

No growth under governments led by regional parties

The crucial exercise of preparing and presenting the annual budget reflects the priorities of the government, be it at the Centre or in the States. The Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre announced a series of measures in the Union Budget for 2023-24 to strengthen the nation's economy. The measures include specific steps to increase the capital expenditure to augment the nation's wealth; enhance investments to develop infrastructure as well as amenities in sectors such as railways, transportation, highways and ports. Besides, the Centre had allotted Rs 1 lakh crore loan to the states to encourage them to increase capital expenditure; yet, some of the governments led by regional parties paid no attention to increase the

nation's wealth. Instead, they totally neglected development, while resorting to heavy borrowing amid increasing revenue deficit. The Governments of West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu have announced huge investments in their budgets. Mamata Bannerjee presented Rs 3.39-lakh crore budget for this year. However, she resorted to heavy borrowing as such the total borrowings of West Bengal reached Rs 6.48-lakh crore. The per capita debt on each person in the state is put at Rs 59,000. The total borrowings of the West Bengal constituted 37.05% of the GSDP of the state. Not a single industry could be set up during the Mamata regime. The situation in the states of Kerala, Punjab and Bihar is not good. The borrowings

The Governments of West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu have announced huge investments in their budgets. Mamata Bannerjee presented Rs 3.39-lakh crore budget for this year. However, she resorted to heavy borrowing as such the total borrowings of West Bengal reached Rs 6.48-lakh crore.

crossed 48.5% (Punjab), 37.2% (Kerala) and 38% (Bihar) of the GSDP of the respective states.

The Jaganmohan Reddy government in AP has gone a step further. The AP government is disposing of government properties. As publicity gimmick, the state government claimed that it had allo-

cated huge amounts for investments in the Rs 2.79-lakh crore annual budget. Of the amount, Rs 1.60-lakh crore would be raised by way of external borrowings, central assistance, and the state's share of taxes devolved by the Centre. The roads in Andhra Pradesh are in a miserable condition because the total



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

allocations made by the Jaganmohan Reddy government, since coming to power, for development of roads and bridges did not exceed 2%. Why would the execution of irrigation projects go slow if the government were to spend funds in tune with the budgetary allocations? What is

the reason for the failure of the government to pay salaries to its employees every month on time? People are not going to buy the argument of the state government that it had provided employment to over 6.81 lakh persons. The budget is silent on the total borrowings made by the government in spite of the total borrowings crossing Rs 10 lakh crore. The GSDP of the state was put at 11.47%, in spite of it not crossing 7%. The budget wrongly states that the share of the financial services was 35.41%, while the actual share was limited to 24.2%.

In February last, the KCR government presented a Rs 2.90-lakh crore budget for 2023-24. In Telangana, the difference in budgetary alloca-

tions and expenditure would be very high as per the revised estimates. Allocation of Rs 40,000 crore more in this budget, compared to the last year's budget, does not mean that development in Telangana is notable. Revenue receipts were predicted to be Rs 2.16 lakh crore, though the actual receipts for the last year in this regard had fallen short of projections.

Support to Telangana from the Centre has increased in the form of state's share of central taxes, grants-in-aid; yet, the revenue deficit has been increasing beyond expectations. The debt servicing burden for the next year would be Rs 22,407 crore. Surprisingly, the Government of Telangana allocated Rs

1,000 crore for publicity, which is 575% more than the allocations made last year. The allocation of funds to this head of account is more compared to the allocations made under Arogyasri. The debt burden in Telangana has crossed Rs 3 lakh crore. During 2014-23, the Centre allocated Rs 1,30,000 crore by way of taxes and Rs 1,39,000 crore by way of grants-in-aid. Under development of basic amenities for railways, the Centre during the current fiscal year allocated Rs 3,048 crore.

The upshot is that the heads of governments led by regional parties are interested in improving their personal net worth rather than developing the state. The Delhi liquor scandal stands as the latest example in this regard.

TDP will continue to fight till GO 1 is repealed: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) will continue its fight till the GO No.1 is repealed and the party will teach a lesson to the YSRCP, said party chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Monday.

The three TDP MLC-elect candidates met Chandrababu Naidu at the party headquarters here. Congratulating the three MLCs-elect, Vepada Chiranjeevi Rao, Kancherla Sripath, and Ramgopal Reddy, on their success, Chandrababu said that Ramgopal Reddy successfully resisted the rowdism in Pulivendula. "This is a success of Ramgopal Reddy and is the defeat of the Chief Minister, Jagan Mohan Reddy," said Chandrababu Naidu.

Expressing concern that



Jagan Mohan Reddy is making even the All India Service officers too as partners in crime, Naidu felt that attempts are being made to force the Returning Officer (RO) and the District Superintendent of Police (SP) to commit blunders. Chandrababu felt that attempts are being made to sti-

ple the voice of the people and suppress the Opposition and said that never in the country's history have such GOs been promulgated.

Serious debates were on continuously for several days between the ruling and the Opposition parties when Paritala Ravi was murdered and on the Yellampalli Lift Irrigation issue.

Even when the members in the House, Venkaiah Naidu, and Puchalapalli Sundaraiyah, used certain strong words, the Chair behaved in a dignified manner, Chandrababu recalled.

Chandrababu said, "I am deeply hurt at the attack on our M.L.A. Bala Veeranjaneeya Swamy, on the floor of the House and said that those involved in this attack will

never be allowed to enter the House again." The MLC election result is only a small wind but a tsunami is on the way in which Jagan Mohan Reddy and his YSRCP will be swept away, he remarked.

Chandrababu said that Monday's incident will remain a dark day in history and made it clear that the TDP leaders will not run away from such empty threats.

"I have seen several crises and we know how to respond," Chandrababu said and asked why the Speaker has not responded to this incident.

Chandrababu Naidu also thanked the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF), the CPI, the CPM, and the Jana Sena, and wanted the party activists to take this victory as an inspiration.

Yuva Shakthi of TS facing many challenges: Guv

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Raj Bhavan was lit up with Yuva Shakthi as the student achievers from major fields have accepted the invitation of Ugadi celebrations, said Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Monday.

The speciality of Ugadi festival is the inclusion of all flavours of sweet, bitter, soar and in life we have to practice the taste of bitterness also apart from sweetness, the Governor said. "The Yuva Shakthi of Telangana will overcome the bitterness and reach sweetness in life," she added.

"As Raj Bhavan is filled with youth, my appeal is definitely to the youth of Telangana to face challenges more than any other state. But, whatever it may be, Telangana youth are courageous to face it and Raj Bhavan is with you in all the challenges, the Governor said.



Newly-elected Teachers MLCs call on CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Newly-elected MLCs from Teachers' Constituencies MV Ramachandra Reddy and P Chandrasekhara Reddy called on the Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at his chambers in the Legislative Assembly here on Monday.

The duo, along with MLC T Kalapa Latha, submitted a rep-

resentation to the Chief Minister on teachers' problems. They urged the Chief Minister to remove the provision of 180 days child care leave for State government women employees to be used only till the children reach the age of 18 years.

Considering their plea, the Chief Minister has directed the officials to change the provi-

sion and issue orders to the women employees to make use of 180 days of childcare leave at any time during the service period. The MLCs also appealed to the Chief Minister to increase the renewal of recognition of private schools from three years to eight years. Responding positively to their plea, he directed the officials to issue orders to this effect.

ED grills...

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The ED also alleged in Pillai's remand papers that he "represented the proxy investments" of Kavitha in the case. Kavitha was earlier questioned by the CBI in connection with the case at her residence in Hyderabad.

The ED has arrested 12 people in the case, including former Delhi deputy chief minister and AAP leader Manish Sisodia. It has also recorded the statement of Butchibabu, an accountant allegedly linked to Kavitha, in which he said that "there was a political understanding between Kavitha and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and deputy chief minister Sisodia. Kavitha also met Vijay Nair on March 19 and 20, 2021."

Nair was arrested in the case by both the ED and the CBI. Butchibabu was arrested by the CBI and was questioned recently again by the ED.

According to Butchibabu's statement, Nair was "trying to impress Kavitha with what he could do in the excise policy."

"Vijay Nair was acting on behalf of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia," the statement recorded by the ED read.

TODAY	
ALMANAC	
Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Amavasya:	Mar 21 01:47 AM to Mar 21 10:53 PM
Sukla Paksha Pratipada:	Mar 21 10:53 PM to Mar 22 08:21 PM
Nakshatram:	
Purva Bhadrapada:	Mar 20 07:39 PM to Mar 21 05:25 PM
Uttara Bhadrapada:	Mar 21 05:25 PM to Mar 22 03:32 PM
Rahukalam:	3:23 PM to 4:53 PM
Yamagandam:	9:23 AM to 10:53 AM
Varjyam:	02:16 AM to 03:44 AM
Gulika:	12:23 PM to 1:53 PM
Amritakalam:	10:10 AM to 11:37 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:59 AM to 12:47 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER	
Forecast: Mostly Sunny	
Temp: 32°	
Humidity: 75%	
Sunrise: 6:11 AM	
Sunset: 6:18 PM	
Updated: MARCH 20, 2023 5:00 PM	

YSRCP Dalit MLAs meet CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP Dalit MLAs called on Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in his chambers in the Legislative Assembly on Monday.

They informed the Chief Minister that MLA TJR Sudhakar Babu was injured during the attack



by the TDP leaders in the ongoing Assembly session. Home Minister T Vanitha,

Transport Minister P Viswaroop and other MLAs were also present.

YSRCP, TDP...

Continued from Page 1

The TDP MLA stood in their allocated seats and two other legislators moved toward the Speaker's Chair and raised slogans and even tried to attack him with placards.

Fearing that the TDP members might attack the Speaker, YSRCP member Sudhakar Babu rushed to the podium resulting in a brawl with the Opposition members, resulting in an injury to Sudhakar. A few more treasury members rushed to the podium and the marshals had to bring the situation under control.

The marshals sent the TDP MLAs back to their seats on the instructions

of the Speaker. The TDP members protested by squatting on the floor while a few stood at their seats, creating obstacles to the House proceedings.

The ruling party members requested the Speaker to keep the House in order time and again. With no other option left, the Speaker suspended the TDP members. As TDP MLA Veeranjaneeya Swamy was reluctant, the marshals took him out of the House while other TDP members moved out as the marshals moved toward them.

Later, the YSRCP members insisted that the TDP MLAs be suspended for the rest of the Assembly sessions for the smooth function of the house for the remaining three days. They termed it a 'Black Day for Democracy' and sought stringent action against the perpetrators.

The suspended TDP members are B Ashok, K A t h a n a i d u , N i m m a l a R a m a n a i d u , Ghinarajappa, Ganababu, Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu, Mantena Ramaraju, Gottipati Ravi Kumar, Yeluru Sambashiva Rao, Dola Sri Bala Veeranjaneeya Swamy, G Buchaiah Chowdary and Gadde Rammoorthy Rao.

Naidu kingpin...

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the skills of the youth in the State coming from the Siemens in the form of grant-in-aid, there was no mention of the grant-in-aid in the MoU.

Again, while the GO talked of 10% of project cost being borne by the Government in form of contribution, it was changed to financial assistance in the provisions of the MoUs.

The grant-in-aid never came from Siemens but the TDP Government hurriedly paid 10% of the project cost equalling Rs 371 crore (which includes taxes) in five tranches in a short period of three months, said the Chief Minister adding that it was a scam skillfully scripted, directed and executed by the skilled criminal Chandrababu Naidu.

The scam broke out even during the TDP rule as the intended taxes were never paid but the CID probe never moved ahead as it was stalled by Naidu. When the lower level officials objected to the releasing of the 10% financial aid without the grant-in-aid coming in from Siemens, Chandrababu directed the officials to release the amount, he said, elaborating further that there were note files signed by the Principal Finance Secretary and the then CS to this effect.

Attempts were also made to destroy these note files by the TDP Government but they are dug out now with the use of shadow files from the other departments, he said.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Condemning the attack by TDP members on Speaker Tammineni Sitaram and YSRCP MLAs in the Assembly on Monday, YSRCP termed it a Black Day for Democracy' and sought stringent action against the perpetrators.

YSRCP MLAs unitedly condemned the ghastly attack on Speaker and YSRCP MLAs by TDP MLAs and called them out for specifically targeting MLAs from the Dalit community. YSRCP MLAs said that the despicable attack on the Chair and rowdism inside the Assembly by TDP leaders was unpardonable. YSRCP has now called for a statewide protest against the

Opposition for their disgraceful conduct.

Addressing the media persons, YSRCP MLAs narrated the sequence of events; how Speaker Tammineni Sitaram was attacked by TDP MLAs on the floor of the House and claimed that the attack was pre-planned and was concocted to disturb the smooth functioning of the assembly session. On the directions of Chandrababu Naidu, the TDP MLAs have thrown the ethics of the House to the wind and have been trying to stall the proceedings on a daily basis as per a plan. Bala Veeranjaneeya Swamy, who is placed in the front as per TDP conspiracy, rushed to the Speaker podium in a threatening manner and manhandled him, he said.

Landmark 'automatic suspension' ruling by Speaker Tammineni

Continued from Page 1

Refuting the allegations of TDP MLAs attacking them, the Speaker clarified that he did not carry any attack and it is TDP legislators who resorted to unruly behavior.

Speaker Sitaram condemned the atrocities of the TDP members in the House

on Monday and expressed anguish over the attack on the Chair. "It was not an attack on me, instead it is an attack on the Chair of a constitutional body," he commented. He said that the members had no right to storm the Speaker's chair, and gave a ruling that any member who crossed the line near the Speaker's podium would henceforth be

automatically suspended from the House. He recalled the same ruling he gave on March 15, 2022, and now the ruling is invoked once again. He said that, if any person touched the Speaker or the chair, will be suspended for the next three to five sessions depending on the gravity of the incident.

Speaker Sitaram also agreed to the ruling party's recom-

mendation to refer Monday's unruly events in the House to the Assembly Privileges Committee. Describing the sequence of events that happened on Monday, the Speaker said that TD MLA Dola Bala Veeranjaneeya Swamy was interrupting the House proceedings right from the beginning of the Assembly session.

