this extremely important variety of English in the OED," Sangster said.

The other Indian words for which pronunciation transcriptions have been added in the dictionary include -- 'diya' (a cup-shaped oil lamp, typically made of baked clay, often used on religious occasions such as Diwali festival), 'bachcha' (a child; also a young animal) and 'almirah' (a free-standing cupboard, wardrobe, or other storage unit). Since 2016, the OED has been expanding its pronunciation coverage for numerous global varieties of English.

For those words which show region-specific usage or meanings (New Zealand, Scottish, or Caribbean English, for example) the dictionary has added a region-specific pronunciation, alongside the British and American pronunciations given as standard across the entire dictionary.

'Use and throw' part of Nitish Kumar's work culture: Chirag

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan on Tuesday mocked Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for his claim that he will rather die than join hands with the BJP again, saying "use and throw" is part of his work culture and the JD(U) leader had made similar remarks in the past.

Speaking to reporters in Parliament complex, Paswan said Kumar can't be trusted as he has repeatedly "used" parties and people in pursuit of power



and had dumped the RJD, his current ally, and the BJP earlier too by making similar assertion of never tying up with them again.

"Use and throw is part of his culture. This is the way he also treated leaders like George Fernandes and Sharad Yadav. He is also treating Upendra

Kushwaha in a similar manner," he said.

Kushwaha, who was a BJP ally till 2019, had joined the JD(U) in 2021 and merged his party (Rasthriya Lok Samta Party) with it.

Kumar had on Monday asserted that he will "rather die" than realign with the BJP after the saffron party said there will be no alliance with the "unpopular" Janata Dal (United) leader.

Paswan also criticised the law and order situation in Bihar, alleging the state has gradually receded into anarchy.

Steady decline in school dropout rate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There has been a steady decline in the school dropout rate and increase in enrolment both in school and higher education, the Economic Survey for 2022-23 tabled in Parliament on Tuesday showed.

The gender parity has also improved in this financial year, the survey, tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, stated.

"The Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) in the primary-enrolment in Class 1 to 5 as a percentage of the population in age six to 10 years for girls as



well as boys has improved during the financial year (FY),"

This improvement has

"reversed the declining trends between FY-17 and FY-19", it stated, adding that "the GER in upper-primary (enrolment in

class 6 to 8 as a per cent of the population in age 11-13 years), which was stagnant between FY-17 and FY-19, improved in FY-22".

In corresponding age groups in primary and upper-primary levels, the GER for girls is better than that of boys, the Economic Survey for 2022-23 stated.

"In FY-22, school enrolment stood at 26.5 crore children with 19.4 lakh additional children enrolled in primary to higher-secondary levels," it said.

The survey noted that the total enrolment of Children

with Special Needs (CWSN) in FY-22 stands at 22.7 lakh as compared to 21.9 lakh in FY-21, an increase of 3.3 per cent.

"The enrolments increased across all levels -- primary, upper-primary, secondary, and higher-secondary, except for the pre-primary level. At the pre-primary level, enrolment reduced from 1.1 crore in FY-21 to one crore in FY-22," it said. "During the year, about one crore children were enrolled in pre-primary, 12.2 crore in primary, 6.7 crore in upper primary, 3.9 crore in secondary and 2.9 crore in higher secondary," it said.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Pretty picture

Economic Survey 2022-23 is quite bullish on the future, and the optimism is grounded in reality

The GDP growth rate in 2023-24 may be lower than that in the current fiscal but happy days are on the horizon. This is the message that the 400-plus pages of Economic Survey 2022-23 tend to convey. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the survey in Parliament on Tuesday. It goes on to list the grounds for its upbeat message. Even as the survey pegs the growth rate at 6.5 per cent for 2023-24, as compared to 7 per cent in 2022-23 and 8.7 per cent in the last fiscal, it claims that India's recovery from the pandemic was relatively quick, and growth in the upcoming year will be supported by solid domestic demand and a pickup in capital investment. The current growth trajectory, it correctly says, will be supported by multiple structural changes that have been implemented over the past few years (read since 2014). The survey suggests that the "financial system stress"—as reflected in non-performing assets, low credit growth, and declining growth rates of capital formation—was caused by excessive lending in the pre-2014 period. Those stress years are behind us, just like the period of recovery from the pandemic-induced slowdown. Chief Economic Advisor Venkatraman Anantha Nageswaran sees similarity in the situation in the last few years to the one pertaining in the 1998-2002 period. Over two decades ago, transformative reforms were undertaken by the government, but the growth returns were due to temporary shocks in the economy. Once these shocks faded, the structural reforms paid growth dividends from 2003.

His optimism is grounded not just in history but also in reality. In general, he has presented a rosy picture in the survey: private consumption in the first half of 2022-23 was highest after FY15; capital expenditure by the Central government has crowded in the private capex, thus strengthening the balance sheets of corporations; credit growth in the MSME sector is good; the Indian rupee performed well compared to other emerging market economies in April-December 2022; the urban unemployment rate has declined; retail inflation has been reined in; direct tax collections for the period April-November 2022 were buoyant; with improved and healthier balance sheets, a fresh credit cycle has already begun, apparent from the double-digit growth in bank credit over the past months. The picture, however, doesn't look very pretty when we closely look at manufacturing—the second largest employment generating sector. The survey does admit that foreign direct investment "in the manufacturing sector moderated in the first half of FY23," but then goes on to gloss the dip by saying that "inflows stayed well above the pre-pandemic levels, driven by structural reforms and measures improving the ease of doing business." The fact is that in the January-November 2022 period, actual industrial investment was over 43 per cent lower than that in the same period in 2021. On the whole, however, the survey presents a realistic picture.

PICTALK



Labourers work at a construction site during sunset, in Jalandhar

Wrestlers' fight for justice

Wrestlers are up in arms against the Wrestling Federation of India for harassment, sexual misconduct and irregularities. The Govt must act.



BRIJENDER SINGH PANWAR

The credit for dissolving the recent controversy, though temporarily, where several top-based World and Olympic medalist wrestlers including Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia, and Sakshi Malik staged a protest at New Delhi to probe the allegations of sexual harassment against the chief of the World Federation of India (WFI), Brij Bhushan Sharan, goes to the Union Sports Minister, Anurag Thakur and his team. As the sequence of incidents indicates on January 18, 2023, the wrestlers began the protest at Jantar Mantar, on the same day, the Sports Ministry took swift action by sending a notice to WFI seeking an explanation, met wrestlers and assured them of a free and fair probe leading to calling off the protest. On January 20, WFI replied to the notice rejecting all allegations, and on January 21, the Sports Ministry asked the Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh and WFI Executive Committee to abstain from attending to the activities of the Federation. Although the tussle is far from over, some top wrestlers are upset with the way dharana ended—neither did their demand of disbanding WFI accepted nor did Singh resign as President but merely "stepped aside"—they have taken the matter to the next level and sought a meeting with the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah. All said and done, the issue which would have boomeranged into a major crisis has been contained at an initial level.

The Sports Minister formulated the Oversight Committee under the chairmanship of six-time world champion and Olympic medalist boxer and head of the Indian Olympic Association, M.C.Mary Kom consists of Olympic medalist wrestler Yogeshwar Dutt, Archer Dola Banerjee, former shuttler Alknanda Ashok, Indian Weightlifting Federation President, Sahdev Yadav, advocates Talish Ray and Shlok Chandra. Till that time, the Committee will carry out the day-to-day affairs of WFI. The Committee will probe the allegations of sexual misconduct,



harassment and intimidation, financial irregularities, and administrative lapses and submit its reports within a month. However, the President of WFI, Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, BJP MP from Kaiserganj, Uttar Pradesh—having criminal cases pending against him refused to resign claiming that the protest was a part of a "larger conspiracy to malign and defame him".

Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh (66), a law graduate, has been a controversial figure in the politics of Uttar Pradesh for more than three decades. He emerged as "bahubali" during the phase of unstable political circumstances in UP during the 1990s. He developed a network of supporters not only from its Rajput community but also from other castes to win the Lok Sabha election from Gonda in 1991 on a BJP ticket. He was named as an accused in the Babri demolition case. He was elected to the Lok Sabha from Balrampur on a BJP ticket in 2004. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was not happy with him, so he left BJP to win the election on an SP ticket in 2009. Again, joined BJP and won the Lok Sabha elections in 2013 and 2019. As per his 2019 election affidavit, the MP faces four criminal cases including serious charges of robbery and attempt to mur-



UNDOUBTEDLY, IT'S COURAGEOUS ON THE PART OF THE WRESTLERS TO CONFRONT A POWERFUL SIX-TERM MP AND PRESIDENT OF WFI WHO HAS BEEN DOMINATING THE GAME OF WRESTLING FOR ALMOST TEN YEARS

der, and was charged under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Prevention Act for allegedly sheltering shooters of a notorious Uttar Pradesh gang, although later acquitted by the court. In 1993, he was accused of attacking a former State Minister and another strongman Vinod Kumar Singh alias Pandit Singh, his competitor for three decades. In this case, also, he was acquitted by the court. He has been in news for criticizing Swami Ramdev, courting controversies by threatening MNS President, Raj Thackeray if the latter visited Ayodhya.

Undoubtedly, it's courageous on the part of the wrestlers to confront a powerful six-term MP and President of WFI who has been dominating the game of wrestling for almost ten years. Phogat and her wrestler colleagues took up the cause by voicing fear for their lives for taking on "powerful people", speaking on behalf of about 20 girls who have been "exploited in the national camps over the past 10 years" and claiming to have their recordings. She came forward to represent their cause because these upcoming wrestlers come from poor families and are too scared to fight back because they are not "powerful".

However, this case is not

in isolation. At least two recent cases of similar nature come to mind. In June 2021, the sexual misconduct of a Tamil Nadu sports academy coach, P. Nagarajan came to light when a teenage athlete accused him of sexual exploitation from 2013 to 2020 and seven more women who trained under him during his three-decade career accused him of some kind of sexual exploitation. In June last year, the incident of cycling coach R.K Sharma was in the public domain for sexually harassing a top female cyclist by threatening to derail her career.

It is a matter of pity that India's top-ranking self-made wrestlers come from ordinary families, who have made it big by toiling on the mats and on the ground, following grueling schedules for years to win medals for the country in the Olympics, Commonwealth, and Asian games are forced to sit on dharna in the bitter cold of the national capital. The concerned authorities should act fast to regain the confidence of our "shining stars" who bring pride to our nation before it is too late.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman of the Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BHARAT JODO YATRA ENDS

Sir — The Bharat Jodo Yatra of Rahul Gandhi finally met the desired end as the Congress leaders successfully unfurl the National Flag at Lal Chowk of Jammu and Kashmir, exactly 75 years after Pt Nehru himself did so. The Yatra has finally reached its wrapping point after collecting baggage of experience and understanding about India which is in its Amrit Kaal. The yatra is extremely rigorous to cover the length and breadth of the Indian territory on foot, thanks to the arrangements and technology that is much more popular than what earlier Congress leaders do so far. Of course, this Yatra is full of experiences and will definitely revamp the way people think about Congress in general and Rahul Gandhi in particular.