TDP MLAs lodge complaint at Tulluru PS

Continued from Page 1

Veeranjaneeya Swamy and Butchaiah Chaudhary filed a complaint against YSRCP MLAs Karumuri Nageswara Rao, Vellampalli Srinivas Rao, Sudhakar Babu, and Eliza.

TDP MLA Nimmala Ramanaidu has stated that the lives of opposition MLAs are in danger in the Legislative Assembly from the ruling party legislators. The TDP MLAs appealed for an inquiry into the incident in the Legislative Assembly. The TDP MLAs paid homage to Ambedkar's statue at Tulluru Centre before filing the complaint. Farmers of the capital region reached the Tulluru police station in large numbers in support of TDP MLAs.

Nimmala Ramanaidu criticised the Assembly as a high-security zone but not for the opposition TDP leaders. He said that the attack was carried out in a manner that endangered their lives, so they filed a complaint at the police station.

Three Bills passed in Council

VIJAYAWADA: The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council passed the Andhra Pradesh Dotted Lands (Update in Re-Settlement Register (Amendment) Bill 2023, the Andhra Pradesh Right in Land and Pattadar Passbooks (Amendment) Bill 2023 and the Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Area) Inams, (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) (Amendment) Bills 2023 during the ongoing Budget session on Monday.

ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్ ప్రభుత్వము	
చోట్లకు మరలయు భవనాల శాఖ	
ఆ-విభాగానికి విధించిన నిబంధన	
సం. 58/e-pro./TO/2022-23, తేది: 17.03.2023	
మీ పేరు: చోట్లకు మరల శాఖకు సంబంధించిన చోట్లకు 10.000 కి.మీ. మరియు 15.000 కి.మీ. వరకు ఉన్న భవనాలు నిర్మించుటకు నిర్మించుటకు అనుమతిని ఇచ్చుట. అందుకు సంబంధించిన 40.00 ఎకరాల విస్తీర్ణం నిర్మించుటకు సంబంధించిన 23-03-2023 వరకు 31-03-2023 వరకు 3.30 గంటల వరకు. ఇతర వివరాలకు: www.eprocurement.gov.in	
నిర్మించుటకు సంబంధించిన ఫోన్: 94408 18056.	సం.- ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్ ప్రభుత్వం, కౌన్సిలర్, ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్ ప్రభుత్వం
కౌన్సిలర్: 5189/CLADVT/2022-23, తేది: 23.03.2023	చోట్ల కి.మీ. మరియు కి.మీ. వరకు

City police foil protest by Anganwadi workers

Thousands of workers and Left leaders were arrested while they were going to Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The NTR Vijayawada police and the Krishna police stopped the Anganwadi workers who were going to participate in the protest organised at Dharna Chowk in Vijayawada on Monday, demanding solutions to their long-pending problems and implementation of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's election promises.

The CITU-affiliated Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union had called for the 'Chalo Vijayawada' protest at Dharna Chowk. The situation was tense after the police action. Left party leaders extended their support to the Anganwadi workers' agitation.

The police detained thousands of anganwadi workers who came to Vijayawada from various districts and sent them to different police stations in both Vijayawada and Krishna districts after the arrests.

In Vijayawada, the protesters were shifted to Kalyana Mandapams. Meanwhile, the union leaders and the Left leaders staged protests at various police stations and Kalyana Mandapams in Vijayawada.

However, amidst the Anganwadi workers' protest and arguments with the police, anganwadi teacher Bujji had a heart attack and was shifted to the government hospital in Vijayawada for treatment. Due to the lack of sufficient beds at the government hospital, the doctors



Anganwadi Teachers & Workers Union leaders were arrested by police as part of the 'Chalo Vijayawada' programme on Monday. Pic: Ch Vijaya Bhaskar

gave her a chair. They allotted a bed for Bujji after the union leaders protested.

Meanwhile, despite the police trying to prevent the protests, a big number of Anganwadi workers reached Vijayawada and blocked the Eluru Road, BRTS Road, and Lenin Centre.

They organised a big procession on the Eluru road demanding the release of the Anganwadi workers and Left leaders who were arrested by the police and solutions to all their demands.

The protesters started reaching Vijayawada through various transport systems to participate in the protest on Sunday night. However, the police prevented them in their respective police station limits and sent them to

various police stations.

Even on Monday, the police continued their searches on the main roads, stopped vehicles, and questioned people. This caused severe trouble to the common people and they flayed the police.

CPM State secretariat member Ch Babu Rao, CITU general secretary Ch Narasinga Rao, Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union general secretary Subbaravamma and other leaders argued with the police. Heated arguments occurred between the protesters and the police. Ch Babu Rao criticised the State government over the issue. "Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy claimed that he is fighting with landlords (Petham Darulu), but he is waging a war on poor

Anganwadi workers," he alleged.

Further, he demanded that the State government conduct a meeting with the union leaders and discuss their problems. Also, remove the face recognition attendance app for Anganwadi workers, pay Rs.26,000 wage per month, and regularise them, he demanded.

He also sought the implementation of welfare schemes, gratuity, DA, and TA for the Anganwadi workers. Though the police tried to prevent 'Chalo Vijayawada', it was a grand success, he added. The Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union leaders were arrested at Machilipatnam, Gudur, Gannavaram and other parts of Krishna district also.

'JAGANANNA GORUMUDDA'

CM to launch 'ragi malt drink' today

37,63,698 students in 44,392 govt & aided schools to benefit from new nutritious food

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will formally launch the programme of providing ragi malt drink to 37,63,698 students of 44,392 government and aided schools across the State on Tuesday with an additional expenditure of Rs. 86 crore annually.

According to officials, the expenditure under the 'Jagananna Gorumudda' is Rs.1,910 crore which is almost four times more than the expenditure of the previous government, including Rs.1,824 crore for 'Gorumudda' and an additional amount of Rs. 86 crore for ragi malt.

CM Jagan said, "The previous government never thought of providing nutritious food to the school-going children. Sensing the necessity of Nutrition for growing children, we totally transformed the Midday meal scheme with daily changes in the menu in the name of 'Jagananna Gorumudda'. We are also providing ragi malt drink to the children to



provide them with more nutrition. We have reached an MoU with Sri Sathya Sai Trust as part of scheme management and thank them for the gesture."

The officials said that one more nutritious addition to 'Jagananna Gorumudda' is 'Ragi Malt Drink' for school children in the morning. The Jagan Government has totally transformed the mid-day meal scheme with daily changes in the menu, providing hot cooked healthy, tasty, and quality nutritious food. They said that the government provides essential nutrients like Iron and Calcium to address Anaemia

and Malnutrition in students through 'Ragi Malt Drink' with jaggery for three days a week (Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday). On other days, peanut 'chikki' is already being given under 'Jagananna Gorumudda'.

The officials explained that under the 'Jagananna Gorumudda', 15 varieties of items are being given every week which include eggs for five days, peanut 'chikki' for three days, and from now on ragi malt drink for three days. They further said that encouragement to farmers who cultivate Millets and it is noteworthy that we are observing this year as the "International Year of Millets".

The annual expenditure of 'Jagananna Gorumudda' is Rs.1,824 crore benefiting around 38 lakh students, which is almost four times more than that during the previous government. An honorarium of Rs 3,000 per month is being paid to kitchen helpers, which is three times more than that extended during the previous government.

3 more polytechnics sanctioned in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy has disclosed that three polytechnics have been sanctioned with Rs 100 crore by the State government under the leadership of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. He said that the polytechnics will be set up in Bethamcherla in the Nandyal district, Guntakal in the Anantapur district, and Maidukuru in the YSR Kadapa district. To this extent, Government Secretary Saurabh Gaur released a gazette on Monday.

The Finance Minister expressed happiness over the sanctioning of polytechnic colleges that provide technical education and provide good employment opportu-



nities to the youth. He said that if colleges are made available, rural youth will have

more flexibility to study diploma courses in mechanical, electrical, electronics, civil, chemical, and metallurgical fields without having to travel far. He said that the skills and training required for industries will be improved and employment opportunities will be better after completion of education.

On behalf of the youth of the constituency and the districts, Minister Buggana thanked Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for setting up one of the 3 polytechnic colleges sanctioned in his own constituency at Bethamcherla with a cost of Rs.30 crore. Minister Buggana appreciated the allotment of 3 colleges to the backward Rayalaseema districts to provide better opportunities to the youth.

Guv attends Ugadi celebrations at Venkaiah's house in Delhi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Governor Dr. S Abdul Nazeer attended the Ugadi celebrations that were held at the residence of former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu in New Delhi on Monday. Every year, Venkaiah Naidu celebrates the Ugadi festival at his residence.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice President Jagadeep Dhankar, several central ministers, and others attended the function. Also, former Rajyasabha Member Yarlagadda Lashmi Prasad attended the celebrations and Venkaiah Naidu

introduced him to AP Governor Nazeer.

Venkaiah Naidu told Governor Nazeer that Yarlagadda worked as Official Language Commission Chairman. Also, he participated in the Visakha Ukku struggle, he added.



TDP will sweep next AP polls: Lokesh

PNS ■ KADIRI

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) will sweep the forthcoming Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, said the principal opposition party's general secretary, Nara Lokesh.

He made these remarks addressing a public meeting at Kadiri in Anantapur district as part of Yuva Galam padayatra.

Lokesh predicted that the ruling YSRCP would only get seats in single digits in the next Assembly polls.

"The Fan (symbol of the YSRCP) will get only single-digit seats in the next elections," Lokesh said in a statement on Sunday, adding he was lucky to conduct his political walkathon in a historic place like Kadiri.

The TDP leader promised the people of the town that temple tourism will be developed in this southern AP location once his party returns to power.

Meanwhile, he observed that the victories in the recent



Legislative Council polls are just a trailer of what the TDP will do in the 2024 Assembly polls and alleged that Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had misused the chance people gave him.

Ridiculing the YSRCP regime's policies, the former IT minister said that any leader generally takes Singapore or the United States of America (USA) as an example to emulate but Reddy took South Africa.

Lokesh slammed the CM and said he took the people for a ride in the name of capital city trifurcation whereas the state topped in borrowings.

Pawan Kalyan condemns attack on TDP MLA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan has condemned the attack on the TDP MLAs by the ruling YSRCP MLAs in the Assembly and underlined the need of holding meaningful debates in the House. In a statement here on Monday, Pawan Kalyan said that the events which took place in the AP Assembly on Monday is a blow to the democratic spirit and also unfortunate. "The GO. No. 1 muzzles the voice of people. When the TDP wanted a discussion on GO No 1, the TDP MLA was attacked by the YSRCP MLAs. I condemn the attack on the TDP MLAs. All democrats should condemn the attack on TDP MLA Dola Bala Veerananjaya Swamy and

Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary," Pawan Kalyan said. He said that the people of the state hope that meaningful debates would be held in the Assembly. The discussions on the policies which are against the people should be held in the Assembly. When the TDP members insisted on a debate on GO No 1, they were attacked and it is highly improper, Pawan Kalyan maintained. "If the attacks continue like this, attacks will take place on the streets. Such things will mock democracy. All should respect the Legislative Houses and uphold dignity. The responsibility of respecting Legislative houses and upholding dignity lies on the Chief Minister and presiding officials," Pawan Kalyan said.



Physics question bank for Class X released

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao released the Physics Question Book for Class 10 written by Physics School Assistant M Hussain, who is working at the Puchalapalli Sundaralah Municipal High School in the city, at the collectorate in Vijayawada on Monday.

M Hussain, who has also been working as District Science Officer (DSO) for several years, compiled the book comprising one mark and two marks questions for free distribution among the students.

Collector Dilli Rao praised DSO Hussain for his commit-

ment. He has been teaching techniques to the SSC students to get more marks in the public examinations for several years, he said.

He also praised Hussain for working towards the development of Vijayawada Municipal Corporation School students.

NTR District Education Officer (DEO) CV Renuka said that Class 10 students should study this book and get good marks in Physics. The book would be distributed to all Class 10 students studying in VMC schools, she added.

NTR District Joint Collector S Nupur Ajay Kumar, DRO K Mohan Kumar and others were present.

Bezawada Bar Association advocates boycott courts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Members of the Bezawada Bar Association (BBA) on Monday boycotted duties and staged a protest in front of the Vijayawada city civil courts alleging false cases against an advocate.

On March 5, the daughter of an advocate was sexually assaulted by a boy, a resident of Bhavanipuram. The advocate lodged a complaint with the police, but it was not registered. The advocate and three others went to the boy's house and had an argument.

The boy's mother lodged a complaint alleging assault on her son, which was registered by



Bhavanipuram police.

BBA president Ch Vishnu Vardhan said that on knowing the incident they met the Commissioner of Police,

NTR district, and requested to take action against Bhavanipuram inspector Md Umar. The Commissioner assured to verify the facts and take

action against the guilty.

On the other hand, Inspector Md Umar denied the allegation of the advocate that his complaint was not registered. He said as the victim was below the age of 12 years, the case was referred to the Disha police. A case has been registered with the Disha police and an investigation is on.

The inspector further said that there is video evidence to prove that the advocate went to the boy's house with an iron rod and assaulted the boy, his mother, and his brother, inflicting injuries on them. He said that it is not fair to say that no case should be registered against an advocate after he/she commits a crime.

'Grama Darshini' in Krishna dist on Mar 24

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector P Ranjith Basha has informed his officials that the district administration would organise Grama Darshini programme on March 24. He directed all officials to make necessary arrangements for the successful conduct of the programme.

At the Spandana programme held at the collectorate in Machilipatnam on Monday, the Collector received petitions from the public along with Joint Collector Dr Aparajatha Singh.

Speaking on the occasion, the

Collector ordered immediate redressal of re-opened petitions and asked the officials to clear pending applications of Jagananna Chebudam. The Collector further said that the updates of Aadhaar services would be available at 74 centres across the district and the services would be extended up to June 14.

He said that Aadhar update services were made available free of cost. CM Jagan would soon launch distribution of ragi java to the students. The officials should arrange necessary facilities to implement the scheme in the schools across the district.

Referring to the lease agreements of the government assets, the Collector said registering documents was compulsory and that lease deeds of all the municipal complexes, petrol bunks, medical shops, fishing ponds and toll gates should be registered.