But now that this journey is over, Congress has surely picked many unimaginable lessons from this journey of discovering New India which had new vigor, we can expect some new changes to be applied in the existing form of Congress for its overhaul. Though it is quite early to say that Congress will change after this Yatra, yes one thing is very sure this yatra will definitely have long-term effects on the Congress' actual image and this yatra will be a part of the golden history of Congress' evolution in Modern India.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

TUSSELE ENDS

Sir — Since all is well that ends well, it is a happy augury to note that the tussle between the Government and the Governor of Telangana has taken a reprieve through the withdrawal of the case from the High Court by the former. It is always better if the grey relationship between the two remains hassle-free. People expect both to settle any differences diplomatically without both taking any political advantage from their respective sides. The bottom line is that the administration and service to people should not be affected by any skirmish between two constitutional heads.

Investigate Adani group



The Shiv Sena faction led by Uddhav Thackeray, Congress, and all the other opposition parties on Monday demanded a SEBI investigation into alleged stock manipulation by the Adani group and "over exposure" of LIC and SBI funds in shares of the group companies. It also demanded a discussion on the issues relat-

ed to the Adani group flagged in a report of the US-based short seller Hindenburg Research which has accused it of several wrongdoings such as stock manipulation and fraud. At an all-party meeting convened by the government on the eve of the Budget Session of Parliament, SEBI's investigation into charges of stock over-pricing and over-exposure of SBI and LIC must be concluded and discussed. Several opposition parties on Monday raised the Adani issue and the conduct of governors in some states ruled by them at the all-party meeting as the government asserted it was willing to discuss every matter allowed by rules and sought their cooperation. With this, all is not well for the Adani group in the coming days.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

When the Assembly begins as per convention, people would love to see the Governor sharing bonhomie in the public interest as much as they would love the reciprocity from their favorite Chief Minister.

D. Nagarjuna | Hyderabad

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Sir — The Budget session of Parliament begins with the President Droupadi Murmu addressing a joint session, in the Parliament's Central Hall on the first day of the budget session every year. In her speech it's heartening to know that not only a medical college has come up almost every month in India, but also two colleges have been established in the country every day. Side by side one university has been established every week, as a result in the last eight years more than 300 new universities have been added. By this expansion of education in the country one has to recall the great saint Swami Vivekananda, who said: "We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand one's own feet." By this way the country is trying to fulfill Vivekananda's

dream, but where is his 'one can stand one's own feet'? We are proudly pats in our back as: India is now the fifth largest economy in the world, and the President in her speech said: A Bharat which has no poverty and where the middle class is also prosperous, but in reality 83 crore (nearly two-thirds) of our population covered under free ration and the way unemployment (there was nothing on unemployment in President's address) rises in the country, then what's the value of this education? President Murmu said that women empowerment has been at the core of all schemes introduced by the central government, but may be debatable. Even that one wants to know from the Modi government that why India ranks 144 out of 193 countries in the representation of women in parliament? Why was The Women's Reservation Bill first introduced in 1996 by the Deve Gowda government, still in the store room in the Parliament? Because they want to prove the country is still dominated by men?

Bidyut kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

All is not well in Ladakh

Unfortunately, Sonam Wangchuk, the man with the mission to save Ladakh was put under house arrest

Sonam Wangchuk, the 57-year-old engineer who inspired the Bollywood blockbuster 'three idiots' was on a five-day fast in Ladakh. He began his fast on January 26 to demand that the Government needs to wake up and stop activities going on in the region and implement the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution as promised. Wangchuk is a man with a mission to save Ladakh from corporate greed. He also sent a message to the Prime Minister saying "all is not well in Ladakh". However, the administration took his hunger strike as a threat and put him under house arrest. What Wangchuk is saying makes a lot of sense as we are seeing catastrophe after catastrophe in the Himalayas and if the mindless construction in the name of development does not stop we may be heading for a calamity sooner than later. Wangchuk contends that the Himalayan environment is fragile and meddling with it would cause the melting of glaciers which might have devastating long-term effects for the country.

Wangchuk is yet another whistle-blower the Government chooses to ignore. Not heading to sane advice has its perils. One of the key solutions which are also his major demand is extending the Sixth Schedule of the constitution to Ladakh which was promised by the government but has not been kept. The sixth schedule allows for forming autonomous administrative areas where the tribal population is more than 50 percent. It permits the creation of independent administrative entities which can enact laws that defend the tribal population's interests and preserve their cultural identity. The Govt's approach to



ignoring Wangchuk's concerns and silencing his voice is not good for the Government or the people of Ladakh. Besides the movement is building up in Ladakh which can snowball into major unrest. Former MP Thupstan Chhewang organized a grand rally against the "failure of the government to protect the identity and culture of Ladakh". So now it is becoming a matter of Ladakhi identity and existential issues that the Government must address. Wangchuk is going to repeat his hunger strike soon. Given the support he is getting it would become a major issue. The safeguards Ladakh enjoyed earlier have been left invalid after the abrogation of Article 370. The government must keep its word and fulfill its promise. What Wangchuk and other protesters are demanding is in the interest of the country at large.

SOUND BITE

I invite you to Visakhapatnam, which is going to be our capital in the days to come. I myself will also be shifting to Visakhapatnam in the months to come.

Andhra Pradesh CM — YS Jagan Reddy

This is no less than an attack on Pakistan. I have no doubt terrorism is our foremost national security

challenge. Pakistan Prime Minister — Shehbaz Sharif

If an unknown guy called Yash can do Rs 500 crore business (with KGF Chapter 2), (then) Shah Rukh Khan doing a 500-crore business is not a big deal.

Filmmaker — Ram Gopal Varma

Today, with immense gratitude and humility, I announce my retirement from all forms of international cricket.

Indian cricketer — Murai Vijay

I announced a five-day climate fast to save and safeguard the Himalayas, the glaciers, Ladakh, and its people.

Environment activist — Sonam Wangchuk



FIRST COLUMN VILLAGE LIFE IN VEIL IN UTTARAKHAND

Women still have to cover themselves in villages



KUMARI KAVITA

"To be veiled is a matter of honor, and the girls who follow it are cultured," said Paruli Devi, an elderly woman from Lamchula village in Bageshwar district in Uttarakhand. She believes that for women and girls to remain 'cultured' and maintain 'respect' for themselves, it is significant to practice the purdah system.

Parul is not the only one to affirm this notion, as two-thirds of rural women (42 per cent) practise purdah, either as victims of this age-old practice or as a symbol of respect. On the other hand, Rekha and Nisha, two adolescent girls from the same village, questioned the veil culture in today's world. But they are aware of how it is given utmost importance in rural environments and how far they will be spared from following it.

"The rural society compels women and girls to practice the veil system by relating it to respect. But we believe women will receive respect when there is equality between men and women and the provision of equal opportunities," the duo said.

"Because of the veil system, women cannot express themselves freely. The practice does not provide any respect to women. On the contrary, it affects their mental health, and should be rooted out of society," they further added.



Although several measures have been taken by the government to curb the purdah system, the practice still persists. According to a Lokniti study conducted in 2019 under the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in 11 states among 6,348 women aged 18 and older, two out of every five Indian women practice purdah.

Focusing on how purdah has been made compulsory for women mostly in rural areas, Sita Devi, the sarpanch of the village, highlighted the difficulties, saying "whenever a woman goes out of the house, it has been made mandatory for her to cover her head. By any chance if she forgets to cover, the society questions her character. The entire dignity and honour of our families are entrusted to our shoulders, and these practices are the means to retain them."

According to her, women need to come out collectively and speak out against these malpractices. Only then, women will be able to get their rights. The purdah system allows men to exert powerful control over women and their bodies. Often, when women revolt against these practices, they are categorised as disrespectful and ill-mannered. This leads to several forms of violence, be they physical or mental.

Bimla Devi, an Anganwadi worker from the village, also spoke on the same lines, explaining how not following the practice often leads to mental harassment and sometimes physical violence. Women are bound to follow it even if they don't want to, Neelam Grundy, a social worker from the area, said, while adding that married women are blamed for not having a cultured upbringing if they believe in doing away with the purdah system.

"Tumhare Ma ne kuch nahi Sikhaya (Your mother did not teach you anything)" is the common phrase used by families to put down their daughters-in-laws. In order to avoid any criticism, women compromise and continue to practice it," shared Neelam. Spreading awareness to eradicate the purdah system is unlikely to work, unless the root cause of patriarchy and its implications are addressed. Clearly, the purdah system and its practice by women, even if they don't want to adhere to it, will follow until these systems are demystified amongst women.

Most importantly, to spark discussions and dialogues within the family system to better understand why women and girls are expected to uphold the family's honour and respect.

(The author is a student of class 12 from Bageshwar, Uttarakhand: Charkha Features)

Wise allocations will boost the economy



RAVI KUMAR GUPTA

ROHAN GUPTA

It is the Government's responsibility to make allocation in the Budget considering all the expectations

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, along with other ministries, has prepared the Budget. Article 112 of the Indian Constitution says that "the receipts and expenditure list of the Government to be laid before the parliament floor" for each financial year (April 1 to March 31).

The Indian economy is showing a high-growth trajectory. It recently crossed the UK and became the fifth largest economy. Healthy and wise allocations in the Budget will boost the economy. The vision that India can become a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 can be achieved only when we have the best tenets of the budget and its allocation in various fields.

Many experts and economists believe that the Budget 2023-24 will be balanced. The approach toward the economic growth, focus wisely on every aspect, be it capital expenditure on various infrastructures, education, taxation, provident funds, tax slabs, subsidies, incentives to production linked schemes, push to manufacturing and service sectors, semi-conductor-based industries installations, health, banking, housing, defence, rural need and demands.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukrainian War had created a deep impact on the economy and GDP of the entire globe during 2020-22. India has also been impacted a lot. The overall slowdown in the manufacturing and service sector caused severe employment loss. Hence by a proper budget allocation we can overcome the impacts up to an extent.

Education is an important tool for overall development. The opportunity for education should be given to all. To make education skillful and learning oriented, it needs good books, labs, workshops, infrastructures. The education budget was raised by 11 per cent last year to 3.1 per cent of the total GDP, which is quite less. The expenditure on education is expected to double of the previous year allocation. It should be close to six per cent.

Taxes are the primary sources to the receipts for the consolidated fund of India. Taxes can be direct tax which is collected directly by an individual like income tax, corporate tax, property tax, etc., or indirect taxes like GST, state excise duty etc. In Financial Year 2022, the ratio of tax revenue to GDP was almost 17.11 per cent. We can have a higher expectation in the financial year 2023. GST collection of Rs 1.52 lakh crore has been recorded as of October 2022, indicating a positive output. However, many people still avoid the tax by taking unfair advantages of the shortcomings in the tax rules. A good taxation system consists of five basic conditions --- fairness, simplicity, transparency, adequacy and administrative ease.

Investment in the capital market is important as more infrastructure means more chances for manufacturing, employ-



INDIA HAS CURRENTLY MORE THAN 83,000 STARTUPS AND MORE THAN 100 UNICORNS. DUE TO THE RECESSION AND PANDEMIC EFFECTS WORLDWIDE, THE FUNDING TO STARTUPS HAS DRIED UP. THE BUDGET SHOULD ANNOUNCE FUNDS TO SUPPORT STARTUPS

(Ravi Kumar Gupta and Rohan Gupta teach at Madan Mohan Malaviya University of Technology, Gorakhpur)



ment, tourism and the market. The money for the capital market basically comes from the provident fund, mutual fund, LIC premiums, NSC, bonds and other government authorised investments which have a sure return after a period of time.

According to income tax exemption under 80(C), we get tax deduction. The expectation is to raise the amount by Rs 50,000, presently it is Rs 1.5 lakhs and has not been amended since 2014, while inflation and many other factors have made Rs 1.5 lakh limit a very lesser value. It should be increased.

The total contribution of the manufacturing sector has decreased in the GDP in recent years. The contribution of the manufacturing sector in GVA was 17.4 per cent in FY-2012, which decreased to 14.5 per cent in FY2021. The government has to step up capital expenditure in this sector. It will help in employment generation as well as more exports can be achieved which will make the target of achieving \$1 trillion of economy true.

By the introduction and use of chips in various electronics devices like vehicles, mobile phones and all other appliances, the demand of semiconductor chips has increased manifold, which is met by imports from Japan, Taiwan and China. The expectation is that the government of India should make a proper allocation of budget with the involvement of private partners

to make and produce the chips.

Disinvestment is the selling of invested stakes. The government sells public sector undertakings (PSUs) and PSU stocks. The government announced many disinvestments in the recent three years, but has been unable to complete the target completely. PSUs like BPCL, OIL, etc., are profitable companies so the expectation is that disinvestment of such companies should not be announced. Even if it is done, there should be moderate disinvestment.

High disinvestment provides revenue while lower disinvestment will save the government for future investment. So, it should be done in a very balanced way.

Our country is the fifth largest economy in the world. The amount of subsidies provided by the government is very surprising, food and fertilizers subsidies amounting to 1/8th (12 per cent) of GDP. Spending on fertilizer subsidy which is Rs 2.3 lakh crore should be reduced to Rs 1.4 lakh crore and food subsidy to Rs 2.3 lakh crore from Rs 2.7 lakh crore. If the government wants to reduce the fiscal deficit, then it should reduce subsidies. It will definitely make the fiscal deficit balanced, which is targeted around 6.4 per cent of the GDP in current fiscal years.

India has currently more than 83,000 startups and more than 100 unicorns. Due to the recession and

pandemic effects worldwide, the funding to startups has dried up. The Budget should announce funds to support startups. It is the major provider of jobs and it is going to cross \$500 billion in valuation very soon. Various schemes and regulations are needed for the ease of doing business for the startups.

The goal of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' can be achieved by enhancing the defence systems. According to a research institute of Stockholm, India ranks fourth among the Indo-Pacific countries in self-reliant production capabilities of arms but India ranks 2nd largest importer of the arms and defence related equipment. However, we have defence exports of Rs 14,000 crore and the target is to achieve Rs 25,000 crore of exports by 2025.

The objectives of fiscal policy and Budget are to increase the ratio of savings to incomes, raising the rate of investment, flow of expenditure in productive areas, price stability, and reduce inequality. If inequality is not reduced, there will be clashes among the people which will affect negatively and generate instability in the economy. The introduction of GST has also helped in collecting the taxes easily and rapidly. A country's budget should be balanced. It is also the Government's responsibility to focus on every aspect and allocate the Budget considering all the expectations.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

CONGRESS IS NEITHER HERE NOR THERE. RAHUL GANDHI'S BHARAT JODO YATRA ONLY ADDS TO THE CONFUSION ABOUT WHAT IT STANDS FOR.

— BJP LEADER
RAKESH SINHA



I HAVE NOT DONE THIS (YATRA) FOR MYSELF OR FOR THE CONGRESS, BUT FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY.

— CONGRESS LEADER
RAHUL GANDHI

Finance Minister may opt for a prudent Budget

Budget will probably have something for everybody as political parties have mastered wooing the electorate

One of the important businesses in Parliament is the annual budget presentation. This year too, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the 2023 Budget today.

Why is a Budget important? It gives a bird's eye view of the government's fiscal policy and how it will distribute resources. The 2023 Budget will have revised revenue estimates for the current fiscal and tax collection forecasts for the following year.

The forthcoming Budget is more important as it will be the last full Budget before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expecting to perform a hat-trick in 2024, and the Budget is bound to have some surprises.



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The author is a senior journalist)

The question is: will it be a dream Budget like in 1997 presented by P Chidambaram, which proposed lower slabs of personal and corporate taxes? Or, given the 2024 polls, will it be a populist one?

As usual, several expectations and predictions are floating around from financial experts to ordinary citizens.

The 2023 Budget will probably have something for everybody as political parties have mastered wooing the electorate. Voters are increasingly getting accustomed to new innovative populist schemes that support welfare spending. The common man is interested in what tax breaks he gets in the Budget.

However, some economists, as a contrarian view,

say the Budget will focus on supporting development and balancing fiscal pressures.

The Finance Minister gave some clues while in the US for the annual IMF-World Bank meeting some time ago and said, "Growth priorities will be kept absolutely on the top for the upcoming Budget." The Minister also said that the Indian economy should not lose momentum. In a recent address to Ficci, she declared that the Budget would follow the spirit of previous budgets to prepare India for the next 25 years.

Since attaining freedom in 1947, the Budget presentation has undergone many changes from its colonial past. For instance, earlier the Budget used to be presented in the evening to coincide

with the London timings. A presentation in the evening gave producers and the tax collecting agencies the night to work out the price change.

During Vajpayee's regime, Parliament shifted it from 5 pm to 11 am in 1999. In 2017, the Railway Budget was merged with the annual Budget. Sitharaman had broken from the tradition of entering Lok Sabha with a black briefcase holding Budget papers. Instead, she carries a tablet wrapped in a traditional pouch in line with the digital concept.

Fortunately, the Modi Government is better positioned to take risks, with considerable tax collections in 2022 despite Covid. The direct tax collection stood at Rs 14.71 lakh crore as of January

10, 2023. There have also been some cutbacks after the Government discontinued the scheme of free food programmes for 800 million people during the pandemic. The sale of Air India was also timely, though privatization might shrink closer to the polls.

Voters expect new welfare schemes. A recent Bloomsburg survey predicts that the Finance Minister could increase expenditure by about 12.5 per cent year-on-year to Rs 44.40 trillion (\$544 billion) beginning April. More importantly, Budget 2023 will focus on capital expenditure as a growth driver. Custom duties on non-essential goods and luxury items might be increased to prevent import dependency and promote the domestic industry.

The Government will focus on providing more impetus to the manufacturing sector, concentrating on capital goods, defence, railways, and public sector banks. The rural sector is also essential.

Price rise is the vital issue people face after the pandemic. There is an urgent need to tackle this. The next critical issue is job creation. Many vulnerable workers lost their jobs during the pandemic and are still on the streets without any permanent livelihood. Go to any market, and you will find that most shops are shut or have moved to a cheaper place. In the absence of social welfare schemes, migrant workers suffer a great deal. The government should address the job crisis. The private sector should also be

encouraged to create more jobs. The rising cost of living and falling income has dented the growth of the aspirational middle classes. Senior citizens also demand medical benefits and no tax on their pensions. The government must reduce some direct and indirect taxes so that more money is available to the people. The pandemic showed the need for enhanced outlays towards the health sector to tackle the emerging new Covid variants and better preparedness. More funds are also required for education, rural development, and social sector schemes like NREGA.

One can go on with all sorts of predictions. Overall, the FM may opt for a prudent 2023 Budget, which could be soft and pragmatic.

MONEY MATTERS

Rupee falls 41 paise to close at 81.93 against US dollar

The rupee depreciated by 41 paise to close at 81.93 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday after the Economic Survey 2022-23 said the domestic unit may remain under pressure on account of plateauing of exports and subsequent widening of current account deficit. Forex traders said significant foreign fund outflows and a muted trend in domestic equities also dented investor sentiment. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened weak at 81.61 against the dollar, and lost further ground to fall below the 82 per US dollar level. The rupee finally ended at 81.93, registering a decline of 41 paise over its last close. During the session, the local unit witnessed an intra-day high of 81.58 and a low of 82.07 against the US dollar. In the previous session on Monday, the rupee settled at 81.52 against the American currency. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.15 per cent to 102.43.



IOC returns to black, posts Rs 448 crore profit

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's largest oil firm, on Tuesday reported returning to profitability in the December quarter after losses in the preceding six months from holding fuel prices despite a rise in cost. Standalone net profit of Rs 448.01 crore in October-December 2022 compared with Rs 5,860.80 crore net earning in the same period of previous fiscal, and a loss of Rs 272.35 crore in the preceding July-September 2022 period, according to a company's stock exchange filing. IOC and other state-owned fuel retailers did not revise the price of petrol, diesel and cooking gas LPG starting April despite a rise in cost. This led to back-to-back quarterly losses. In case of IOC, the loss totalled Rs 2,265 crore in the April-September period. They continue to hold prices but the cost has come down as crude oil prices declined globally. This has helped them recoup some of the past losses and make decent profit.



RBI appoints V Ramachandra as member of Advisory Committee

The Reserve Bank on Tuesday appointed V Ramachandra, former chief general manager of Canara Bank, as a member of the Advisory Committee of Srei Infrastructure Finance Limited (SIFL) and Srei Equipment Finance Limited (SEFL). After superseding the boards of SIFL and SEFL in October 2021, the RBI had appointed a three-member advisory committee to assist the administrator of the two crisis-ridden firms. "Consequent upon the resignation of Shri Farokh N Subedar from the Advisory Committee with effect from January 31, 2023, it has been decided to appoint Shri V Ramachandra as a member of the Advisory Committee with immediate effect," the central bank said in a statement. The Advisory Committee shall advise the Administrator in the operations of SIFL and SEFL during the corporate insolvency resolution process, it added.



Economy poised to do better, inflation to be tamed: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian economy is poised to do better and is expected to grow 6.5-7 per cent in the remainder of the decade, Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran said on Tuesday. Addressing reporters here after the tabling of the Economic Survey in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Nageswaran said that by and large, inflation is likely to be "well behaved" in FY2023-24 barring headwinds.



The Economic Survey, which has been prepared by the CEA, stated that RBI's projection of retail inflation at 6.8 per cent in the current

fiscal is neither too high to deter private consumption, nor so low as to weaken inducement to invest. India's economy is projected to slow to 6.5 per cent in the fiscal year starting April but will remain the

fastest-growing major economy in the world as it fared better in dealing with the extraordinary set of challenges the globe has faced, the Economic Survey 2022-23 said.

Nageswaran said as long as oil prices remain below USD 100 per barrel, the projected growth rate would remain undisturbed.

Nageswaran pointed out that the quality of public expenditure has gone up and the government has become more transparent with budget deficit numbers.

There is increased transparency in public procurement, he added. The CEA also said credit growth is picking up across sectors, and credit to MSMEs has grown at 30 per cent since January 2022, while NPAs in NBFCs is lower than what it was 15 months ago.

He observed that India is well ahead of its targets for renewable energy mix.