Ranjith Basha said that the Chief Minister would be inaugurating the third tranche of YSR Asara on March 25 virtually and added that all the municipality and Mandal-level officers should speak with the MLAs concerned regarding distribution of cheques at the Mandal-level.

Soft tennis: Women's team qualifies for GNG

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh soft tennis team (women) has qualified to participate in the 37th National Games, which will take place in Goa in November this year. The AP women won the bronze medal in the 19th Senior Soft Tennis Championship being conducted at Bhubaneswar in Odisha.

On Monday, the women's team defeated hosts (2-0) and reached the semi-finals. In the semi-final match, however, AP lost to Tamil Nadu (2-0).

The top eight teams, i.e. the teams that reach the quarter finals, will qualify for the



37th National Games.

Meanwhile, the men's team lost in the pre-quarterfinal match and lost the chance to go to the National Games.

Andhra Pradesh Soft Tennis Association chairman

Daram Naveen Kumar, president Valle Srinu Babu, general secretary D Dilip Kumar and director Karim congratulated the AP women's team for qualifying for the Goa National Games.

Olectra delivers 25 electric buses to K'taka RTC

Largest fleet of intercity e-buses to be deployed in public transport sector in India

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Olectra Greentech Limited, leading electric bus manufacturers, successfully delivered 25 pure electric intercity buses to the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC). This batch of e-buses is the largest fleet of intercity electric buses to be deployed in the public transport sector in India.

The fleet of 25 intercity e-buses was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Karnataka Basavaraj Bommai, along with other ministers, chairman of KSRTC M Chandrappa, and other dignitaries, in Bengaluru. The e-buses will soon be seen plying on the busy routes of Bengaluru, Mysuru, Shimoga, Davangere, Chikkamangalur, Virajpet and Madikeri.

The 12-metre-long, fully air-conditioned type III



intercity e-buses can travel 300 km on a single charge. It has electronically controlled air suspension, disc

brakes with EBS, 5 Cumt luggage space, ergonomically designed interiors, push-back luxury seats, Wi-Fi facility, video surveillance, and USB ports for charging smartphones. These sustainable and efficient e-buses will serve a dual purpose, providing passengers with a comfortable ride during the hot summer months while helping the State of Karnataka meet its green goals.

Olectra Greentech's Chairman and Managing Director KV Pradeep said that the company was playing a significant role in the electrification of public transport in India. He added that with these 25 intercity electric coach buses, the company was helping Karnataka lower its dependency on fossil fuels and reduce carbon emissions by over 65,000 tonnes during the contract period.



Provide cashless treatment under Aarogyasri: Collector

PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh has directed the officials concerned to ensure that cashless treatment is provided to the Aarogyasri beneficiaries and resolve complaints.

The District Disciplinary Committee meeting was held here on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector directed the officials to provide all the needed medical services to the beneficiaries under the YSR Aarogyasri scheme and resolve the complaints within a specific time frame.

Collector Prasanna Venkatesh examined each and every case of complaints registered in the discharge app of the Secretariat and inquired with the owners of the concerned ANM, Arogyamitra, and network hospitals.

He said that an inquiry was conducted regarding the lack of service of Arogya Mitra, the lack of service of network



hospitals, and the free distribution of medicines after treatment.

In this regard, action has been taken against the health partners concerned regarding the deficiencies identified. The implementation of the YSR Aarogyasri scheme in the district, available health partners, team leaders, acceptance of applications, settlement system, and other issues was discussed in the meeting.

The Collector made it clear that quality medical services

should be provided in a transparent and accountable manner through the Aarogyasri scheme in the district. He warned of taking action if anyone is found guilty of irregularities in the provision of free medical services in government and network private hospitals.

At the village level, ANMs should be made aware of Aarogyasri services and special apps. Information related to Aarogyasri services should be displayed in the form of posters

in YSR Health Centres, the Collector said.

The Collector told the officials to resolve the complaints and applications received through Spandana, IVRS, and personal channels within a specified period. Grievances should be resolved to the satisfaction of the petitioners, he directed the officials. Dr. AVR Mohan, District coordinator of Vaidya Vidhanb Parishat, Deputy DHO Dr. Ratna Kumari, and other officials were those who were present.

JAC inspects illegal mining in Kotturu Reserve Forests

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A Joint Action Committee comprising the Andhra Pradesh Forest, Andhra Pradesh State Pollution Control Board officials, and the NTR Vijayawada district administration inspected the illegal mining happening in Kotturu Reserve Forests of Vijayawada Rural on Monday.

Pilli Surendrababu, a former soldier, has filed petition OA No.53/2023 in the National Green Tribunal (NGT) regarding illegal mining activity in Kotturu Tadepalli, Jakkampudi and P Nainavaram village limits under the Kotturu Reserve Forests. NGT constituted the committee to inspect the areas under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Chennai Region Office.

Based on the directions of

NGT, the committee comprising Forest Department Flying Squad DFO Trimurthulu Reddy, NTR Vijayawada Sub Collector Aditi Singh, Pollution Control Board along with a petitioner and his advocate inspected the illegal mining in Kotturu Tadepalli, Jakkampudi and P Nainavaram village limits.

They started the inspection from the Polavaram Canal near Anjaneya Swamy temple at Jakkampudi and visited all places where illegal mining was taking place. The committee members interacted with local farmers and took their opinions regarding illegal mining. As per the NGT directions, this committee must submit its report within two months.

However, the petitioner Pilli Surendra Babu and his advocate Paleti Maheswara Rao said that the committee could

not inspect the illegal mining areas in the reserve forest. Also, Water Resources Department, Polavaram, and Mining and Geology officials were not taking part in the inspection, he said. So, they requested the committee members to inspect the reserve forests once again along with the concerned department officials.

Meanwhile, the petitioner Surendra Babu said that about 600 acres of forest land were excavated illegally. Besides, the Polavaram Right Main Canal Bund was also excavated, he said. So, the committee should inspect all the areas and submit the appropriate report to NGT, he urged.

Vijayawada Tahsildar Jahnvi, Forest Ranger Srinivas Reddy, Deputy Ranger Vijayasekhar and others were present.



‘Pratyeka Pushparchanalu’ from tomorrow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In view of the Telugu festival Ugadi, Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri is set to organise a ‘Pratyeka Pushparchanalu’ as part of the Vasantha Navratotsavamulu on the temple premises from March 22 to 31.

Temple Executive Officer (EO) D Bramaramba said in a press release, on Monday, that on the directions of the temple Vedic Committee, this ‘Pratyeka Pushparchanalu’ would be conducted. The special occasion would be organised for nine days with several varieties of flowers, she said.

She further said Pushparchana would be conducted at the Sri Lakshmi Ganapathi Swamy Vari temple at the Chinna Rajagopuram at the hilltop. Those interested may purchase a ticket through the website or the temple’s ticket counter, she added.

Interstate thieves arrested, booty worth Rs 18 lakh recovered

PNS ■ BAPATLA

The police arrested two notorious interstate thieves and recovered Rs 18.50 lakh worth of booty including gold jewellery, silver ornaments, and a bike.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Bapatla district SP Vakul Jindal said that since a series of burglaries had taken place during the last few days, the police laid special focus and intensified vigil. The police formed three special teams under the supervision of DSP A Srinivasa Rao and led by CIs Murali Krishna and P Krishnaiah.

Using the latest technology and tip-offs, the police teams arrested the two interstate thieves Puli Ramaiah and Sonthi Durga Rao at Kankatapalem junction near GBC road here on Monday.

They confessed before the police that they committed burglaries in Bapatla, Chirala, Eluru, and other places. The police recovered gold jewellery weighing 322 grams, 1,350 KGs silver ornaments, and a bike altogether worth Rs 18.50 lakh. Sonthi Durga Rao was a history-sheeter in Chilakalapudi police stations in Krishna district. A rowdy sheet was opened against him at Payakapuram police station in Vijayawada.

The duo committed burglaries in Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Delhi, Odisha, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu states. They also committed crimes in Machilipatnam, Gudur, Payakapuram, Sattenapalli, Narasaraopet, Piduguralla, Dacheppalli, Vinukonda, Nagarjunasagar, Prathipadu and Bapatla in AP. They were earlier arrested in various cases and sent to prison. After being freed from prison they committed crimes, the SP said.



Interstate thief arrested with diamonds worth Rs 53 lakh

PNS ■ KADAPA

The police arrested an interstate notorious thief and recovered diamonds worth Rs 53 lakh from him.

SP KKN Anburajan told the media here on Monday that interstate notorious thief Ismail Shahid was arrested in connection with the diamond robbery case. The arrested thief belongs to Goa state. He was one of the accused of confining a diamond merchant Khadar Basha in a lodge and robbing diamonds worth Rs 60 lakh in 2020 at Almaspet in the city. The police have already arrested two

accused in the diamond robbery case and Ismail is the third accused. Meanwhile, the police also arrested two interstate burglars and recovered cameras worth 8 lakh. The arrested burglars broke open the shutter of a smart digital camera shop and decamped with cameras including sonny, Nikon, Canon, and drone cameras worth Rs 8 lakh.

The police also recovered a pick axe which the thieves used to break open the shutter, a motorcycle, and two mobile phones.

The arrested two burglars belong to Rajasthan state.



DEBT-RIDDEN FARMER ENDS LIFE

PNS ■ ONGOLE

A debt-ridden farmer committed suicide by consuming pesticide at Malapatipalle village in Markapuram.

Police said that the deceased farmer Golamari Kotireddy (51) raised chilli and cotton crops on his 4 acres of land. He had taken

four acres of land on lease and raised crops.

He borrowed money to raise the crops from money lenders. Due to the failure of crops, he incurred losses. Unable to bear the pressure from the money lenders for money, he consumed pesticide on March 18 at his field. He was admitted to the KIMS

hospital and he died on Monday. After conducting the post-mortem the body was handed over to the family members. Markapuram ZPTC Bapan Reddy, MPTC Malapati Srinivasa Reddy, and mandal agriculture officer Devireddy Srinivasulu consoled the family members.



Tyre burst leaves truck driver dead

PNS ■ KAKINADA

In a freak incident, the driver of a heavy-duty truck was killed when one of the tyres got burst while filling the air into the deflated tyre in Parry sugars Limited company on the city outskirts here on Monday, police said.

The driver Penupothu Sivakumar (35) suffered a grievous injury on the head and died on the way to Government general hospital. However, the family members and workers union leaders alleged that the management has shifted the dead body to the hospital without informing them.

Tension prevailed at the factory premises for quite

some time with the family members and their relatives demanding Rs 1 crore compensation alleging management’s negligence for the mishap.

However, the police-led DSP Padala Muralikrishna Reddy along with Revenue officials rushed to the factory and pacified the agitating crowds holding discussions with the factory management on the compensation.

Union leaders of workers said that management of the factory agreed to pay Rs 40 lakh towards workmen’s compensation and Rs 1 Lakh funeral expenses while the contractor will pay Rs 5 lakhs thus total of Rs 46 lakh compensation.

Amazon to lay off 9,000 employees on top of 18,000 in Jan

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Amazon plans to eliminate 9,000 more jobs in the next few weeks, CEO Andy Jassy said in a memo to staff on Monday.

The job cuts would mark the second largest round of layoffs in the company’s history, adding to the 18,000 employees the company said it would lay off in January.

In the memo, Jassy said the second phase of the company’s annual planning process completed this month and led to the additional job

cuts. He said Amazon will still hire in some strategic areas.

“Some may ask why we didn’t announce these role reductions with the ones we announced a couple months ago. The short answer is that not all of the teams were done with their analyses in the late fall; and rather than rush through these assessments without the appropriate diligence, we chose to share these decisions as we’ve made them so people had the information as soon as possible,” Jassy said. (AP)

GLAUCOMA AWARENESS WALK ORGANISED

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of World Glaucoma Week, the LV Prasad Eye Institute organized an awareness walk to bring public focus on the vision-threatening glaucoma eye disease that can affect both adults and children. The awareness walk started at 7.30 am and was flagged off by Prakash Rao, Municipal Commissioner, YSR Tadigadapa.

On the occasion, Dr Anasua Ganguly Kapoor, Head, of LV Prasad Eye Institute said, “Even though 80 percent of blindness from glaucoma is preventable, almost seven million people worldwide turn blind due to glaucoma, with two-thirds of them being women. This is



because a whopping 90 pc of glaucoma cases go undetected, presumably due to a lack of awareness. Hence, there is a great need to raise awareness about the symptoms, early detection, and treatment of glaucoma,” he said.

He said that glaucoma was an eye problem associated with an increase in eye pres-

sure and is characterised by damage to the optic nerve leading to irreversible blindness. Available statistics indicate that 1.12 crore Indians (4.5 pc of the Indian population) suffer from glaucoma, including children, of which 11 lakh people have turned blind. Glaucoma more commonly affects people beyond the age of 40 years, especially those who have high myopia or are diabetic. Steroids should be judiciously and only under medical supervision and excessive use of steroids can also lead to glaucoma. World Glaucoma Week is a joint global initiative of the World Glaucoma Association and the World Glaucoma Patients Association.

VMC chief Swapnil Dinkar inspects upkeep of facilities

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar visited Krishna Lanka, Ranigiri Thota and Ramalingeswara Nagar and inspected the maintenance of sanitation facilities on Monday. He asked people about their problems and directed officials to resolve them.

The VMC chief inspected River Krishna’s retaining wall at Krishna Lanka and directed the Town Planning officials to remove encroachments. Also, he asked the engineering officials to start the park work as early as possible.

He visited Ambedkar Park, adjacent to the National Highway at Krishna Lanka,



and observed the renovation works. He inspected the cycle track and directed officials to conduct necessary repairs. Also, he asked the officials to repair the hall in the park. VMC Additional

Commissioner (Projects) KV Satyavathi, Chief Engineer M Prabhakara Rao, City Planner GVGSV Prasad, Executive Engineer ASN Prasad, ADH Srinivas and others were present.

Job fair for polytechnic students on March 24, 25

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Technical Education Commissioner Chadalavada Naga Rani has said that her department would organise a job fair for polytechnic students at Ongole from March 24-25. Following the instructions of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the Technical Education Department is taking steps to provide immediate employment opportunities to diploma students in major, renowned Industries, she said.

Regarding this job fair,

Commissioner Naga Rani issued a press release here on Monday. She said the delegation of the Technical Education Department met with the representatives of HL Mando Anand India on Monday and came to know about this. In this regard, a meeting was held with DGM Rajasekhar and Manager Ragini of the Human Resource Department of HL Mando.

She said that 200 Technician Apprentices would be hired by HL Mando Anand India, which is a part of the Halla group of companies and



are specialists in chassis systems consisting of brakes, suspension and steering.

Further, she said the students who passed diploma in 2020, 2021, and 2022 could attend written tests and interviews which would be held at DA Government Polytechnic, Ongole on March 24, 25.

She made it clear that all male students who have passed in Mechanical, Automobile and Electrical and all Female students who have passed in Mechanical, Automobile, Electrical, Electronics, Instrumentation, and Computer with a minimum of 60 per cent overall aggregate are eligible to attend the job fair.

Similarly, she said that the selected candidates will be paid a monthly stipend of Rs.14,050 for one year with subsidised facilities and after one year, based on the performance, they will be absorbed into the company on rolls. She said Deputy Director (Training, Placement) Dr MAV Rama Krishna, and the team from the Technical Education Department will monitor and coordinate the job fair proceedings.

Interested students can contact the numbers 8870985062 and 8985872905 for more details.

Prehistoric stone tool found at Buddhavanam

NAGARJUNASAGAR: A prehistoric pebble stone tool was found at Buddhavanam, the Buddhist Heritage Theme park, developed by Telangana government at Nagarjunasagar on Monday. The tool called ‘chopper’ belonging to the Acheulean industry in archaeological terms was picked up during the exploration conducted to create a track for walking and cycling on the peripheral edge of Buddhavanam along the river side under the guidance of Mallesh Reddy, Special Officer, Buddhavanam. E Sivanagireddy, archaeologist and Buddhist Expert Consultant, Buddhavanam, who spotted and picked up the tool said that it belonged to a period between 2.5 to 1.5 million years which clearly revealed that the Buddhavanam campus and the surroundings served as a habitation to prehistoric man.



INDIA CORNER

Delhi man falls prey to obscene video call, loses 1.5 lakh in extortion

A 44-year-old man from Central Delhi has become the latest victim of cybercrime wherein fraudsters make obscene video calls and encourage the call receiver to indulge in similar acts. The fraudsters record the act and later demand money under the threat to defame the person by uploading the video on social media, police said on Monday, adding in such cybercrime, the scammers use pre-recorded obscene videos to dupe people. The latest case came to light when the man, who has been a priest at a temple for the past several years, informed the cyber police about it. "I received a video call from a nude girl. She encouraged me to undress and I did the same. Soon, I realised my mistake and disconnected the call," he said in his complaint to police. According to police, the caller recorded his nude video and sent it to him on his WhatsApp number demanding money for not making it public.



Remarks on PM: C transfers 3 FIRs against Pawan Khera to Lucknow

The Supreme Court Monday clubbed three FIRs lodged against Congress leader Pawan Khera for allegedly making objectionable remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and transferred them to the Hazratganj police station in Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow. Extending the interim bail till April 10, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala took note of the facts that three FIRs were lodged against Khera. Out of the three FIRs, two were lodged at the Cantonment police station in Varanasi and the Hazratganj police station in Lucknow. The third FIR was lodged in Assam. The apex court bench directed that the three FIRs stand transferred to Hazratganj police station in Lucknow. Khera, whose interim bail was extended till April 10, will have to appear before the court of competent jurisdiction in Lucknow to seek regular bail in the matter. The apex court, from time to time, had been extending the interim bail of Khera.



Maoist leader carrying Rs 5 lakh reward on head surrenders in Jharkhand

A sub-zonal commander of the banned Maoist outfit Tritiya Sammelan Prastuti Committee (TSPC), who is carrying a bounty of Rs 5 lakh on his head, surrendered before the security forces in Jharkhad's Latehar district on Monday, police said. Dasrath Oraon alias Roshan Ji, who was wanted in 60 cases related to Maoist attacks, surrendered in presence of Inspector General (Palamu) Rajkumar Lakra, Latehar Superintendent of Police Anjani Anjan and CRPF commandant KD Joshi at the SP's office here. "These 60 cases were lodged in police stations of Balumath, Latehar, Chandwa, Herhaji, Manika, Tandwa and Kunda," Lakra said. After the surrender, Oraon told media persons that he was associated with activities of the CPI(Maoist) and the TSPC for the past 19 years. "I was with the CPI(Maoist) till 2016 and then shifted to the TSPC. The government's surrender policy attracted me to surrender."



India, Japan resolve to boost cooperation in Indo-Pacific

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India-Japan global partnership is based on shared democratic values and respect for the rule of law and promotes peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday after holding wide-ranging talks with his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida.

The two prime ministers largely focused on significantly boosting cooperation in areas of clean energy, semiconductors and co-development of military hardware besides exploring ways to deal with regional security challenges amidst the increasing assertiveness of China.

During the talks, Modi conveyed to Kishida that one of the areas of very strong cooperation between India and Japan could be co-innovation, co-design co-creation in the defence manufacturing sector, officials said. Modi and Kishida also vowed to work together to deal with



pressing global challenges under India's presidency of the G20 and Japan's chairship of the G7 grouping.

Kishida, who was in India for just about 27 hours, said he invited Modi to the G-7 summit in Hiroshima in May, and the offer was immediately accepted.

On the sidelines of the talks, a note was exchanged between the two sides concerning the provision of the fourth tranche of a Japanese loan of up to 300 billion yen (around Rs 18,000 crore) for the Mumbai-

Ahmedabad high-speed rail.

"The India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership is based on our shared democratic values, and respect for the rule of law in the international arena," Modi said in his media statement.

"Strengthening this partnership is not only important for both our countries, but it also promotes peace, prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

In our conversation today, we have reviewed the progress

made in our bilateral relations," he added.

The Japanese prime minister arrived in Delhi this morning on a brief visit amid global geopolitical turmoil over the Ukraine conflict and increasing concerns over China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific.

Modi said he and Kishida exchanged views on defence equipment and technology collaboration, trade, health, and digital partnership.

There was also a fruitful discussion on the importance of reliable supply chains in semiconductors and other critical technologies, he said.

"Last year, we had set a target of Japanese investment of 5 trillion yen in India in the next 5 years, that is, Rs 3,20,000 crore rupees. It is a matter of satisfaction that there has been good progress in this direction," Modi said.

Modi said "fast" progress is being made on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail project.

MHA recommends CBI probe against NGO Aman Biradari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has recommended a CBI inquiry against Aman Biradari, an NGO established by writer and human rights activist Harsh Mander, for alleged violation of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, officials said on Monday.

Mander, who was a member of the Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council during the erstwhile UPA government, founded Aman Biradari -- "a people's campaign for a secular, peaceful, just and humane world".

Official said a CBI inquiry has been recommended against Aman Biradari for violation of various provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. All NGOs receiving foreign funding have to mandatorily register with the Home Ministry under the FCRA.

According to Mander's website (<https://harshmander.in>), he is the "founder of Aman Biradari, a people's campaign for a secular, peaceful, just and humane world, established after the Gujarat communal carnage of 2002".

DELAY IN HC JUDGES' APPOINTMENT

Fix all bottlenecks: Parl panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary panel has asked the government to "fix all bottlenecks" responsible for delays in the appointment of high court judges, saying the vacancies must be filled with the same zeal as shown in the appointment of Supreme Court judges.

An apex court bench had recently expressed concern over delay in appointment and transfer of HC judges.

Last week, Law Minister Kiren Rijiju had asserted that it is the bounden duty of the government to carry out due diligence on the names recommended by the collegium.

"Otherwise I'll be sitting there as a post master," he had said. In its report on the demands for grants of the Department of Justice in the Law Ministry, the standing committee on personnel and law also observed that the government and the Supreme Court have failed to reach a consensus on revision of the Memorandum of Procedure (MOP) for appointment of judges to the



apex court and the high courts, "though the same is under consideration of both for about seven years now".

The MoP is a set of documents which guide the appointment, transfer and elevation of SC and HC judges.

The panel headed by BJP's Sushil Kumar Modi pointed out that as on December 31, 2022, vacancies in the high courts stood at 30 per cent of the total strength of 1,108.

"Six high courts have vacancies of 40 per cent and above and another six have vacancies in the range of 30 to 40 per cent. Though the situation has improved over the last year, the

vacancies at the high court level are quite significant," it observed.

In smaller states such as Manipur and Tripura where the bench strength is small, high levels of vacancies leads divisional benches not being constituted for want of judges "and if there is some retirement or elevation or transfers, the working of such high courts are brought to a standstill," it observed.

"Accordingly, the Committee recommends the Department of Justice to fix all the bottlenecks responsible for delays in the appointment of Judges at the High Court.

RUNS IN INDIA'S DNA: TN GOVERNOR

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam not a political slogan

PNS ■ COIMBATORE

The theme of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (World Is One Family) is apt for India's presidency of G20 as it has been following the concept for ages,

Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi said on Monday.

Addressing the 'G20 Young Ambassador Summit 2023' at Sri Krishna College of Engineering and Technology here as the chief guest of the programme, Ravi said the theme of the yearlong presidency of the grouping envisages "one earth, one family and one future".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not see India in different geographies, but as one family as the various welfare schemes being implemented in the last nine years, including the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme, were meant for all and not for any particular religion and caste, he pointed out. Contending that over the last 70 years, policies and schemes were shaped following the legacy of the British Raj, the Governor said that since Modi came to power, the Centre has rolled out programmes for the develop-

ment of the entire nation. He cited data stating that only 500 startups had been set up prior to 2014, and that the count has now gone up to over one lakh startups in the last nine years.

"India's way of seeing the country as one family will be invaluable in its G20 Presidency," Ravi said, adding the maxim of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is not a political slogan but a concept running in India's DNA.

He said affluent Western nations developed vaccines for Covid-19 and adopted "vaccine nationalism" but India realised the needs of different countries and manufactured vaccines considering the entire world as one family. Ravi exhorted the youth to create the space given at the G20 summit for contributing to the future and asked the delegates to create a network and interact periodically to enhance their career prospects.

The Governor urged them to come up with recommendations that can fulfil their dreams and present it before G20, and influence the leaders of the grouping to bring to fruition the proposals.



Rahul promises unemployment aid; to fill 2.5 L govt jobs

PNS ■ BELAGAVI (K'TAKA)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday called on party leaders in poll-bound Karnataka to fight the BJP in a united manner as he exuded confidence about "sweeping" the upcoming assembly elections.

The party also vowed the youth with promises of unemployment allowance -- its fourth poll 'guarantee' -- and filling up of vacancies in government jobs, in the event of the party coming to power in the State, where Assembly elections are due by May. While thanking people of Karnataka for supporting his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and making it successful, Gandhi took a dig at the BJP-led government at the Centre.



"The Yatra sent out a message that this country belongs to everyone, not just to select two to three, not Adaniji's (industrialist Gautam Adani). This country belongs to farmers, labourers, the poor and youth," the Wayanad MP said. He dubbed the Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government in Karnataka as "most corrupt in the country" and

a "40 per cent commission government". "We will fight the election together. All Congress leaders will fight together. Congress will sweep this election, because the BJP government is a 40 per cent commission government, and the people of Karnataka want to get rid of this government."

"They want a government that will work for poor, downtrodden, middle class, small traders," Gandhi said. Taking into account the message of the youth that they are not getting jobs, the Congress has decided to give Rs 3,000 per month to every graduate, and Rs 1,500 per month to every diploma holder, for two years as unemployment allowance, he said.

'Amritpal maintains close links with ISI'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pro-Khalistan supporter and radical preacher Amritpal Singh, who is on the run following a massive crackdown on his outfit 'Waris Punjab De', has allegedly been maintaining close links with drug peddlers and Pakistan's ISI to further his goal for a separate country for the Sikhs, officials said.

While drug lords were allegedly helping the pro-Khalistan preacher financially, including gifting him a high-end

Mercedes SUV, the ISI was helping him with arms, ammunition and other logistics, they said. At the time when police was chasing Singh, he was travelling in a Mercedes SUV, allegedly gifted by Ravel Singh, who is accused of peddling drugs, they said. This is the same SUV from whose sunroof he used to wave people and his supporters.

On Saturday, when police was trying to apprehend the radical preacher, he had abandoned the SUV to evade the police and rode a bike and fled the scene.



Stop arresting 'innocent' Sikh youths: SGPC

PNS ■ AMRITSAR

Amid a police crackdown against radical preacher Amritpal Singh and his associates, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on Monday asked the Punjab government to stop arresting "innocent" Sikh youths.

BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY
NGOs upset over SC ruling, seek compensation for victims

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Voluntary organisations fighting for the victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy have expressed displeasure over the Supreme Court's dismissal of the Centre's curative plea seeking an additional Rs 7,844 crore from the Union Carbide Corporation's (UCC) successor firms and demanded that the government compensate them adequately.

The apex court last week

team reaching his residence on Sunday to inquire about his "women are still being sexually assaulted" statement made during the nationwide Bharat Jodo Yatra. "Many people may be scared of the Prime Minister, BJP, RSS and the police, but I am not. I am not scared of them in the least and that is their problem. Their problem is why I am not scared."

Exit permit to US citizen after she pays full course fee: HC

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A US citizen who approached the High Court of Karnataka seeking a direction to the Union Government and Bureau of Immigration to issue her an exit permit has been ordered to pay the full fee of her MBBS course.

Coming to India on a tourist visa as a child, she had completed her education throughout claiming to be an Indian citizen. It was only when she sought an exit permit from India that it came to light that she was an US citizen on an unauthorised stay in India.

"The petitioner has shamelessly resorted to falsehood and achieved her goals by unethical means as indicated hereinabove. Curious enough, the petitioner is not even wanting to pursue her career in this country, having secured benefits throughout her career contending that she is an Indian," Justice M Nagaprasanna said in his judgment recently. The Court allowed the issuance of an exit permit to her subject to her paying the course fee applicable to a NRI/Overseas citizen of India.