'Govt procurement portal GeM catching up with Amazon, Flipkart'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Healthy growth in the procurement of goods and services by central and state governments through GeM portal is helping the platform to catch up with global e-commerce giants like Amazon and Flipkart, the Economic Survey said on Tuesday. The Government e-Market (GeM) portal was launched on August 9, 2016 by the commerce ministry for online purchases of goods and services by all the central government ministries and departments and other agencies including public sector units. Procurement of goods and services from the portal has crossed Rs 1 lakh crore till November 29 this fiscal on account of an increase in buying activities.

'Uproot licensing, inspection and compliance regime'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Economic Survey 2022-23 on Tuesday recommended "entirely" dismantling the licensing, inspection and compliance regime, and a host of other reforms to accelerate economic growth to sustained higher levels.

The Survey tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the reforms undertaken before 2014 primarily catered to product and capital market space. "They were necessary and continued post-2014 as well," it said. The government, however, imparted a new dimension to these reforms in the last eight years.

"With an underlying emphasis on enhancing the ease of living and doing business and improving economic efficiency, the reforms are well placed to lift



the economy's potential growth," it said while listing out reforms undertaken by the Modi government since 2014. The Survey has been authored by a team lead by Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran.

It said that while the new age reforms undertaken over the last eight years form the foundation of a resilient, partnership-based governance ecosystem and

restore the ability of the economy to grow healthily, further reforms are needed to ensure that economic growth can both accelerate and be sustained at higher levels, to deliver a better quality of life. "The deregulation and simplification of compliances should continue to dismantle the licensing, inspection and compliance regime entirely," it said.

Country needs carefully crafted multi-dimensional mineral policy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country needs a carefully crafted multi-dimensional mineral policy to address the issues posed by uneven distribution of rare earth elements, the Economic Survey on Tuesday said.



Survey 2022-23 said. The country has resources of nickel, cobalt, molybdenum and heavy REEs, but further exploration would be required to evaluate the quantities of their reserves.

There is a need to create strategic mineral reserves along the lines of strategic petroleum reserves to ensure a continuous supply of minerals, it said.

Also, policies should consider investing in internal research, including technological innovation for mineral exploration and processing and the development of recycling, reusing, and repurposing technologies.

minerals is highly concentrated and unevenly distributed. The skewed distribution of the resource poses a supply risk in the face of its enhanced demand.

"A carefully crafted multi-dimensional mineral policy would reduce our dependence and address the problems for the future," the Economic

'Capital expenditure target of Rs 7.5l cr for FY23 to be met'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital expenditure has started pushing private investment and the Budget target of Rs 7.5 lakh crore for the current financial year is likely to be met, the Economic Survey 2022-23 said.

The capital expenditure (capex) of the central government which increased by 63.4 per cent year-on-year in the first eight months of FY23 was another growth driver of the Indian economy, crowding in the private capex since the January-March quarter of 2022, it said.

"On the current trend, it appears that the full year's capex (announced in the Budget) will be met," it said.

Disinvestment proceeds of Rs 4.07 lakh cr realised in last 9 yrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

About Rs 4.07 lakh crore has been realised as disinvestment proceeds in the past nine years, and post-2014 the government is engaging with the private sector as a co-partner in the development, the Economic Survey said on Tuesday.

In the current fiscal, out of the budgeted amount of Rs 65,000 crore, 48 per cent or over Rs 31,000 crore has been collected as of January 18, 2023.

The survey said privatisation



of Air India re-ignited the privatisation drive, and evidence shows that labour productivity and the overall efficiency of

the PSUs disinvested during 1990-2015 has improved. "During FY15 to FY23 (as of 18 January 2023), an amount of

about Rs 4.07 lakh crore has been realised as proceeds from disinvestment through 154 transactions using various modes/instruments," said the Survey tabled in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Of this, Rs 3.02 lakh crore was realised from minority stake sale and Rs 69,412 crore was realised from strategic disinvestment transactions in 10 CPSEs - HPCL, REC, DCIL, HSCC, NPCC, NEEPCO, THDC, Kamraj Port, Air India and NINL).



I-T dept conducts survey action against Cipla

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department has carried out a survey action against drug major Cipla, sources said on Tuesday.

The department is conducting the surprise action to check the balance sheets and other business documents of the Mumbai-headquartered company as part of an alleged tax evasion investigation, they said. A reaction from the company is awaited.

As part of a survey, the Income Tax Department only covers the business premises of a company and does not raid the residences and other locations of its promoters or directors.

The company had last week reported, in a regulatory filing, a seven per cent increase in its consolidated net profit at Rs 808 crore in the third quarter ending December 2022, aided by robust sales in the US market.

Cipla is one of the leading pharmaceutical firms in the country. It has more than 1,500 products in 65 therapeutic categories available in over 50 dosage forms.

For the third quarter ended December 31, 2022, the company reported total revenue from operations at Rs 5,810 crore compared to Rs 5,479 crore in the year-ago period.

Voda Idea board again okays issue of Rs 1,600 crore bond to ATC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Crisis-ridden telco Vodafone Idea on Tuesday said its board has approved an issue of optionally convertible debentures of up to Rs 1,600 crore to vendor American Tower Corporation.

After a meeting of the board of directors, the company in a regulatory filing said that it will convene an extraordinary general meeting on February 25 to seek shareholders' nod for the same. "The Board of Directors of Vodafone Idea Limited...has again approved Preferential Issuance of up to 16000 Indian Rupee denominated optionally convertible, unsecured, unrated and unlisted debentures...aggregating up to Rs 1,600 crores, convertible into equity shares at a conversion price of Rs 10 per equity share, to ATC," the filing said.

The fresh approval was necessitated as the nod granted by the shareholders had lapsed. "The funds so raised shall be used to pay amounts owed by the Company to ATC under the master lease agreements and, to the extent of the remainder, for general corporate purposes of the Company," the filing said.

The shareholders' nod granted on November 21 to issue OCD within 15 days of approval of the proposal had lapsed in the absence of any response from the government on the conversion of interest dues into equity.



The VIL shareholders approved issuing OCDs worth Rs 1,600 crore to ATC Telecom Infrastructure on a preferential basis to settle dues of the infrastructure vendor by converting the due amount into equity, if the amount remained unpaid in 18 months.

The OCD issue for ATC was subject to certain conditions, including the approval of the government. VIL was of the view that by the time of issuing OCDs, the government would have converted the interest from deferral of adjusted gross revenue and spectrum dues owed by the company into equity.

The government has given telecom operators an option of paying the interest in deferred spectrum instalments and AGR dues by way of conversion into equity of the NPV (Net present value) of such interest amount.

Markets settle marginally higher ahead of Budget

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks ended with marginal gains on Tuesday as investors adopted a cautious approach ahead of the Union Budget presentation and the US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision.

Fag-end buying helped the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex settle with a gain of 49.49 points or 0.08 per cent at 59,549.90. During the day, the benchmark hit a high of 59,787.63 and a low of 59,104.59. The broader NSE Nifty inched up 13.20 points or 0.07 per cent to close at 17,662.15.

From the Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Power Grid, State Bank of India, ITC, Titan, Tata Motors and ICICI Bank were among the major winners.

Sugar production to fall 5% to 340 lakh tonnes in 2022-23

More diversion of cane juice to ethanol making

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's sugar production is estimated to fall 5 per cent during 2022-23 marketing year ending September to 340 lakh tonnes as more quantity of sugarcane juice is being diverted for production of ethanol, according to industry body ISMA.

Sugar production stood at 358 lakh tonnes in the 2021-22 marketing year (October-September).

In a statement, Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said sugar production in 2022-23 is estimated at around 340 lakh tonnes after diversion of 45 lakh tonnes of sweetener towards ethanol manufacturing. Sugarcane juice/syrup and



B-molasses are being diverted to ethanol making.

In the previous 2021-22 marketing year, 32 lakhs tonnes of sweetener were diverted towards manufacturing of ethanol for blending with petrol.

Based on the images of harvested and balance area, field visits, current trend of yields and sugar recoveries, ISMA has released its second advance estimates of sugar production

for 2022-23. The actual sugar production in Maharashtra is estimated to decline to 121 lakh tonnes in 2022-23 from 137 lakh tonnes in the previous year. Uttar Pradesh will see a marginal decline to 101 lakh tonnes from 102 lakh tonnes, while Karnataka may witness a decline to 56 lakh tonnes from 60 lakh tonnes.

The government has allowed sugar exports of 61 lakh tonnes for the current 2022-23 marketing year. The country had exported a record over 110 lakh tonnes of sugar in the previous year. The blending of ethanol with petrol stood at 10 per cent in the previous year and it is expected to increase to 12 per cent in 2022-23.

Indian cos raise Rs 5.06L cr via equity, debt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian companies mobilised Rs 5.06 lakh crore through the equity and debt routes during April-November 2022, a drop of 8.5 per cent from the year-ago period, the Economic Survey 2022-23 said on Tuesday.

Fund mobilisation through debt contributed a lion's share to the overall fund-raising during the period under review.

Out of the cumulative Rs 5.06 lakh crore garnered in FY23 (till November 2022), funds totalling Rs 3.92 lakh crore were mopped up from the debt market and Rs 1.14



crore came in through the equity route, as per the data compiled in the survey.

In comparison, firms had

raised Rs 5.53 lakh crore, including Rs 3.71 lakh crore through debt and Rs 1.81 lakh crore through equity, which

comprised Rs 89,166 crore from initial public offerings (IPOs), during April-November 2021.

According to the survey, overall, India's capital market had a good year in FY23 though global macroeconomic and financial market developments exercised some influence. "Global macroeconomic uncertainty, unprecedented inflation, monetary policy tightening, volatile markets, etc., resulted in hurting investor sentiments, leading to a downbeat performance of global capital markets in FY23," it

added. Within the equity segment, funds mostly came from preferential issue of equity shares (Rs 54,414 crore), which is one of the fastest mechanisms for companies to raise in funds, during the period under review. This was way higher than the Rs 43,000 crore garnered through the route in April-November 2021.

This was followed by the IPO route, which helped 104 companies to raise Rs 48,095 crore during the period under review as compared to 76 firms that collected Rs 89,166 crore in the year-ago period.

Sebi penalises 15 entities for manipulating stock prices of BFL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday levied fines totalling Rs 89 lakh on 15 entities for manipulating the share prices of BFL Asset Finvest Ltd (BAFL).

The entities have to pay the said penalty jointly and severally.

The regulator slapped a fine of Rs 54 lakh on Babulal Hansraj Lakhani, Ramanlal Ravchand Shah, Vinod Solanki, Bhagavati Ben Vishnubhai Patel, Dhirajbhai Baladevi Thakor, Bharti

Sharma, Pinesh Nareshkumar Shah, Jasmin Indu Shah and Mahendrabhai Naranbhai Patel.

It also imposed a penalty of Rs 30 lakh on Nishant Jain, Pradeep Kumar Jain, Dharmendra Kumar Jain, Dharmendra Jain HUF, Jaipur Infracord and Rs 5 lakh on Rajiv Maheshwari.

The order came after Sebi conducted an investigation into the trading activity in the scrip of BAFL during the period from February 2016 to June 2017.