'Underactive response may explain Covid in obese'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People who are obese may be more susceptible to severe COVID-19 because of a poorer inflammatory immune response, according to a study.

The research, published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, found that following SARS-CoV-2 infection, cells in the lining of the lungs, nasal cells, and immune cells in the blood show a blunted inflammatory response in obese patients, producing suboptimal levels of molecules needed to fight the infection.

While some people have very mild -- or even no -- symptoms due to COVID-19, others have much more severe symptoms, including acute res-

piratory distress syndrome requiring ventilator support.

One of the major risk factors for severe COVID-19 is obesity, which is defined as a body mass index (BMI) of over 30, the researchers said.

While this link has been shown in numerous epidemiological studies, until now, it has not been clear why obesity should increase an individual's risk of severe COVID-19.

"During the pandemic, the majority of younger patients I saw on the COVID wards were obese," said Professor Menna Clatworthy, a clinician scientist at the University of Cambridge, UK. "Given what we know about obesity, if you'd asked me why this was the case, I would have said that it was most likely due to excessive inflam-



mation. What we found was the absolute opposite," Clatworthy said.

The team analysed blood and lung samples taken from 13 obese patients with severe COVID-19 requiring mechanical ventilation and intensive care treatment, and 20 controls. The researchers used a tech-

nique known as transcriptomics, which looks at RNA molecules produced by our genetic material, DNA, to study activity of cells in these key tissues. Contrary to expectations, they found that the obese patients had underactive immune and inflammatory responses in their lungs.

In particular, when compared to non-obese patients, cells in the lining of their lungs and some of their immune cells had lower levels of activity among genes responsible for the production of two molecules known as interferons (INF) interferon-alpha and interferon-gamma which help control the response of the immune system.

The researchers also found lower levels of tumour necrosis factor (TNF), which causes inflammation.

When they looked at immune cells in the blood of 42 adults from an independent group, they found a similar, but less marked, reduction in the activity of interferon-producing genes as well as lower levels of IFN-alpha in the blood.

"This was really surprising and unexpected. Across every cell type we looked at, we found that that the genes responsible for the classical antiviral response were less active. They were completely muted," Clatworthy said.

The team was able to replicate its findings in nasal immune cells taken from obese children with COVID-19, where they again found lower levels of activity among the genes that produce IFN-alpha and IFN-gamma. This is important because the nose is one of the entry points for the virus a robust immune response there could prevent the infection spreading further into the body, while a poorer response would be less effective, the researchers said.

Digital solutions hold capacity to revolutionise healthcare: Mandaviya

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Digital solutions hold the capacity to revolutionise the healthcare delivery systems and under the visionary leadership of the prime minister, India aims to launch a global initiative on digital health as an institutional framework, said Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday.

This framework aims to converge the global efforts for digital health and scale up digital solutions with use of cutting-edge technologies, Mandaviya said as he virtually addressed the 'Global Conference on Digital Health - Taking Universal Health Coverage to the Last Citizen', a co-branded event under India's G20

Presidency organised by WHO - South-East Asia Region in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

"It is time to move from 'silos to systems' with collaboration of all countries for enhanced coverage and quality of healthcare services," he said. Highlighting the importance of digital health, Mandaviya said digital health is a great enabler in delivery of healthcare services and has the potential to support overall universal health coverage (UHC) targets.

He further said that national health policies proved instrumental for various path-breaking digital health intervention ensuring availability, accessibility and affordability, and equity of health services.



Asian alliance

Japanese PM Kishida's visit to New Delhi has the potential to open new vistas in bilateral ties

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to New Delhi Monday is important not just from the perspective of bilateral relations covering a gamut of spheres but also a critical signal it sends to the big bullies in the international arena: democracies are joining hands like never before. The two nations are discussing a raft of issues, ranging from defence and security to trade, investment, and technology. Committing themselves to a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kishida vowed to expand the India-Japan global strategic partnership. This century has seen the deepening and broadening of the bilateral ties, which became 'Global Partnership' in 2000, 'Strategic and Global Partnership' in 2006, and 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership' in 2014. This is of great importance against the backdrop of China's bellicosity in the region. It is serendipitous that India's presidency of G20 coincides with Japan's presidency of the G7. It needs to be mentioned here that Kishida has been striving to bring the rich and poor nations of the world together. In his address to the Japanese Parliament earlier this year, he revived the term Global South. This was a favorite of the votaries of non-alignment, used to depict and highlight the North-South conflicts. But the Japanese Prime Minister resuscitated just the term, not the idea that it connoted to the pinkish non-alignment enthusiasts. He doesn't seem to be an admirer of Nehruvian principles in international matters; he would not like to act as the trade union leader of poor nations and fight against rich countries; indeed he comes from a rich country. He



wants to unite all countries, rich as well as poor, for a rules-based international order.

Kishida is following the late prime minister Shinzo Abe's foreign policy, which has been called "panoramic diplomacy." It has been officially described as a "diplomacy that takes a panoramic perspective of the terrestrial globe." Gone are the days of Tokyo's pacifism. A quarter of a century ago, when India carried out nuclear explosions, Tokyo condemned New Delhi. Today, however, Japan sees an ally in India in the eventuality of a conflict with China; it is arming itself. Japan's role in strengthening the Quad is critical. It is a measure of growing proximity between the two nations that Modi and Kishida met three times in 2022. Along with defence and security cooperation between the two Asian democracies, trade is also growing. Last year, the bilateral trade was \$20.75 billion, the largest ever. The two countries signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement or CEPA in 2011. Now both sides emphasise reliable supply chains for semiconductors and other critical technologies. A year ago, Kishida had promised a Rs 320,000-crore investment target in India in five years. This may be the time to redeem the old promise — and make new ones. The same is true for India.

PICTALK



A boy plays with snow on a tree in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir

PTI

Memories rush back as the mangoes bloom

Being in the midst of nature is unmatched. To be one with nature is to live a pristine life in tune with the moment

In spring, trees bloom, turning the world into a colourful garden. One bloom that stands out is the bloom of mango trees. The trees bloom and the air is filled with a sweet scent that attracts bees, birds, and people. For me, as a child, the season of spring, which starts in February in north India and spills into the month of March, was a season of extremes. The first few days were spent studying for final exams, and the last few days were spent jovially and academically free. We played hide and seek or explored the jungle trails during the balmy, pleasant weather filled with colors and fragrances of spring. Occasionally, we sneaked into a friend's ox driven 'Belna' (country made sugarcane juice machine) where freshly prepared jaggery coming from a huge boiler, treated our taste buds.

As the weather gets warmer, the bloom starts maturing and with the onset of monsoons, the fruit is ripe and ready. During school days, the ripening of mangoes coincided with the two-



month long monsoon break and there are so many memories associated with those mango-savouring holidays. Every tree had a folklore and history associated with it—some were planted by a revered ancestor and some took to roots by accident, some had divine powers and some were the abode of ghosts, some bore fruits

every year and some never. The rain soaked days, paddy fields and trees blanketed in green, mango trees loaded with fruits, the streams filled with fresh water meandering leisurely downhill, the early morning calls of 'koel' (Cuckoo) and the company of friends made those times truly memorable ones. It was like reliving all

those past moments when I was at home at the beginning of the mango bloom. A whiff of fresh fragrance from our courtyard blooming mango tree transported me back in time. I savoured every day trying to hold on to those smells, sights and flavours and enjoyed every moment of spring at home. The sun rises woke me up early to witness the most spectacular sights of nature and the sunsets took me to the highest hilltop in the village, the flowing streams led me on paths less taken, the forests took me in a search of wild, I sat under trees and felt the morning breeze touching my cheeks, I roamed in wheat fields and saw the fresh dew drops kissing the tender plants, I heard the birds chirping in the silence of mornings, I sat on the bank of the rivers to feel the stillness and solitude, I met old friends and we talked late into the nights, like good old times and doing all this I understood the true meaning of living in moments. (The writer pens down stories of human interest and his travels. He also likes to click portraits)



AMIT KANWAR

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The hullabaloo over UK's refugee policy

There's been a sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers to Britain. PM Rishi Sunak is trying to put a timely end to the impending danger



SARADINDU MUKHERJI

The outcry over the latest Refugee/Asylum Bill in Britain was not unexpected. The Indian media has not remained unaffected. Incidentally, even a fraction of this "concern" is seldom seen in the latter's coverage of genuine refugees fleeing to India — victims of religious persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan!

The website of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) indicates that it "is profoundly concerned by the asylum Bill introduced by the UK Government in the House of Commons". It further stated, "The legislation, if passed, would amount to an asylum ban-extinguishing the right to seek refugee protection in the U.K. for those who arrive irregularly, no matter how genuine or compelling their claims may be". It further urged, "the Government, to all MPs and Peers to reconsider the Bill and instead pursue a more humane and practical policy solution".

Be that as it may, the ground reality is that there has been a sharp increase in the number of small boat arrivals on British shores in recent times. All of them have sought asylum in the country. In the year ending September 2022, the UK received 72,027 asylum applications. This is double the number of applicants received in 2019. Add to this the number of unresolved cases. In the critical backdrop of the UK's declining Christian population and a sudden upsurge in the Muslim population, it assumes a serious complexion. These are the real causes of concern.

Since the 1950s, there have been many legal and illegal immigrants who have settled down in English and have done well. Most of them have complied with the norms of the host community. As against them, there have been a growing number of Islamic terrorist activities, targeting the sons of the soil and their civilizational values. One would do well to recall, among many, the activities of the ISIS bride Shamima Begum, who had been stripped of her British citizenship and the forceful cam-



paigned in her favour by numerous Britishers including the B.B.C. There are areas in London and the midlands, which make one feel as if they have been transported to a strange, unfamiliar territory, resembling more of a Pakistani and Bangladeshi ghetto.

In the early 1990s, a "Muslim Parliament" had been set up in Britain and had been clamouring for absurd favours including the introduction of Sharia! This writer pointed out this emerging threat thirty years ago. ("Muslim Parliament in Secular Britain", The Pioneer, 7 Feb 1992; "Islamic Assertion in Britain", The Pioneer, 30 June 1995)

They carry with them the medieval religious-social-political norms of their original homeland that were notorious for inhumane treatment of religious minorities. Then, there are the crimes committed by the Muslim grooming gangs who have played systematic havoc with the British white girls besides many Hindu/ Sikh girls, unfortunately abetted by the British society on the pretext of multiculturalism that has generally failed. Integration of such a sizable and viciously



MANY OF THESE IMMIGRANTS CARRY THE MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS-SOCIAL-POLITICAL NORMS OF THEIR ORIGINAL HOMELANDS, WHICH ARE INFAMOUS FOR THEIR INHUMAN TREATMENT OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

ungrateful segment of the population into the mainstream was a non-starter to begin with.

After all, the UK, is a sovereign nation and its political culture is shaped by the ideas of Hobbes— who had enunciated the concept of untrammeled sovereignty (Leviathan, 1561) which came to be tempered by the liberal ideas of John Lock and the subsequent political revolutions and remedial parliamentary legislations. While its claim to "civilizing mission" in its erstwhile colonies, when the Sun had not yet set on the British Empire, need not be taken seriously, it is absurd to demand that every refugee/asylum seeker entering Britain by hook or crook is entitled to stay back and enjoy all the benefits of a welfare state free of cost. Those who find this Nazi like may have to revise their knowledge of some rudimentary history!

Rishi Sunak, and his Conservative Party may have correctly sensed the nature of the impending danger, and are now trying to put a timely end to it. Surely, the number of their sympathisers in Britain and elsewhere in the civilised world would

increase. Sunak belongs to a Hindu family that once lived in a part of undivided India which is now in Pakistan. Unlike many of India's political classes, he must be aware of the disastrous consequences of a changing religious demographic. There is still a solution to the problem in Whitehall even without Palmerston and Disraeli.

Following the mass expulsion of Asians by Idi Amin from Kenya, their rehabilitation in Britain was both legal and justified, and so is the status of the asylum seekers from Hong Kong, which had been a Crown colony till it was returned to China, and inhabitants of the Falkland islands for which the "Iron Lady" had fought with Argentina.

It is high time that the UNHCR and its parent bodies extinguish the very roots of this malady in the countries of origin — the persecution of religious minorities and their flight across boundaries. Why should they not begin with India's neighborhood? That should be a top priority for any non-political and impartial humanitarian agency.

(The author is a Member of the ICHR)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NO RELAXATION FOR EWS MEMBERS

Sir — The rationale behind the reservation of seats in Government employment and education is often asserted to be the inadequate representation of various social groups. Due to poor implementation of government policies, sometimes even by the Government itself, the purpose of reservation in favour of reserved categories, be it OBC, SC, ST, or the newly introduced EWS, often gets defeated in other dimensions. I recently observed that the application fee for various government examinations such as Provincial Civil Service (PCS) in states like Uttar Pradesh for EWS candidates is exactly the same as for the unreserved (General) candidates. This is ironic because the very purpose behind the EWS quota is to uplift economically weaker sections as is evident from the very definition of EWS. Thus, it defeats the very purpose of reservation. This is because EWS candidates may find it difficult to fill out the forms for those exams where the application fees are very high.

Shivanshu K Srivastava | Lucknow

NATIONALIST MUSLIMS

Sir — According to a certain prominent leader of a poll-bound state, his party definitely needs the support of "nationalist Muslims"! However there has been no mention of asking for support from "nationalist Hindus"! Surely in his dictionary, the entire Hindu community is "nationalist" by default! After all no Hindu can afford to terrorise or work against the nation, such is their "sanskar"! Disgusting, but hardly surprising given his party's "glorious tradition" of flexing rabid religious muscle mixed with invocations of barbaric Islamophobia!