Michael Jackson's nephew Jaafar Jackson to play King Of Pop in biopic

Late King of Pop Michael Jackson will be played by the late icon's 26-year old nephew Jaafar Jackson in the Antoine Fuqua-directed film biopic.

Fuqua just posted a confirmation on Instagram. The singer and songwriter is the son of Jermaine Jackson, who is the brother of Michael and member of The Jackson 5. Jaafar has been singing and dancing since age 12, and has showcased himself singing tunes from Sam Cooke to Marvin Gaye, along with originals, reports Deadline.

The *Emancipation* helmer signed on to next direct *Michael*, which has a script by John Logan. The film's being produced by Graham King, who turned the Freddie Mercury Queen story into the blockbuster *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

According to 'Deadline', the film will not shy away from the controversies of Jackson's life, the pedophile accusations that haunted his latest years up to his death in 2009 at age 50, from cardiac arrest caused by a cocktail of sedatives.



tail of sedatives.

The MJ estate's presence gives rights to Jackson's musical catalog, but has led some to question how protective they will be, but clearly things will have to be explored for the film to have dramatic edge and enough truthfulness to stand up to scrutiny while not

turning off fans of Jackson's songs and musical legacy.

King and Oscar-nominated *Gladiator* screenwriter Logan previously threaded the needle perfectly with director Martin Scorsese on *The Aviator*, with Leonardo Di Caprio playing Howard Hughes as he tried to pursue his innovations before mental illness turned him into a germophobic recluse.

King and screenwriter Anthony McCarten captured the complexities of Freddie Mercury's life before he died from AIDS.

Michael will also be driven by Jackson's musical accomplishments, which gives the film global potential similar to 'Bohemian Rhapsody', which grossed over \$900 million worldwide, boosted the song catalog of Queen, got a Best Picture Oscar nomination and a win for star Rami Malek.

Fuqua is currently finishing *The Equalizer 3* with Denzel Washington in Italy.

Wednesday Star Emma Myers On Possible Romance Between Her, Jenna Ortega's Character

Actress Emma Myers has discussed the direction she thinks *Wednesday* season 2 should take.

In a new interview, the actress portraying Enid Sinclair shared her thoughts on possible romance between Enid and Wednesday Addams, played by Jenna Ortega, reports aceshowbiz.com.

The 20-year-old actress was asked by Variety whether or not she's seen posts about *Wenclair*, *Wednesday* and Enid's ship name, on the Internet.

"I'm not on Twitter, and I'm not really on social media very much, but my sisters find it amusing to send me stuff. Fan art, tweets talking about it," she responded.

"My Instagram comments are flooded with it, and so are my DMs. So yeah, I have seen it."

As for a potential romance between *Wednesday* and Enid, whose dynamic charmed viewers, Emma said: "Anything is possible."

She continued: "We haven't really spoken about direction at all, so I don't really know what the game plan is for anything," referring to the possible direction the show writers



could take.

"As far as love interests go for *Wednesday*, I feel like at least for a second season, she needs to take her season of singleness. She just had a whole fiasco with her men, she's got to lay it off for a little bit," Emma elaborated more.

"I would be deterred from dating anybody if I had gone through that."

Emma first learned that *Wednesday* had been renewed for a second season when she was in a van with colleagues from an upcoming Netflix film she's starring in.

"They emailed me, and I was like, 'Oh, cool,'" she recalled, "I wasn't allowed to tell anybody yet, so I couldn't have said anything to anybody who was in the van with me. But I mean, I felt it coming. I feel like all of us felt it coming."

Previously, Emma's co-star Jenna said that she thinks her character in *Wednesday* is a gay icon.

Fans have also speculated that *Wednesday* may actually be queer or asexual herself. On top of that, Ortega said she doubts *Wednesday* will date Xavier (Percy White Hynes) in season 2.



Angad Bedi takes sprinting lessons from renowned hurdle sprinter Brinston Miranda

Bollywood actor Angad Bedi, who has a background in sports, has found a new interest in sprinting and is preparing for a 400 metre sprint race for a tournament in Mumbai in February. For this, Angad is being coached by Brinston Miranda, who is the world number 5 hurdle sprinter in the world.

Brinston, who has multiple gold medals in sprinting to his credit, has prepared a customised routine for the actor.

Talking about his preparations, the actor said: "As I was an athlete for earlier part of my life, I have always looked at different types of training styles, it keeps me updated. Sports being an important part of my upbringing, sometimes add sports to my fitness routines to keep it interesting. This preparation is particularly for the tournament that is happening in February, but I feel sprinting is a whole rounded workout in itself."

Brinston said: "Taking him on track to try some speed endurance workouts just did the trick. He started loving the workouts as an athlete. His workouts consist of lifting weights fast, endurance workouts on track like reps, jumps and drills, flexibility and mobility all well planned and distributed rightly in his weekly training."

He further mentioned: "The journey has just begun and I can see he is gonna do well. His interest and liking in athletics will make him a winner soon. He is very passionate and disciplined and gives his 100 per cent in every single workout whatever be it and whenever we can make it. That's a true committed sportsman."

On the work front, Angad will soon be seen in R. Balki's *Ghoomer*, which also stars Abhishek Bachchan and Saiyami Kher. He is also working for the anthology *Lust Stories 2*.

Varun, Janhvi's *Bawaal* pushed owing to VFX and technical requirements



The release of the upcoming Varun Dhawan and Janhvi Kapoor-starrer film *Bawaal* has been pushed to a later date. The reason behind it is said to be the VFX and other technical requirements of the film.

The new release date of the film however, is something that the makers are still mulling over and will only divulge details once they get through the technical part. The film has been directed by Nitesh Tiwari, who is known for films such as *Dangal*, *Chillar Party* and the Sushant Singh Rajput-starrer *Chhichhore*.

Commenting on the pushing of release date, Nitesh Tiwari said: "The visual sequences we want to achieve on these sequences will need more time than we expected. We don't want to cut short at anything because our purpose is to bring nothing but the best version of our vision to our viewers." The film's new release date hasn't been revealed yet but the makers are soon expected to make an announcement. The film, produced by Nadiawala Grandson Entertainment, has been shot using a special technology in Poland and is ambitious in its on-screen presentation.

The Cast of *Class* spills hidden talents of each other

Netflix's upcoming young adult drama series is an exciting and intriguing adaptation of Netflix's popular global series, *Elite*. Produced by Bodhitree Multimedia Limited in association with Future East and directed by Ashim Ahluwalia, the show follows the tumultuous events that unfurl when two worlds collide, shaking up families, relationships and the lives of Hampton International's students.

In a fun conversation with the cast, they revealed that if they weren't actors and students in class, what their co-actors alternate job would be. Chayan, who plays the character of Dhruv in the show, said that his co-actor Yashika would be a photographer. "Yashika has an eye for detail and composition, I can totally see her capturing beautiful moments behind the lens."

Gurfateh, who plays the role of Neeraj, said that his co-actor Chayan would be Ranbir Kapoor from *Tamasha*. "Chayan is a natural performer, and he can easily pull off any role. He has that emotional radar, just like Ranbir Kapoor."

Anjali, who plays the role of Suhani, said



that her co-actor Piyush would be a public speaker, "Piyush is a great listener and he has a way with words. He can easily hold an audience's attention, I can see him being a great public speaker."

The cast also revealed that they have a close-knit relationship with each other. They are constantly in touch, sending each other memes and pictures, and have a group on WhatsApp. "We're a close-knit bunch," said Anjali. "Even if we're not working, we're constantly in touch with each other."

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



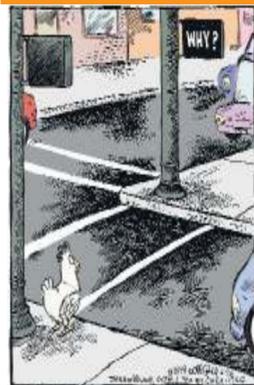
GARFIELD



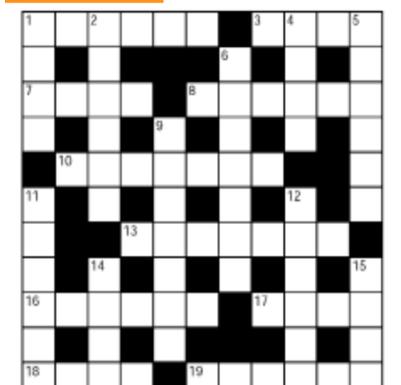
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



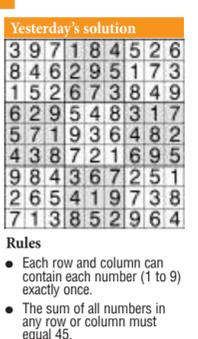
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Rules
• 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.

ACROSS

- Bleeding injuries
- Counts up
- This heavy metal is used for making fishing sinkers
- Took part in a game
- Write this on an envelope
- A two-wheeled ride-on you push along with a foot
- Of greater height
- Young female
- Gritty stuff on beaches
- A small river
- Australia's largest city
- A flower on a fruit tree
- A game with bats and wickets
- A prickly desert plant
- Make up your mind
- A map of a building
- This fruit has a stone

DOWN

- Go on foot
- Ugandians live here
- Parts of a week



'When you are going through your lows, you'll understand showbiz internally'

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, actor Parambrata Chatterjee, who will next be seen in Sudhir Mishra's series *Jehanabad-Of Love & War*, shared some insights about the upcoming series.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

There are some actors dabbling in sci-fi, others dipping their toe into fantasy, and some may even make an appearance in a horror film, but what are they doing? They all are returning to the safety of the genres in which they feel more comfortable. On the contrary, popular Bengali actor Parambrata Chatterjee is chasing award-winning films.

Enjoying and celebrating his character with critically acclaimed director Sudhir Mishra's series *Jehanabad-Of Love & War* — you'll see this fun little actor in a very nuanced avatar. An actor who has also committed to films such as *Kahaani* and others are having a good time right now and talks to us about it. "I am not always so hyperconscious about the roles that come my way — I hate overthinking. The production company, as in the big banners, does not matter to me, the concept does."

An actor who is always on the go for working life and whose parents were themselves, film critics, also informed us, "Everyone would love to leave a lineage behind, for posterity, and would be happy to do so if the stars are aligned. Talking about the series, there is not just Islamic radicalism that's going on around the world — there are other immoderations too. Islam is being abandoned in many corners of the world; it's depressing. Some are even operating cowardly in propagating this exorbitance."

The character actor who is frequently targeted by fundamental-



ists for his secularist views is known for his bravery in embarking on a contentious series like this in which he plays a dark character. He continued, "I protest

against this intemperance. We live in a civilised society, and such groups should be shunned if they only want to spread ignorance. My state isn't devoid of caste politics,

probably it's lacking "caste sensibility." And it's more inclined toward remote areas. When you are in West Bengal, "caste" will never get in the way of your daily interaction."

His roles have always steadfastly stuck with the audiences, and he sees through the heavyweight roles so well. Because of his outspoken nature, Parambrata was probably the right choice for the series that will dive headfirst into the Naxal world. He's got this! He continued, "Not everyone is your friend in this industry, when you really are going through your lows: you'll understand showbiz internally. A gentleman complimented me once: 'you do not try very hard to get noticed' and that stuck with me."