Also thanks to him, we can arrive at the conclusion that loudspeakers "screaming" azan (which get performed few times a day for just a few minutes) disturb the neighborhood students and patients; but his silence upon the day/days long screams (shlokas, bhajans, mantras, drums, conch, bells) coming from loudspeakers of temples during various festivals throughout the

Millet: Superfood against hunger



The United Nations has declared the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYOM) in response to a suggestion made by the Indian government to promote millets as a nutritious and climate-resilient crop. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also voiced his support for Millets. He stated that they are the gateway to prosperity for small farmers and a key to fighting hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

The Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference held in Pusa, New Delhi, is a crucial event for

the global good, highlighting India's increasing responsibility for the global good. It is a matter of great honor for India that after its proposal and efforts, the United Nations declared 2023 the International Year of Millets.

Millets have been a staple in India for centuries, mentioned in some of the oldest Yajurveda texts. However, with the Green Revolution in the 1960s, millets were replaced by rice and wheat, which were considered more profitable. But now, with the promotion of millets as a superfood, their popularity is once again on the rise. The International Year of Millets is an opportunity to promote millets as a superfood and raise awareness of their benefits. The Indian government's Millet Mission is an example of the importance placed on promoting millets and their potential to fight hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

year prove that if sound emanates from temples, it acts as balm or honey upon ears without causing minimum disturbance to the neighbourhood students and patients! What better can be expected from such a force which treats electoral wins of their own as "Victory of democracy" but the Opposition wins are "triumph of dynasts!" What a blatant example of hypocrisy!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

CLOSING OF MADRASAS IN ASSAM

Sir — Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's decision to shut down all madrasas is a foolish decision. It is nothing but a move to suppress the Muslim community. By closing all madrasas in the State and saying that there is a threat to our culture and tradition is against our constitution. This is because it is against the right to practice and learn his own religion. Instead of converting Madrasas into other schools why don't the Assam Government construct new modern schools? Government funding should only be stopped if they believe the Quran is being taught in madrasas. Who are

these people to decide what to study and what not to study? If madrasas are closed, there will be mass dropout of female students. Is this *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*? In any madrasa, besides Islamic studies and languages such as Arabic and Urdu, general subjects and other modern Indian languages are taught to all students. Many parents who prefer their daughters to get Islamic education along with regular subjects will pull them out of schools.

The Assam Government has forgotten that notable personalities such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Munshi Prem Chand, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and Dr. Zakir Hussain studied in madrasas. Previously the Government cited that madrasas are funded by terror activities. However, the Government could find nothing like that in the madrasas. The Assam Government should know that these madrasas were set up to fulfill a religious need rather than promote enmity with any community.


Zakir Hussain | Kazipet

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FIRST COLUMN

LIFE INSURANCE UNDER THE NEW I-T SCHEME

What to do with the insurance policies already taken, is the big question



S KALYANASUNDARAM

The Union Budget presented for the next fiscal year has provided the necessary incentive for taxpayers to switch to a new income tax scheme. Individual taxpayers are free to choose the old scheme or the updated scheme as per his/her convenience. Under the old scheme, tax payers were claiming deductions based on different savings, expenses and loan repayments as per provisions of the IT Act. The revised scheme does not allow any such deductions and immediately provides a higher exemption limit. Therefore, individuals opting for the new scheme need not continue with their savings.


The situation provides an opportunity for individuals to continue or discontinue endowment policies (and also similar life cover instruments like Money back policies, ULIP etc.). Though ideally term insurance will be the best option for life coverage, many have contracted for endowment policies on the perception that it is also a saving instrument. If they have taken the insurance only as a saving measure, they now have the option to discontinue it. The following options are available when choosing a new tax scheme for endowment policies (and similar policies).

Surrender the policy

It is possible to surrender the insurance policy to the issuer. This means no more premium is payable on this and the life cover will also lapse. The insurance company will return what is called the surrender value. Surrender value is the amount the policyholder will get from the life insurance company if he decides to exit the policy before maturity. Surrender value varies from policy to policy and it is printed on the policy itself.

Do not surrender but stop paying premium

This would not be the only option available. One need not surrender the policy but simply stop paying further premiums. When one continues with the policy without paying any further premium, the policy will have what is called "Paid up Value". In other words, the paid up value is the value payable at maturity of the discontinued policy (of premium payment).



Generally, a life insurance policy with an investment value earns some paid up value after at least 3 years in force (5 years for ULIPs). This means that policies like money-back endowment will have paid-up value after 3 years and ULIP will have market value after 5 years. To calculate the paid up value, multiply the number of premiums paid by the sum assured by the total number of premiums. This method will offer continuing life coverage at a reduced amount (paid up value) and maturing.

Allow it to lapse

By not paying premiums further, one can allow the policy to lapse if it has no surrender value. The premium paid will be a loss. But cash outflows for many more years in the future will be a big saving.

Taxation

The surrender value of a life policy is allowed as a tax-free benefit only if it fulfils some conditions with regard to the number of years premium paid. But as the surrender value eligibility matches this, the surrender value will be tax free. (Only if the policy was issued between 1st April 2003 and 31st March 2012, there are additional conditions). There is no change in the deductions allowed in earlier years on account of premium payment. For paid up value, the amount received on maturity will be tax free.

Takeaway

The revised income tax regime allows the discontinuation of insurance policies taken with intent to save. This should not be confused with the necessity of life insurance. One may need life insurance protection, and it may be appropriate to have term insurance for the amount of coverage required. The decision of surrendering, continuing the policy without further premiums, or letting it lapse depends on the individual's determination of opportunity cost.

(The writer is a retired banker)

Inflation management needs salutary changes



SUMEET BHASIN

The Reserve Bank of India's MPC will meet in the first week of April. The stakeholders are concerned if it will emerge wiser from recent global experiences



Vietnam became the first country to break ranks with the global community to cut the policy rates. The Central bank of Vietnam surprised the global economists to cut the benchmark interest rate. The East Asian nation was wary of the fact that the blind-walking alongside the US Federal Reserve to keep raising the interest rates would have surely taken its economy into fast downturn.

Europe remains hawkish with rate hikes, increasing the policy rate by 50 basis points last week. Jerome Powell, the head of the US Federal Reserve, has come under intense fire within his country. He is being accused of walking the US economy to the doorsteps of a deep recession. He has been dogged in pursuit of higher interest rates despite fellow members cautioning him of risks associated with hawkish measures.

Within a span of a few days, three banks in the US have come to their knees, with one collapsing in 48 hours. The US and Europe are now battling the worst fears of economists of banks failing the high interest regime. The monetary policy meeting (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India will meet in the first week of April. The concerned stakeholders are watching out with intense curiosity to see if the MPC of the RBI will be wiser from the immediate global experiences of following a hawkish path.

Inflation indeed is a cause of concern. The poor suffers the most from an uncontrolled inflation. Therefore, there is an unequivocal understanding that inflation must be tamed with all the policy might available at the RBI and the government.

But it must not be ignored that high interest rates may be suicidal for the economy, as a number of factors make it less effective at controlling inflation, while harmful economic growth more. High interest rates drive away capital, which may exacerbate inflation further, while harming emerging economies more by putting pressure on their currencies.

Several studies and reports have taken



note of the creditstress, harming small businesses and low-income households, who are most sensitive to changes in interest rates, while being at loan repayments risks when rates are high. Also, economic growth naturally takes the blows of high interest rate regime, as private investment and private consumption take backseat in the economy.

Furthermore, increasing interest rates may not address the underlying causes of inflation, which can be caused by a range of factors, including rise in the money supply, high production costs, or changes in consumer demand. For instance high cereal costs in India is driving inflation high. Indeed, core inflation is also staying above six per cent. But cereal and fruits are making the management of inflation a daunting task. India indeed needs to take steps to work on post-harvest management with the participation of the private capital to ensure that the cereals, fruits and vegetables don't march on high price trajectory to give fresh legs to inflation.

Thus, it's incumbent upon the policymakers to consider targeted interventions to address specific drivers of inflation. The government has done well by proactively asking the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to auction the public wheat stock in the open market. The four rounds of the auctions of the wheat stocks have shown sobering impact on the wheat prices, which have significantly cooled down in the last few days.

Similar interventions are needed to cool down the prices of the specific drivers stepping up the inflation. The price stabilization fund, which is a mechanism created by the Centre, to deal with the volatility in the prices of food items needs effective utilization. This has

WITHIN A FEW DAYS, THREE BANKS IN THE US HAVE COME TO THEIR KNEES, WITH ONE COLLAPSING IN 48 HOURS. THE US AND EUROPE ARE NOW BATTLING THE WORST FEARS OF ECONOMISTS OF BANKS FAILING THE HIGH INTEREST REGIME

(Author is a policy analyst)

to be done by the state governments with effective utilization of the market intelligence architecture. It will be worthwhile to explore if there could be a mechanism to incentivize the states for better performances on the price stabilization front.

Failures among banks, including Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), have been attributed to a variety of factors, with high-interest rates bring the principal culprit, which has proven to be unsustainable and even disastrous. Banks resort to offer high-interest rates to attract depositors in pursuit of rapid growth. But the banks tend to gain customers who are primarily interested in the rate, leading to a higher concentration of risky or unstable deposits. This makes banks becoming host to hot money, which can make a sudden flight from the first sign of stress, as had been the case with Silicon Valley Bank and other regional banks in the US.

By all accounts the RBI will not be able to meet the projected inflation rate of 5.7 per cent for this fiscal. This will be possible only if inflation crashes by over 230 points in the last month of the financial year. This will call for the RBI to explain why it failed in the inflation management as mandated by Parliament. We already know that couple of the members of the MPC had opposed the Repo Rate hike in the last meeting. Therefore, it will be desired that the RBI embraces a course correction in the light of the fresh developments globally.

Pausing the rate hike trend will be most desired by the stakeholders. Cut in the rate hikes will, however, be the demand of the prevailing situations. Also, the fact that India had not resorted to printing of currencies to deal with the situations arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic may be factored in since the market is not flush with cash that requires to be sucked out. Indeed, the US and the European nations had excessively printed their currencies to deal with the economic crises due to the pandemic. They may require flushing out the excess cash from the system to control the inflation. This is surely not the case in India.

But it must not be forgotten that India has paid a heavy price for such quick-fix approach of the government to deal with the situations arising out of the economic crisis. The UPA government led by Manmohan Singh, former prime minister, had done exactly the same thing, of giving cash in the hands of the people in its bid to find an easy way out of the economic crisis, which India faced in the wake of the 2008 global crisis. This had led India to double-digit food inflation for the remainder of the term of the UPA government.

It was only when Narendra Modi took charge of the country as the prime minister that the Central government could tame the runaway food inflation with agile policy making.

The weather scientists have warned that India may have to face El Nino this year. There may be a risk of weather pattern disruptions, which could also have bearing on prices of several items, which constitute the retail inflation basket. This also calls for the RBI to elicit wider participation in the process of the inflation management, since some of the solutions may lie in the domains of the Centre and the state governments.

It must be understood that working in silos is an ailment that made India suffer the most. The RBI must make sure that it's not working from silos.


Reforming Parliament: Charity begins at home

It is high time that parliamentary reforms are undertaken to make the House more effective and in sync with the changing times

Just as we need reforms in many other areas, Parliament needs reforms urgently. Right now, both Houses remain paralysed. The Opposition is looking for public and media attention to embarrass the Government, while the Government is also in an aggressive mood.

The BJP opposed the earlier Congress Governments precisely as the Congress is following now, everything which could attract the public and media attention. The direct TV telecast also makes members play to the gallery.

The face-off between the adamant Treasury Benches and the belligerent Opposition continues over two controversial issues. The first concerns Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's recent alleged defam-



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The author is a senior journalist)

atory comments about the Modi government in the U.K. Strangely, the treasury benches are demanding, "Rahul Gandhi *sadan mein aao, sadan mein aakar maafi mango* (Rahul Gandhi come to the House and apologise)".

The second comes from the Opposition, which demands a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Adani-Hindenburg issue. The Adoni issue had been simmering for some time, but the Government has been unwilling to discuss it in the House.

The second half of the budget session opened on March 13. The row has become intense now, with the Opposition taking to the streets. The Congress also gave a privilege notice against Prime Minister Narendra

Modi in Lok Sabha.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said, "A member of this House (meaning Rahul Gandhi) went abroad and made defamatory comments. He has to tender an apology. And how these people (some Opposition MPs) who are protesting and carrying placards in the House should be acted against; in my opinion, they should be suspended."

This brings us to the larger question of Parliament's functioning. There are enough checks and balances. Parliament's liberal framework provides many opportunities for vigorous debate, discussion, and dissent. Political parties must replace disorder, disruption and delay in legislation with debate, discussion, and decision in a democracy. The

adage is while the Opposition should have its say, the Government should have its way.

Historically, there was a degree of homogeneity in both Houses in the fifties and sixties. Many members like Piloo Modii enlivened the House with their repartees, humour, and healthy debates while maintaining the dignity and decorum of the House.

Congress shrank since the eighties while others, including regional parties, grew, leading to coalition politics.

Another area for improvement is the duration of sittings. Most state legislatures sit for barely 30 days a year. In some, like Haryana and Punjab, the average is about a fortnight. The Parliament spends less time on legislative business resulting in lawmakers spending less time on law-making.

The first three Lok Sabhas sat for an average of 120 DAYS a year. The Lok Sabha spent less than 10 minutes to pass a law, and the Rajya Sabha less than half an hour.

The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution recommended that Lok Sabha should have at least 120 and Rajya Sabha 100 sittings. A single minute in Parliament leads to an expenditure of Rs. 2.5 lakhs approx to the exchequer.

The former chief justice N.V. Ramana recently lamented how Parliament passed laws without deliberation and debate. The judiciary interprets the law and always looks for the discussion before passing the law. The presiding officers of both Houses have time and again urged the members to maintain the dignity of the House in mind.

There should be a complete revamp of the rules to make clearing legislation and discussion on issues open, transparent, and outcome-oriented. Secondly, political parties should choose eminent men and women as members.

Thirdly, new members should be given adequate time to participate in the proceedings.

Fourthly, the party leaders should focus more on Parliament's functioning as they are also stakeholders.

Fifthly, Question Hour should not be disturbed as that is when Government answers many questions. The cancellation of Zero Hour and

Question Hour indicates that parliamentary reforms are urgently needed.

Sixthly, presiding officers should be given more teeth.

Seventhly, accommodation and negotiations should be part of the conduct of the House.