He never settled into the bland rut of the A-list movie stars, and if the trailer is anything to go by, it is going to be intense and real. "I was filming continuously in a prison house, which used to be a functioning jail very recently. It was tough: not a bright, vibrant place to shoot. They house people with anger, sorrow, and grief. That was pretty intense on its own. And, as a civilian, I have been hearing folklore since the Naxalite movement was at its peak in our area. Many of my family members sympathised with their "cause", not the means, obviously. More so as a Bengali, who has also grown up with more leftist ideologies. But when I start acting, I do not subscribe to that specific ideology because I am versatile. A goon/murderer cannot be a leftist. So, while playing a Naxalite commander — yes, I sympathised with their cause. They could have adopted the means though."

Blend of art & history

TEJAL SINHA

With a strong belief in the 'Make in India' initiative, Jaipur Watch Company is India's first bespoke watch company. Gaurav Mehta, the founder of Jaipur Watch Company, hails from Jaipur and has always had a hobby of collecting ancient coins. He later founded a company that had an ancient history attached to it.

The brand is recognised for its limited edition watches that showcase India's history and rich heritage. Gaurav's tryst with watches began at a young age. While experimenting with designs, he once embedded a British India 1-pice hole coin as a dial in one of his favourite watches of the time. To his surprise, it became an eye-catcher, after which requests started pouring in from friends and family to buy the watch.

The brand watches are donned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi; actors Amitabh Bachchan, Vidya Balan, Rajkumar Rao, Rana Daggubati, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, and cricketers Rahul Dravid, Yuvraj Singh, and KL Rahul, among others.

"It will make anyone proud. Our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji is the ambassador for Make in India, and when he says this is a good quality product from India, what better feeling can one get? Mr. Bachchan is an avid watch collector, and he loves watches, his look said it all when he held my watch," shared an enthused entrepreneur.

Recently, Gaurav debuted his legacy brand on *Shark Tank India season 2*. Although the brand couldn't bag a deal from the investors on *Shark Tank season 2*, it certainly did turn a lot of heads and made a great impression amongst the sharks. It's Pret and Bespoke collection received rave reviews from critics as one of the most innovative Indian watch brands, beautifully capturing Indian heritage through their watches.

Sharing his experience of being on the show, he said, "*Shark Tank India* has been a game changer for us. We have gained many eyeballs and huge traction on our website and in our offline stores. We have taken valuable lessons back from the tank; we have already opened one store in Delhi and one in Jaipur. We are com-



Gaurav Mehta, the founder of Jaipur Watch Company, debuted his legacy brand on *Shark Tank India season 2*. In a conversation with *The Pioneer*, he takes us through his experience with and learnings from the series.

ing up with another store in Gurgaon and Bangalore. We are working on building our offline presence. We are also consolidating our collections with more focus on the line for scalability."

Ending the conversation on a lighter note, Gaurav shares his piece of advice with those who have ambitious ideas but struggle to put them across. "It's always a challenge to be able to implement your idea into reality as there are risks involved, but the best way to go for it is to first have at least 5-6 months of your current income in savings so that the lives of your loved ones don't get affected by you venturing into something new if it's a switch from a job. And once you roll into the business, patience is the key, there are no shortcuts."

Doodlers creating art from their heart

Instagram scrolling can become tedious and repetitive. When we are surrounded by chaos, all we have is a piece of inspiration in front of us; art takes our hands and leads us there. The creation of such artists is uplifting, aesthetically appealing, and energising visually by reducing an image to its bare essentials while simultaneously making fun of and criticising the reality of the world that we live in. These illustrators explore a variety of sociopolitical subjects in their sketches, including feminism, patriarchal conventions, and sexual empowerment, while simultaneously entertaining and enlightening viewers.

We have curated a list of five illustrators who express themselves through bold colors, firm strokes, and quirky designs. This is what catches the eye in the world we live in.

Ayush Kalra: He has developed the ability to dig deeper into the complexities of digital art, ranging from desi art to contemporary aesthetics. Ayush highlights long-held gender stereotypes in an attempt to challenge them through his creative illustrations. His artistic ability is evident in the fascinating movements he employs to highlight the various characteristics of animated characters. He is a young Delhi illustrator who has already achieved a significant career milestone by being accepted into the prestigious HT 30 Under 30.

Jaideep: A COVID-born doodle artist, Jaideep (21) is just a graduate with a degree in business. However, COVID sparked his interest in illustrating, and now he is making the internet laugh with relatable video-based content. His artwork features pop artists like The Weeknd and issues that everyone has encountered at least once in their life. Jaideep is trying to cover each aspect of comedy with a hint of dark humour. The young artist has been recognised by big league doodle artists, which has further pushed him in this field.

Neha Doodles: Neha Sharma, aka Neha Doodles, is a color-obsessed freelance illustrator, cartoonist, and lifestyle content creator. During her graduation, she realised that CA

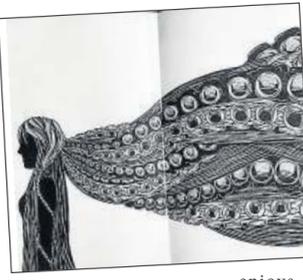
was not her passion, but drawing was. While she has grown to become one of the most known and admired illustrators on Instagram,

it took her great courage to take that leap of faith and choose the world of doodling. Also, she creates quirky doodles and traditional Indian comics with a dash of sarcasm. Neha's work has been published on platforms like the Huffington Post, The Tribune, Times of India, The Delhi Times, Tinkle Digest, Cosmopolitan, etc. She makes art and comics for the internet with the intention of showcasing how art can be used as therapy.

Stephy Ann Tomy: She has big curly hair, loves Christmas and Onam, is obsessed with stationery, and sings at random times of the day. Stephy is a self-avowed papad m hogger who strangely enjoys beans. Meet Stephy, the eponymous comic character created by Stephy Ann Tomy, a 24-year-old UK-based illustrator. Her comic strips are single-frame depictions of her daily adventures with friends. Stephy's comics are aimed at young millennials and Gen Zers who are navigating adulthood, careers, love, relationships, and identity. They offer a funny, relatable, light-hearted, and often quirky worldview.

Shivangi Sah: She is a popular YouTuber who works as a user experience designer. Shivangi is well-known for her incredible artistic endeavours and novel ideas. She has 2.44 million subscribers on her YouTube channel. She has been able to establish her own digital brand while exploring the realm of art.

She believes that design is more than just solving problems or improving the user experience; it is also something with which people can connect emotionally.



IS LEPROSY MAKING ITS WAY BACK TO INDIA?

Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic infectious disease caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae*. It affects the skin, nerves, and mucous membranes, causing discoloration, numbness, and disfigurement. Although leprosy is curable with a multi-drug therapy (MDT) regimen, the disease remains a public health concern in many parts of the world, particularly in India.

Leprosy remains a significant public health concern in India. The resurgence of the disease in recent years highlights the need for continued efforts to control its spread. This includes increasing awareness about the disease, reducing social stigma, and improving the health services provided to leprosy patients. By working together, we can effectively control the spread of leprosy in India and improve the lives of those affected by this debilitating disease.

India has the highest global burden of leprosy, with over 130,000 new cases reported in 2020 alone. Even though the country has been implementing a comprehensive leprosy control programme since the 1980s, which has successfully reduced the overall prevalence of the disease. However, the steady increase in the number of new cases in recent years has raised concerns about the effectiveness of the current control measures.

Dr. Saranya Narayan, Technical Director and Chief Microbiologist, Neuberger Diagnostics, shares, "One of the main reasons for the resurgence of leprosy in India is the lack of awareness about the disease among the general population. Many people do not recognise leprosy's early signs and symptoms, leading to delayed diagnosis and treatment. This, in turn,



Even though the country has been implementing a comprehensive leprosy control programme, which has successfully reduced the overall prevalence of the disease. However, the steady increase in the number of new cases in recent years has raised concerns about the effectiveness of the current control measures.

increases the risk of transmission to others and leads to more severe and disabling forms of the disease. Another factor contributing to the resurgence of leprosy in India is the social stigma

associated with the disease. People affected by leprosy often face discrimination and exclusion from their communities, which makes it difficult for them to access health services and sup-

port. This further exacerbates the problem, as people who are afraid of being shunned may be hesitant to seek treatment."

The government of India has been working to address these issues by increasing awareness about leprosy and promoting early diagnosis and treatment. The National Leprosy Eradication Program (NLEP) has provided free MDT to all leprosy patients and provides disability and rehabilitation services to those affected by the disease. Furthermore, the government is also working to reduce the social stigma associated with leprosy by educating the public about the condition and its transmission.

The NLEP was discontinued because it was thought Leprosy was under control, i.e. <1 per 100,000 people, and after this, thanks to Covid, healthcare workers in the Leprosy area were deployed to help with the pandemic. These two are contributing factors that have led to India continuing to be the largest contributor to cases worldwide.

However, there's still a lot more that needs to be done to control the spread of leprosy in India effectively. One important strategy is to improve the quality of health services provided to leprosy patients. This includes training health workers to recognise the disease's early signs and symptoms and providing them with the necessary tools and resources to diagnose and treat it.

Another important strategy is to strengthen the surveillance and monitoring of leprosy cases. This will help identify areas where leprosy is more prevalent and target control measures in those areas. It will also help track the disease's progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the control measures.



There's still enough pull to play for NZ: Ferguson

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

New Zealand pacer Lockie Ferguson empathised with his fellow players giving up central contracts for lucrative T20 league deals but said there is still enough "pull" to represent the country in big-ticket events, such as the World Cup.

Three New Zealand players -- Trent Boult, Martin Guptill and Jimmy Neesham -- gave up their central contracts last year to play in different T20 leagues across the world.

Asked if it would affect the future of T20 cricket in New Zealand, Ferguson said: "I don't think I have the answer. And it's certainly above my pay grade but, from our point of view, you can understand players when they're at the sort of back end of their careers."

"But at the same time, I know they will still want to play for New Zealand. So finding the balance, I'm not sure what that might be. Certainly, as I said, people above the chain to me, will work that out. But I think, from a player's point of view, we love playing for the Black Caps."

"Certainly since I've been playing such a rich history of being very successful, and that's enjoyable to play and seeing the young talent come through and do well as well is very rewarding."

"So, I think, from a player's point of view, we want to play for New Zealand in World Cups. That's sort of what kids dream of, and I think there's still a lot of pull for that."

The 31-year-old, who played under Hardik Pandya as part of Gujarat Titans side in IPL last year, heaped praise on the India T20 skipper.

"Hardik, I have a very high regard certainly from day one, playing underneath him in Gujarat (Titans), he is a clear leader within the group and demands the audience very quickly."

"But, at the same time, I guess, similar to Kane (Williamson) he has time for everyone in the group," Ferguson said.

"He's done well with India. You can see his body language has been fantastic with the group and I think, he is an exceptional leader for the country. But certainly, I enjoyed my time playing under him."

New Zealand suffered a 3-0 loss against India in the ODI series and are currently tied 1-1 in the three-match T20 rubber after losing the second game in Lucknow by six wickets.