Eighthly, new members should be trained to understand the House's rules and regulations.

The parliamentary committees have gradually decreased their number of sittings. The Government also only refers some pieces of legislation to the committee.

A healthy democracy needs a fit functioning Parliament. Indian democracy has matured over the years, and it is time to make some necessary corrective issues.

MONEY MATTERS

Air India to temporarily reduce flights on some US routes: CEO

Air India will reduce the frequency of flights on certain US routes due to crew shortage issues for a temporary period, its chief Campbell Wilson said on Monday. Six weekly flights to the US, three each to Newark and San Francisco will be trimmed. Wilson also said the airline will have 100 pilots for Boeing 777 planes in three months as they are being "activated" and around 1,400 cabin crew are in training. In recent months, there have been instances of some long haul flights getting impacted due to crew shortage issues. Wilson, who is the CEO and MD, said frequencies will be reduced on some US routes due to crew shortage issues. The six weekly flights -- three each to Newark and San Francisco -- will be reduced due to shortage of crew. This will be in place for the coming two to three months, Wilson said. The airline has a staff strength of around 11,000 people, including flying and non-flying employees.



Mahindra fully acquires MITRA Agro Equipments

Mahindra & Mahindra on Monday said it has fully acquired MITRA Agro Equipments Pvt Ltd for an undisclosed amount. The company's Farm Equipment Sector (FES) has increased its stake in MITRA Agro Equipments Pvt Ltd (M.I.T.R.A) to 100 per cent from the existing 47.33 per cent. As part of the acquisition, Mahindra has fully bought out Omnivore's stake in the business. The company, however, did not share financial details. "Mahindra aims to grow its farm machinery business by 10-fold in 5 years and is making rapid progress towards achieving this goal. The additional share purchase in M.I.T.R.A would aid Mahindra's growth and expansion into the growing horticulture market," Mahindra & Mahindra Farm Equipment Sector President Hemant Sikka said in a statement. Founded in 2012 by Devneet Bajaj, M.I.T.R.A is a leading player in high precision orchard sprayers, a brand for farmers growing fruits like grapes.



We don't want to be in a rush: Jet Airways

Jet Airways CEO-Designate Sanjiv Kapoor on Monday said the new management does not want to be "in a rush" to restart operations while asserting that the airline will be unique and different. The ownership transfer of the airline under the insolvency resolution plan is facing hurdles over differences between the winning bidder and lenders. "We don't want to be in a rush," Kapoor said. Speaking at the CAPA aviation summit in the national capital, he also said it is a marathon and not a sprint. In October 2020, the airline's Committee of Creditors (CoC) approved the revival plan submitted by the consortium of Dubai-based Murari Lal Jalan and the UK's Kalrock Capital. In June 2021, the consortium's bid was approved under the insolvency resolution process. However, the implementation of the plan is getting delayed. Once-storied carrier, Jet Airways shuttered operations in April 2019.



FM: No direction on loading Rs 2,000 notes in ATMs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

No instructions have been given to banks for filling or not filling Rs 2,000 notes in Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) as lenders make their own choice for loading of cash vending machines, Parliament was informed on Monday.

As per Annual Reports of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the total value of Rs 500 and Rs 2,000 denomination bank notes in circulation as at end-March 2017 and as at March-end 2022 was Rs 9,512 lakh crore and Rs 27,057 lakh crore, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a written reply in Lok Sabha.

"No instructions have been given to banks for not filling Rs 2,000 notes in ATMs. Banks make their own assessment of amount and denominational requirement for ATMs on the basis of past usage, consumer requirement, seasonal trend, etc," she said.

Replying to another question, the finance minister said,



total amount of the central government debt/liabilities is estimated at about Rs 155.8 lakh crore (57.3 per cent of GDP) as on March 31, 2023.

Out of this, she said, external debt valued at current exchange rate is estimated at Rs 7.03 lakh crore (2.6 per cent of GDP).

"Share of external debt is only about 4.5 per cent of total

debt/liabilities of the central government and less than 3 per cent of GDP. External debt is mostly financed by multilateral and bilateral agencies at concessional rates. Therefore, the risk profile stands out as safe and prudent," she said.

RBI in consultation with the government has announced various measures recently to diversify and

expand the sources of forex funding to mitigate exchange rate volatility and global spillovers, she said.

It included, "fresh FCNR(B) and NRE deposits were exempted from the extant regulation on interest rates (i.e. interest rates shall not be higher than those offered by the banks on comparable domestic rupee term deposits) till October 31, 2022."

The external commercial borrowing limit under automatic route has been raised to USD 1.5 billion and the all-in-cost ceiling has been raised by 100 basis points in select cases up to December 31, 2022, she said.

In order to promote the growth of exports from India and to support the increasing interest of the global trading community in the Indian rupee, she said, RBI has put in place an additional arrangement for invoicing, payment, and settlement of exports/imports in the rupee on July 11, 2022 etc.

'Strong case to hike coal prices, could happen soon'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Coal India Chairman Pramod Agrawal on Monday said there is a "strong case" for increasing coal prices, and the hike could be effected "very soon" as discussions are underway with stakeholders.

Agrawal also said he is confident the mining behemoth will achieve its production target of 1 billion tonnes by 2025-26.

"There is a strong case for increasing coal prices, as that has not happened in the last five-odd years. This year, the wage negotiation has taken place as well, which will have an impact on CIL's financial condition, especially for a few subsidiaries where the manpower cost is very high."

"There will be a lot of problems if prices are not hiked. Discussions are underway with stakeholders... It will happen very soon," Agrawal said at the Indian Coal Markets Conference here organized by Mjunction.

PSU banks' gross NPA declines to 5.53%

○ Earn total profit of Rs 70,167 cr in Apr-Dec FY23

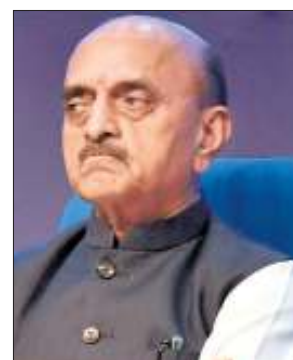
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has taken various reforms following which asset quality of public sector banks has improved significantly with gross NPA ratio declining from the peak of 14.6 per cent in March 2018 to 5.53 per cent in December 2022, Parliament was informed on Monday.

All PSBs are in profit with aggregate profit being Rs 66,543 crore in 2021-22, and that further increased to Rs 70,167 crore in first nine months of current financial year, Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat K Karad said in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

At the same time, resilience has increased with provision coverage ratio of PSBs rising from 46 per cent to 89.9 per cent in December 2022, he said, adding capital adequacy ratio of PSBs improved significantly from 11.5 per cent in March 2015 to 14.5 per cent in December 2022.

Total market cap of PSBs (excluding IDBI Bank, which was



categorised as private sector bank in January 2019) increased from Rs 4.52 lakh crore in March 2018 to Rs 10.63 lakh crore in December 2022, he said.

Karad also said banks, earlier placed under Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework by RBI, have made significant improvement.

Talking about various measures taken to improve the financial health of PSBs, Karad said, the government implemented a comprehensive 4R strategy of

Recognising NPAs transparently, Resolution and recovery, Recapitalising PSBs, and Reforms in the financial ecosystem.

Major banking reforms undertaken by the government over the last eight years addressed credit discipline, responsible lending and improved governance, besides adoption of technology, amalgamation of banks, and maintaining general confidence of bankers, he said.

In reply to another question, Karad said, as per the information provided by Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH), the total estimated vehicle fleet is 30.48 crore (excluding data from Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Lakshadweep), of which 16.54 crore vehicles are uninsured.

Replying to another question, Karad said the government since 2016 has given 'in-principle' approval for strategic disinvestment of 36 cases of public sector enterprises (PSEs) and/or subsidiaries'/joint ventures of PSEs/ banks.

Gold rallies Rs 1,400 to touch all-time high; silver zooms Rs 1,860

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price rallied Rs 1,400 to touch a life-time high of Rs 60,100 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had ended at Rs 58,700 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also zoomed Rs 1,860 to Rs 69,340 per kilogramme.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 60,100 per 10 grams, up Rs 1,400 per 10 grams," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas markets, both gold and silver were trading higher at USD 2,005 per ounce and USD 22.55 per ounce, respectively.

Comex Gold prices traded



higher in Asian trading hours on Monday and rose to a fresh 52-week high of USD 2,005 per ounce, Gandhi said.

"Bullions continue surge, with gold on domestic front hitting a new life-time high of over Rs 60,000, as a wave of banking crises shook global markets and put bullion on track for its biggest weekly rise in three years, while bets solidified for a less aggressive Fed in its fight against inflation," Navneet Damani, Senior VP - Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

Sensex sheds 360 points, Nifty closes below 17k amid global rout

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex declined by 360 points while the Nifty closed below the 17,000-level on Monday due to a sell-off in financials, IT and capital goods shares amid a global rout in equities on lingering worries over the banking crisis.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 360.95 points or 0.62 per cent to close at 57,628.95 as 23 of its stocks ended in the red. The index tanked more than 900 points to touch a low of 57,084.91 before recovering some losses at the fag end.

The broader Nifty of the NSE plunged by 111.65 points or 0.65 per cent to close below



the 17,000-level at 16,988.40. As many as 40 Nifty stocks declined while 10 advanced.

Analysts said investors fretted over the US banking crisis even as Federal Reserve and other central banks took efforts to ease a fast-growing banking crisis.

"The fear of contagion of the financial crisis has kept investors away from the equity markets as the global mar-

ket faces numerous hurdles. Despite Swiss regulators' intervention to protect the global financial system, investor sentiment remained shaky," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Among Sensex shares, Bajaj Finserv fell the most by 4.08 per cent. Bajaj Finance declined by 3.01 per cent, Tata Steel by 2.2 per cent, Wipro by 2.09 per cent, Tata Motors by 1.96 per cent, IndusInd Bank by 1.9 per cent, SBI by 1.75 per cent, Tech Mahindra by 1.66 per cent and HCL Tech by 1.2 per cent.

TCS, Infosys, Power Grid, Maruti, Reliance, HDFC twins, L&T, M&M, NTPC and Ultratech Cement were also among the losers.

PE/VC investments nearly halve in Feb 2023: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Investments by private equity and venture capital funds declined by 44 per cent to USD 3.7 billion in February compared to the same period a year ago, a report said on Monday.

The bets by the long-term investors were 13 per cent lower when compared to the investments in the preceding month of January, the report by industry lobby Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association and consultancy firm EY, said.

"rising global recession concerns, increasing cost of capital and mismatch in valuation expectations between sellers and investors are turning out to be major impediments in



the deployment of capital," EY's partner Vivek Soni said.

He added that the recent events in the global financial world after the failure of SVB and the contagion spreading to other mid-market US banks catering to the technology sector has added to the overall uncertainty, and "may discourage investors from making bold bets in the immediate term".

PSUs asked to issue LoCs based on their financial strength

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has asked central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) to issue letters of comfort (LoCs) on the basis of their own financial strength so that no liability devolves on the Government of India.

The Office Memorandum dated March 20, 2023, has been issued following a request from some CPSUs in the oil and power sector seeking relaxation with regard to the issuance of LoCs.



"In view of requirements, it has been decided that CPSUs may issue LoCs on its own financial strength and all such LoCs shall only be issued after specifically inserting the following clause--under no circumstances, the liability under this Letter of Comfort shall

devolve on the Government of India," the memorandum said.

Under the provision of the fiscal responsibility law, the budget requires to provide details of guarantees given by the government.

It further clarified that ministries and departments will not issue any letters of comfort as specified under the Office Memorandum dated March 31, 2022 on behalf of the Government of India.

Issuance of LoCs based on own financial strength is a part of regular business practice.

Merged AI Express-AirAsia India will have enormous potential

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The integration of Air India Express and AirAsia India is expected to be complete by the end of next financial year and the merged entity will have "enormous growth opportunities" in the coming years, according to a top executive.

Air India, Air India Express, Vistara and AirAsia India, now rebranded as AIX Connect are part of the Tata Group.

The merger process of Air India Express and AirAsia India as well as that of Vistara with Air India is underway.

Air India Express CEO Alok Singh on Monday said the businesses of the airline and AIX Connect are complementary.

The merged entity of Air India Express and AirAsia India will look at large growth opportunities and also unlock the synergies between the two carriers, Singh said.

Speaking at the CAPA aviation summit here, he also said the merger of the two carriers is expected to be complete by the end of next fiscal.

Singh is now in charge of both Air India Express and AirAsia India.

India to be among top 5 markets for Cisco by 2025

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Telecom gear maker Cisco is bullish about India's business prospects where rapid digitisation across sectors and 5G play are fuelling robust growth, a top executive said on Monday, adding India is well on its way to be counted among top five markets for the company globally by 2025.

On the new regulations in offering in India's telecom and IT sectors, Daisy Chittilapilly, President, Cisco India and SAARC, said that guardrails are important and "needed" as connectivity improves.

TAKEOVER ANNOUNCEMENT

Credit Suisse, UBS shares plunge

PNS ■ GENEVA

Shares of Credit Suisse plunged 63 per cent in early trading Monday after the announcement that banking giant UBS would buy its troubled rival for almost USD 3.25 billion in a deal orchestrated by regulators to stave off further market-shaking turmoil in the global banking system.

UBS shares were down 14 per cent in early trading on the Swiss stock exchange.

Swiss authorities urged UBS to take over its smaller rival after a plan for Credit Suisse to borrow up to 50 billion francs (USD 54 billion) failed to reassure investors and the bank's customers.

Shares of Credit Suisse and other banks plunged after the failure of two banks in the US raised questions about other potentially shaky global financial institutions.

Credit Suisse is among 30 financial institutions known as globally systemically important banks, and authorities worried about the fallout if it were to fail.

The deal was "one of great breadth for the stability of international finance," Swiss



President Alain Berset said as he announced it Sunday night. "An uncontrolled collapse of Credit Suisse would lead to incalculable consequences for the country and the international financial system."

Switzerland's executive branch, a seven-member governing body that includes Berset, passed an emergency ordinance allowing the merger to go through without shareholder approval.