"Look, the one-day series was challenging, certainly the first ODI we had our chance to win it. And then, outplayed in the second one, and in the third one, we were sort of lined out well too. So although on paper it's 3-0, I thought it was a pretty competitive series," he said.

"And then, in the T20s, it's been pretty even throughout. So always nice to come to a decider, particularly in a lovely stadium like this."

The pitches used for the two T20 games favoured the spinners a lot with India skipper Pandya criticising the Lucknow track, which saw New Zealand post just 99 in 20 overs.

Ferguson, however, said low-scoring games are good for cricket since T20 is mostly dominated by batters.

"I bowled my four (overs) in the first game and I actually enjoyed bowling the cross seamers, sort of sped a little bit, got a bit of an extra pace and carry. To be honest, even Arshdeep bowling to me in the last game, there was a little bit of pace and carry, but clearly spin was the right option."

"We play a lot of T20s here in India, and around the world and we have those high-scoring games. And as a bowler, I think sometimes those sort of lower scores, probably not the 100, but lower score games actually are just as exciting and brings a good battle between bat and ball."

"So I think for the game, it's great. Certainly I'm sure fans prefer the big, high-scoring matches but, as a cricketer player, that can be pretty exciting."

MEN IN BLUE'S TOP ORDER IN FOCUS IN SERIES DECIDER

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India's young top order will be under pressure to deliver in the series-deciding third T20 International against New Zealand here on Wednesday.

It would be fair to say the trio of Shubman Gill, Ishan Kishan and Rahul Tripathi has not made their opportunities count in the absence of Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and K L Rahul.

After the game on Wednesday, India don't play a T20I for a long time, leaving the younger crop to make a statement before the focus shifts to the five-day format.

Kishan has not been able to find rhythm in his batting since his double hundred in Bangladesh while the turning ball has troubled Gill, who has not been able to replicate his ODI form in the shortest format. Tripathi, too, has wasted chances that have come his way in the absence of regular number three Kohli.

If it hadn't been for Suryakumar Yadav and Hardik Pandya, India would have struggled to chase down 100 on Sunday.

The surfaces in the series have attracted a lot of attention and it remains to be seen if the players get to negotiate another turning track at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

In the bowling department, Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav playing together has helped India build the pressure on the opposition. With the pitch offering a huge amount of turn, it was surprising that Chahal was used only for two overs after he dis-



missed opener Finn Allen.

After struggling with no-balls, Arshdeep Singh was back to his frugal best in Lucknow and that should give him a lot of confidence going into the decider.

With the series on the line, Pandya is unlikely to change the playing eleven despite clamour for inclusion of Prithvi Shaw, who made a national comeback with this series.

New Zealand, on the other hand, will be expecting more from their middle order. Sensing an opportunity to win a rare series in India, The Blackcaps will be highly motivated for the challenge.

Glenn Phillips has not been at his destructive best but trust him to play a match-winning knock on Wednesday. ODI series sensation Michael Bracewell too is due for a game-changing knock. Number three Mark Chapman will also be looking to make a significant contribution.

New Zealand used as many as eight bowling options in the previous game with four spinners bowling their full quota of overs.

More than 200 runs were scored in the last T20I played here almost two years ago and, after the low-scoring affair in Lucknow, fans would be hoping that normal service is restored.

TEAMS (FROM)

India: Hardik Pandya (captain), Suryakumar Yadav (vice-captain), Ishan Kishan (wicketkeeper), Shubman Gill, Prithvi Shaw, Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Umran Malik, Shivam Mavi and Mukesh Kumar.
New Zealand: Mitchell Santner (captain), Finn Allen, Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway (wk), Dane Cleaver (wk), Jacob Duffy, Lockie Ferguson, Benjamin Lister, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips (wk), Michael Rippon, Henry Shiple, Ish Sodhi and Blair Tickner.

Lucknow pitch curator sacked for preparing a 'shocker'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The curator of the Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow has been removed from his job after preparing a "shocker of a pitch" for the second T20I against New Zealand.

Though India won the game on Sunday with a ball to spare, skipper Hardik Pandya did not mince his words, calling the Lucknow wicket a "shocker".

New Zealand were restricted to 99 for eight and India had a hard time chasing the small target on a turning track.

"The curator has been removed and replaced by Sanjeev Kumar Agarwal who is a very experienced curator. We will turn things around in a month."

"A lot of domestic cricket was already played on all the centre wickets ahead of the T20I and the curator should have left one or two strips for an international game. The surface was overused and due to the bad weather, there was not enough (time) to prepare a fresh wicket," a UPCA source told PTI.

Agarwal, who has prepared pitches in Bangladesh in the past before being removed in October last year, has been tasked to set things right as far as pitch-making is concerned. He will work closely with veteran BCCI curator Taposh Chatterjee, said the source.

Hardik has not been happy with the surfaces on offer so far in the series.

"To be honest, it was a shocker of a wicket. Both the games we have played on so far. I don't mind difficult wickets. I am all up for that, but these two wickets are not made for T20. Somewhere down the line, the curators or the grounds that we are going to play in should make sure they prepare the pitches earlier," Hardik had said after the six-wicket win in Lucknow.

Deepti climbs to 2nd spot in T20I bowlers rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India all-rounder Deepti Sharma has climbed to second spot and has the top position -- currently occupied by England's Sophie Ecclestone -- in her sights in the latest ICC T20I bowling rankings announced on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old off-spinner, who is leading the wicket-taker's list in the ongoing Women's T20I Tri-series in South Africa with nine scalps, has reduced the England left-arm spinner's lead to just 26 rating points.

Deepti (737 points) moved up one spot, while South African left-arm spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba, who has picked four wickets in the Tri-series, also climbed a spot to occupy the third place with 732 points.

If the duo continue their form, they could take Sophie's top spot ahead of the Women's T20 World Cup, scheduled in South Africa from February 10.

India and South Africa



will square off in the T20I Tri-series final in East London on Thursday.
India left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad also improved her rank four places and is currently 14th on the list of T20I bowlers.
There was a lot of move-

Playing tour games on Indian pitches is irrelevant: Smith

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former Australia skipper Steve Smith says his team is better off training on its own rather than playing tour games on "irrelevant" Indian pitches ahead of the four-Test Border-Gavaskar series.

Australia have decided not to play a single tour game in India during the month-long Test series, primarily due to the hosts serving up green tops for practice matches and spinning tracks for the actual games.

Smith, who won the country's best men's player award for the fourth time in his career on Monday, said nets sessions would benefit his side more than the tour games.

The 18-member squad, led by Pat Cummins, had a pre-series camp on spin-friendly tracks in Sydney and will have a week-long stint in Bengaluru before the first Test in Nagpur from February 9.

"We normally have two tour games over in England. This time we don't have a tour game in India," Smith was quoted as saying by news.Com.Au on



Monday ahead of the team's departure to India.

"The last time we went (to India) I'm pretty sure we got served up a green top (to practice on) and it was sort of irrelevant. Hopefully, we get really good training facilities where the ball is likely to do what it's likely to do out in the middle, and we can get our practice in," said Smith, who beat Travis Head and David Warner to win the Allan Border medal on Monday.

Australia have been criticised for not including tour games, which are an integral part of a long series, in their itiner-

ary. But Smith said rigorous nets sessions will help spinners train better. "We're better off having our own nets and getting spinners in and bowling as much as they can."

Smith, whose side had lost the series 1-2 when it toured India in 2017, indicated a lot of thinking had into the decision.

"We'll wait and see when we hit the ground. I think we've made the right decision to not play a tour match. Like I said, last time they dished up a green top for us (in a tour game) and we barely faced any spin, so it's kind of irrelevant."

Venkatesh takes 5 as K'taka blow away Uttarakhand

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Medium-pacer M Venkatesh sizzled with a five-wicket haul as Karnataka produced a sensational bowling effort to bundle out Uttarakhand for a paltry 116 on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal here on Tuesday.

Karnataka were 123 for no loss at stumps.

The 22-year-old Venkatesh justified captain Mayank Agarwal's decision to field after winning the toss as he rocked the top-order, removing Avneesh Sudha (17) and Dikshanshu Negi (9) early after Vidhwath Kaverappa (2/17) drew the first blood, dismissing opener Jiwanjot Singh (1).

Vijaykumar Vyshak (1/25) then had Swapnil Singh (0) caught by Samarth R, while Kaverappa cleaned up Aditya Tare (14), as Uttarakhand lost half their side for only 64 in 27.4 overs.

Kunal Chandela (31) tried to hold one end but wickets continued to tumble, with Venkatesh returning to strike twice in the 47th over, sending Akhil Rawat (14) and Abhay Negi (1) back to the dressing room.

The Mysore pacer also had Chandela caught by



Manish Pandey to put the final nail in Uttarakhand's coffin as spinner K Gowtham mopped up the tail with two wickets.

In reply, Karnataka seemed to be batting on a different track as both the openers -- Ravikumar Samarth (54) and Mayank Agarwal (65) -- looked in full flow during their unbeaten fifties.

While Samarth cracked seven boundaries, Agarwal had nine hits to the fence

besides a maximum.

ANDHRA ON TOP

Indore: A fluent century by Ricky Bhui and his association with Karan Shinde helped Andhra overcome the blow dealt by skipper Hanuma Vihari's injury on day one of their quarterfinal against defending champions Madhya Pradesh.

Thanks to Bhui's unbeaten 115 and Shinde's 83 not out, Andhra ended the day at a strong 262 for two.

Sent in to bat by MP captain Aditya Shrivastava, the visiting team got off to a brisk start with CR Gnaneshwar (24) and Abhishek Reddy (22) adding 37 runs.

Reddy was the first to fall, trapped LBW by medium-pacer Gaurav Yadav (2/53), the only MP bowler to pick up wickets on the day.

Skipper Vihari joined Gnaneshwar and the two added 21 runs before the latter was dismissed by Yadav.

Vihari and Bhui played cautiously before the pacy Avesh Khan struck the former with a bouncer. Andhra were 72 for two at that stage.

The blow left Vihari in some discomfort and he subsequently decided to retire hurt. Later, scans revealed that the Andhra captain had suffered a wrist fracture.

The batters though recovered after Vihari's injury and frustrated the MP attack. Bhui, a key member of the visiting team's batting unit, played with a lot of determination, and in Shinde's company, kept the scoreboard ticking.

The duo did not mind playing out a few quiet overs in between but picked up runs when the bowlers erred in line and length. Avesh Khan worked up some pace but sprayed the ball around at times.

BHUT STRIKES CENTURY

Rajkot: Batting at number nine, bowler Parth Bhut shone with the bat and saved Saurashtra the blushes with a gritty century on the first day of their quarterfinal against Punjab here.

Bhut was yet to open his account when Saurashtra lost their eighth wicket for 147 at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium. However, thanks to the 25-

year-old left-arm spinner's unbeaten knock of 111 and his last-wicket partnership of 95 runs with Yuvraj Singh Dodiya (17), the hosts could stretch their total to 303 before getting bowled out with three overs still remaining in the day.

In reply, Punjab faced just one over and were three for no loss when the stumps were called on Tuesday.

Prabhsimran Singh (2) and Naman Dhir (1) were at the crease.

In all, Bhut struck 11 boundaries and four sixes while scoring his runs at a fairly decent strike-rate of 71.61.

Earlier, Saurashtra's decision to bat first after winning the toss backfired as the Punjab bowlers left the home team reeling at 147 for eight.

Opener Snell Patel was the only specialist batter to show a semblance of resistance as he laboured his way to a fighting innings of 70 off 131 balls, hitting 11 fours in the process.

Leg-spinner Markande was the most successful bowler for the visitors, returning with figures of 4/84, while there were three and two wickets for pacers Baltej (3/60) and Siddarth Kaul (2/81) respectively.

Bhut added 61 runs for the ninth wicket with Chetan Sakariya (22) before Dodiya joined the former.

Bengal pacers make merry as Jharkhand dismissed for 173

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Pacer Akash Deep led Bengal's impressive show with a four-wicket haul as Jharkhand failed to last three full sessions and folded for a paltry 173 in their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal at Eden Gardens here on Tuesday.

The Bengal pace trio of Akash Deep, Mukesh Kumar (3/61) and Ishan Porel (1/26) claimed seven wickets between them to revel in bowling-friendly conditions after the home team skipper Manoj Tiwary won a good toss.

More than half of Jharkhand's score was made by their No 3 batter Kumar Suraj, who looked composed and elegant en route to a gritty 89 not out.

The left-hander struck some elegant cover drives, scored on both sides of the wickets using his wrists beautifully but only to be stranded 11 runs shy of a third first-class hundred.

Suraj batted deep into his crease to negate the pace threat by the Bengal pacers and carried his bat through



but wickets kept on falling at the other end.

Jharkhand No 11 batter Ashish Kumar (12 off 8 balls) was one of the four Jharkhand batters to get to a double digit as he lent fine support to brighten Suraj's century prospects.

But Ashish fell after a mix-up as Bengal ended their innings in 66.2 overs. The duo put together 20 runs for the last wicket.

Bad light meant that Bengal could not come out to bat in the first innings as day one ended with 21 overs in arrears.

Kavya Thapar: I miss having the global exposure when I entered Tollywood

Kavya Thapar is all set to bring us another path-breaking series *Farzi*, alongside superstar Shahid Kapoor. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, the actress spoke about sharing screen with Shahid Kapoor and more.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Like several other mainstream stars, Tollywood actress Kavya Thapar again decided to make a move with another path-breaking series. She is going to be a part of the upcoming web show *Farzi* which will feature her alongside superstar Shahid Kapoor. This is also going to be Shahid's debut and in a recent interview with us, his co-actor Kavya opened up about sharing the screen with him and more.

"Whether *Farzi* had to be made eight years ago or now — I was destined to be a leading lady. I had no profound relationships with the biggies of this industry, yet I'll acknowledge a sentiment that I had it way easier than most of my contemporaries. Initially, my focus was on business management studies while I was also interested in becoming a star. Although, I had no idea about how to seep into this industry! I was spotted by the famous casting agent Shanoo Sharma from YRF, who actually made Ranveer Singh, Arjun Kapoor, and Bhumi Pednekar stars. She made me take the acting job seriously! From doing commercials, I landed my first ever Telugu film.

When did Raj AND DK spot Kavya? She revealed, "During the pandemic, all the newcomers were supposed to do self-tests. I received an audition call from the duo. I cracked the role in *Farzi* opposite Shahid Kapoor. Post that, the edginess started to kick in because I had never met him before. Heard, he is a tad bit forthright

when he interacts. To me, he's my senior! I couldn't have set my boundaries like a child's play with him. Even on the sets with him, I was wondering how I would do this! From the time his debut film was released, I fell in love with him. From crushing on him to doing a romantic scene with Shahid Kapoor — yes, I was tensed. When I saw him in *Kabir Singh*, the commendation only grew and grew. And now, when he's married: his loveliness is bubbling out even more, especially when he's around Mira Rajput. When the amorous scene began, I didn't know how to react to Shahid. I froze. He started cracking jokes and made me feel comfortable, and we went ahead with the scene."

The series has already piqued the interest of the audience. As the fans await the collaboration to create magic on screen, Kavya also mentioned, "Sometimes having the best directors also on board, can go wrong. Everybody is a 'critic' now! They are judging us even 'off-screen'. Every actor has a point of view today, but as soon as they tweet: they receive backlash. Why? I am not going to hold myself back from being who Kavya Thapar is regardless of criticism. The fate of my series cannot be decided on the basis of 'how I think', *Pathaan's* success is an example of it."

Elaborating further, she said, "Our series is definitely thwarting into a system that's favouring the elite. I have experienced it first-hand in real life. For example, richies get into a club just like that! The bouncers forget about authority and it comes to filling pockets. But, you should never underestimate the intellect of the underprivileged. Today an auto rickshaw driver's kid is also

running for the same league as us. Somehow, by touching upon this theme the directors knew the results were going to be in their favour. Even though my character is smaller in comparison with Raashii Khanna, however, the duo gave me the same importance. I wasn't made to feel lesser than the lead actress ever on the sets of *Farzi*! But, you can never come to Raj and DK sets with the intention of passing time — the schedule is so rigorous.

Packed with back-to-back projects, she continued, "I never knew I would be exposed to the Telugu film industry being a north Indian. For me, initially, movies meant Shah Rukh Khan, and Kareena Kapoor Khan: they were my inspiration. Granted that, I miss having the global exposure when I entered Tollywood. And, on OTT, it's sometimes scary to sign the contract because you'll be signing three seasons back-to-back without anticipating its success. Either you're in it for a gamble or a package deal."



Writer Padmabhushan opts for low ticket rates

Writer Padmabhushan, starring Suhās in the role of a wannabe novelist, is directed by newcomer Shanmukha Prashanth. On Tuesday, Lahari Films and Chai Bisket Films announced that their

film has opted for highly affordable ticket rates.

"We are going for early paid premieres in Hyderabad. The film hits the cinemas on February 3 worldwide. In Hyderabad, paid premieres will be held on February 2. We have decided to make ticket rates accessible in both single as well as multiplex screens," the makers said.

For single screens: Rs 110 (including GST) in both AP and Telangana. Meanwhile, for multiplexes: Rs 150 in Telangana and Rs 177 in AP (include GST) are the ticket rates.

Starring Tina Shilparaj as the heroine, the film has Rohini and Ashish Vidyarthi in key character roles. As per the makers, *Writer Padmabhushan* has got a suspenseful element.



Natural Star Nani

for his 30th movie will be helmed by debutant Shouryuv. Mohan Cherukuri (CVM), Dr Vijender Reddy Teegala, and Murthy KS will be producing the movie to be made on a grand scale under Vyra Entertainments with a high budget and lavish technical standards. The film has been launched on a grand note in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

For the muhurat shot, megastar Chiranjeevi sounded the clapboard and Ashwini Dutt switched on the camera. Buchi Babu, Kishore Thirumala, Hanu

Ragavapudi, Vasistha, and Vivek Athreya together directed the first shot. Before that, Vijayendra Prasad handed over the script to the makers to begin the proceedings. Palasa Karun Kumar, Girish Ayer, Devakatta, Chota K Naidu, Suresh babu, Dil Raju, 14 Reels Gopi- Ram Achanta, AK Anil sunkara, Mythri Ravi, DVV Danayya, Sravanthi Ravi Kishore, KS Rama Rao, Sahu Garapati, Asian Sunil, Abhishek Agarwal, Niharika Konidela and Kalyan Dasari were the other guests for the opening ceremony. The regular shoot of the movie will begin from today in Hyderabad.

Mrunal Thakur is the heroine opposite Nani in the movie which will have some young and talented technicians taking care of different crafts. Sanu John Varughese ISC will be cranking the camera, while popular Malayalam composer Hesham Abdul Wahab of *Hridayam* fame scores the music. Mrunal has been shuffling between

Raashii Khanna on bagging *Farzi*, 'Destiny works in mysterious ways

Multilingual star Raashii Khanna has been creating waves with her upcoming show *Farzi*, set to release soon. With her headstrong and impactful role of a woman in a man's world, Raashii has grabbed the attention of the audience, however, not many know that the actress bagged her part in the Raj and DK show basis an audition done years ago!

Not only did Raashii Khanna sign *Farzi* before her digital debut release *Rudra: The Edge of Darkness*, but also her audition for the Shahid Kapoor - Vijay Sethupati co-starrer show was filmed years ago.

The actress shared, "Farzi came to me based on an audition I did for Mukesh Chhabra's cast-

ing agency a few years back. It wasn't particularly for any project, however, it led me to *Farzi*. Apparently, Raj and DK saw the audition tape and had also seen clips of my work in a few South Indian films, and visualised Megha in me. I guess destiny works in mysterious ways."

Raashii Khanna looks forward to an eventful year in Bollywood with two big projects, while currently gearing up for her first release of the year *Farzi*, Raashii also has Dharma Productions' *Yodha* alongside Sidharth Malhotra in July, in addition to a few projects in South.



It's Official! Mani Ratnam's *PS2* to release on IMAX on April 28

After much anticipation, the sequel of *Ponniyin Selvan* finally has a release date. The film is slated to hit the big screens on April 28, 2023.

IMAX Corporation and Lyca Productions on Tuesday announced their plans to release *Ponniyin Selvan II* in IMAX this year. The film marks a sequel to Tamil film *Ponniyin Selvan I*.

Ponniyin Selvan II stars Vikram, Aishwarya Rai

Bachchan, Jayam Ravi, Karthi, Trisha, Aishwarya Lekshmi, Shobhita Dhulipala, Prabhu, Vikram Prabhu and Prakash Raj in pivotal roles. *Ponniyin Selvan II* continues the story of the great Chola emperor Raja Raja Chola, the most powerful King in South at his time. He is chiefly remembered for reinstating the Chola power and ensuring its supremacy in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

The film is helmed by

Mani Ratnam, produced and distributed by Subaskaran's Lyca Productions, which also backed *Ponniyin Selvan I* and *Robot 2.0* among other films.

Megan Colligan, the President of IMAX Entertainment said about the development: "IMAX is coming off its best year ever at the Indian box office thanks in large part to breathtaking local blockbusters like *Ponniyin Selvan I*."



Sanjay Dutt and Priya Anand onboard for *Thalapathy 67*



Popular production banner Seven Screen Studios has officially announced that they are bankrolling the most-anticipated movie, tentatively titled *Thalapathy 67*. Star director Lokesh Kangaraj is the helmer of this biggie.

The makers took to their social media profiles and announced that the Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt is a part of this movie. The movie team released a poster to announce the same. The *KGF* villain is likely to play the antagonist in this movie. Apart from Sanjay Dutt, the makers had also announced actress Priya Anand also onboard for the film.

The movie team flew to Kashmir on Tuesday morning to commence the next schedule. Sanjay Dutt will also join the sets in this schedule, accord-

ing to the latest buzz. Anirudh Ravichander is the music director of

this flick, which is a part of Lokesh Cinematic Universe (LCU).

Nani and Mrunal Thakur starrer #Nani30 launched, shooting begins today