Markets remain jittery despite the best efforts of regulators to restore calm. Global stock markets sank Monday, with Hong Kong's main index sliding more than 3 per cent. Market benchmarks in Frankfurt and Paris opened down more than 1 per cent. Shanghai, Tokyo and Sydney also declined. Wall Street futures were off 1 per cent. Oil prices plunged more than USD 2 per barrel.

Wind energy can surge 4-5 times on policy tailwinds

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Positive policy moves by the new and renewable energy ministry can crank up the annual wind capacity addition by 6-8 gigawatt (GW) from fiscal 2026, around 4 times more than 1.6 GW of growth clocked in the past five fiscals, a report said.

According to a Crisil analysis, the aggressive tariff bids in reverse auctions since fiscal 2018 has been one of the key drivers of the wind energy growth.

The process led to discovery of irrationally low tariffs that were favoured by state distribution companies, but compromised returns left little incentives for developers to complete the projects. There were also delays in land acquisition and setting up of evacuation infrastructure.

Under reverse auction, bidders compete on an open e-platform, adjust tariffs within timeframes with their quotes visible to all participants. Prior to FY18, wind projects were awarded under the feed-in



tariff regime, where payments at fixed tariffs were made by discoms to producers under long-term contracts without

competitive bids.

Only 41 per cent of projects awarded by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI)

during fiscals 2018-21 got commissioned till December 2022, while 23 per cent were cancelled and the remaining projects are delayed due to issues in land acquisition, and evacuation and supply-side constraints, the report noted.

While the annual solar capacity addition averaged 8.3 GW in the five fiscals through 2022, wind capacities grew a meagre 1.6 GW per annum during this period. All that can change now with the ministry introducing four key policy measures in January, the

report said. The first of these four major policy changes include setting a goal to award 8 GW of wind tenders per annum. This is significant because wind tendering has been low at just 3.3 GW per annum in the past five fiscals. This can propel capacity growth at a faster rate if executed well.

Secondly, the ministry has replaced the reverse auction process with a single stage, two-envelope closed bidding, which will curb irrational bidding.

Manoj Bajpayee to narrate *The Vial*, documentary on India's Covid vax success

Bollywood actor Manoj Bajpayee spoke about being part of the upcoming documentary *The Vial* in which he will be narrating the story of the Covid-19 vaccination programme in India. He said that it is a tribute to healthcare professionals and frontline workers.

In the documentary, PM Narendra Modi will be speaking in detail about India's success over the Covid-19 pandemic.

The actor said: "India's Covid-19 vaccine story is a remarkable accomplishment for the country, and as Indians, we all should be aware and proud of it. This film is a tribute to our healthcare professionals and frontline workers who produced the vaccines in unprecedented timelines and executed the vaccination drive, despite several challenges."

The Vial focuses on the development of a vaccine for the huge population of the country. It also showcases certain case studies that highlight how the government and health workers made vaccines accessible to people despite many challenges.

Manoj, who is known for films such as *Gangs of Wasseypur*, *Satya*, *Kaun?*, *Shool*, *Raajneeti*, and *Aligarh*, said that because of the efforts of healthcare workers, people are safely moving out

of their homes and can continue their work.

"They are the reason why we are stepping out of our homes confidentially today. I am honoured to be part of this documentary," he added.

The 60-minute documentary narrated by Manoj Bajpayee features Prime Minister Narendra Modi; Adar Poonawalla (CEO, Serum Institute of India); Bill Gates (co-founder of Microsoft and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation); Dr Sumit Agarwal (Scientist, ICMR); Dr Shamika Ravi (public policy expert); Dr Devi Shetty (Founder of Narayana Hrudayalaya); and Dr Krishna Ella (Chairman, Bharat Biotech) among others.

Produced by Colosseum Media, *The Vial* will premiere on History TV18 on March 24.



Babil Khan shines in debut performance, wins Best Debut Award

Babil Khan made his debut with the Netflix film *Qala*, directed by Anvita Dutt. He recently won the Best Debut Award at the Zee Cine Awards 2023 for his portrayal of Jagan in the film.

His performance as Jagan a talented Singer in the 1930s was raw and resonant. Hailed as Bollywood's wunderkind the newcomer has won hearts with his subtle, assured and human rendering of Jagan's tragic journey. With this award, he proves that he is a talent to watch out for and is ready to carve his own niche in the world of cinema.

While accepting the award Babil thanked in entire Team of *Qala* and said "Validation at this age results in a lot of motivation"

Talking about receiving the award Babil said, "I am truly grateful and humbled to receive this award. It's an honor to be recognized for my debut performance and I feel blessed to have had the

opportunity to work on a project as meaningful as *Qala*. This award has motivated me to work even harder and continue to grow as an actor. I owe this win to my incredible team who supported me throughout the filming process and helped me bring Jagan to life on screen. I am

excited for what the future holds and can't wait to keep sharing my art with the world."

As Babil said these words, he couldn't help but feel overwhelmed with gratitude and determination to keep improving and delivering powerful performances in the future.



Alicia Silverstone would love to take on a *Blast from the Past* sequel

It has been over two decades since *Blast from the Past* was released and actress Alicia Silverstone is ready for a sequel with Oscar winner Brendan Fraser.

During a 'Clueless' reunion panel at '90s Con, the actor answered a fan question about whether she'd ever revisit the film, reports 'Variety'.

"With Brendan? I would do anything with Brendan. It was so much fun," Silverstone said during Sunday's panel in Hartford, Connecticut.

"I just saw Brendan after he won his Oscar and he's so cute. He talked in his speech about how we all go through this really hard time and you have to grow and it's part of life that you struggle and then look what happened to him! So yes, I'm happy to do that."

The romantic comedy was released in 1999, starring Fraser, Silverstone, Christopher Walken, Sissy Spacek and Dave Foley.

It focuses on a 35-year-old man (Fraser) who spent his entire life living in a fallout shelter

built by his father (Walken). As he emerges into the modern world, he meets Eve (Silverstone), who opens his eyes to a whole new life.

Silverstone attended the Vanity Fair Oscars party on March 12, as did Fraser, who won the Academy Award earlier in the evening for his role in Darren Aronofsky's *The Whale*. In the film, he portrayed Charlie, a 600-pound English teacher trying to salvage his relationship with his estranged daughter.

"I started in this business 30 years ago, things didn't come easy to me but there was a facility that I didn't appreciate at the time, until it stopped. I just want to say thank you for this acknowledgment," Fraser said in his acceptance speech. "It couldn't be done without my cast. It's been like I've been on a diving expedition and the air on the line to the surface is being watched over by some people in my life like my sons."



Ted Lasso cast to visit White House to discuss 'importance of mental health'



The cast of *Ted Lasso* will visit the White House to participate in a discussion with President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden on "the importance of mental health to promote overall well being."

Apple announced the meeting on Sunday afternoon, reports Variety.

President Biden teased the appearance minutes before Apple's confirmation, posting a reference to the Apple TV+ hit comedy: "Tomorrow."

"*Ted Lasso* has inspired the world through its universal themes around optimism, kindness, and determination and the Lasso philosophy to 'believe' reads Apple's announcement of the meeting of the minds.

Excerpts from the event will be released on the White House's official social media channels. The third season of *Ted*

Lasso debuted on Apple TV+ on March 15, kicking off its 12-episode season.

There remains uncertainty whether a fourth season of the show will be approved by showrunner and star Jason Sudeikis, who has stated that such a matter "will always be dictated by the stories."

Sudeikis developed *Ted Lasso* along with Bill Lawrence, Joe Kelly, and Brendan Hunt. It is based on the existing format and characters first featured on NBC Sports.

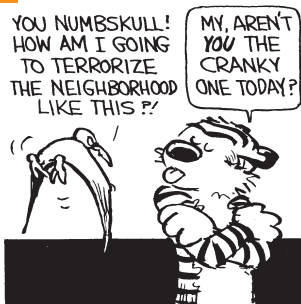
Sudeikis serves as an executive producer in addition to starring. Lawrence executive produces via Doozer Productions. Hunt, Kelly, and Bill Wrubel also executive produce along with Doozer's Jeff Ingold and Liza Katzer as well as Jane Becker and Jamie Lee Goldstein is a writer and co-executive producer on the series.

FUN

ARCHIE



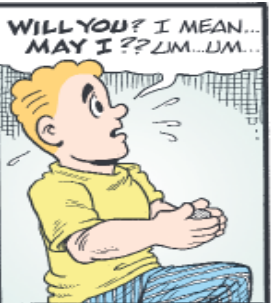
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



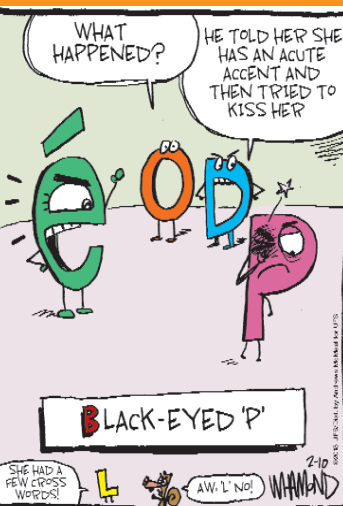
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



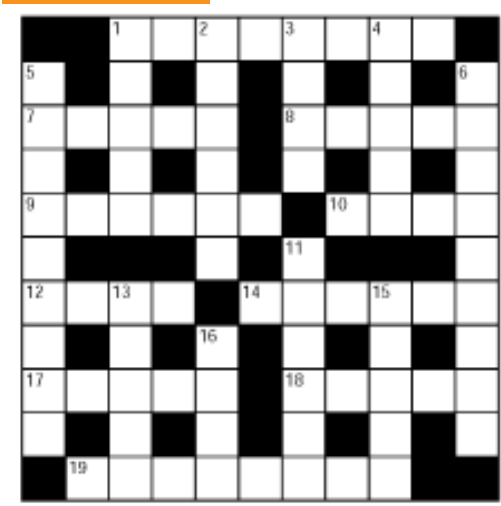
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 The first teenage year
- 2 A neck warmer
- 3 This makes bread rise
- 4 Expensive
- 5 A heat injury
- 6 An artist's workshop
- 7 Precise
- 8 Shave with this
- 9 A sheep minder
- 10 A ship's right-hand side
- 11 Be ill or die from lack of food
- 12 Get to
- 13 Stunned and not able to think properly
- 14 Halt

DOWN

- 1 Easily burnt breakfast food
- 2 Young child
- 3 Things to play with
- 4 Rub out
- 5 Puts together from separate parts



SUDOKU

3			2			5	6
	2		5				
	8		1	7			
9	4	6			3	2	
			9		8		
6	7				5	9	8
			7	9		5	
			6		2		
5	2		8			3	

Yesterday's solution							
8	3	2	7	4	5	9	1
4	5	9	8	6	1	3	2
7	6	1	9	3	2	5	4
1	8	5	2	9	6	7	3
6	2	3	4	5	7	1	8
9	4	7	3	1	8	2	6
2	1	4	5	8	9	6	7
5	7	8	6	2	3	4	9
3	9	6	1	7	4	8	5

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.

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, internationally acclaimed comedian Vir Das speaks of his collaboration with UnCrave by Licious, his favourite cuisine, his comfort food, channeling himself to be creative, and more.



AMARTYA SMARAN

Vir Das: Staying true to your style is the way to go

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a common inflammatory disease of the joints. It affects multiple joints, mainly the small joints of the hands and wrists but also larger ones. It causes painful joints with stiffness that is typically more in the morning and progresses with time, causing joint deformities and, ultimately, a crippling state. Effective treatments are available, and therefore, early diagnosis and regular treatment with monitoring of disease activity are important to limit or prevent permanent damage.

Dr. SK Chhabra, senior consultant, pulmonary medicine, Primus Superspeciality Hospital, Chanakypuri, New Delhi, answers some queries related to rheumatoid arthritis.

Can rheumatoid arthritis cause lung disease?

RA is more than just a joint disease. The inflammatory process also affects several other parts of the body. The most frequently affected are the lungs, besides the skin, eyes, digestive system, heart, and blood vessels. The lung conditions that occur in patients with RA are of several types. More than 25% of patients with RA will eventually develop lung conditions and diseases in their lifetime. If all patients with RA are screened for lung disease, even when there are no lung symptoms, more than half are found to have evidence of lung involvement. Lung disease is next only to cardiac disease and cancer as the leading cause of death in patients with RA. Lung disease due to RA is a major contributor to a poor-

walking fast, especially up an incline. It progresses with time and, ultimately, even activities of daily living such as dressing, taking a bath, or even taking food cause breathlessness. The oxygen levels in the blood decrease, in the early stages of exertion, and later, even at rest. These patients require home oxygen to keep their oxygen in the normal range. Dry cough is the other major symptom. Patients with ILD sometimes get sudden flare-ups, called acute exacerbations, that acutely worsen respiratory failure and carry a high risk of mortality.

Males, smokers, those with a long history of joint disease, more active joint disease, and older age are more prone to developing ILD, but many RA patients with none of these risk factors can also develop ILD.

How is an ILD diagnosed and treated?

ILD is diagnosed by features on chest examination, breathing tests called spirometry and diffusion capacity, and imaging including a plain chest radiograph and a high-resolution computed tomogram (HRCT) of the chest that provides the clue to the pattern of ILD. In

seem to work for the lungs in general. Drugs like corticosteroids that suppress immunologically mediated immune damage have a variable response. For those who have increased lung fibrosis, a newer class of drugs called antifibrotics may help slow down the increasing shrinkage. The fibrosis is not reversible.

Treatments for other lung diseases due to rheumatoid arthritis

Management of a large pleural effusion would require drainage with a chest tube or a video-assisted thoracoscopy, which is minimal-access surgery. Treatment of lung infections requires appropriate antibiotics. Narrowing of the lung airways requires inhaled medicines.

Other treatment modalities for Interstitial Lung Disease

Apart from drugs, breathing exercises and nutritional supplementation as needed are given as part of what is called pulmonary rehabilitation. This reduces breathlessness and improves exercise tol-

erance. Patients who are unable to maintain normal blood oxygen levels, which can easily be measured by pulse oximeter and blood gas analysis, require oxygen therapy round the clock. This can be done using oxygen concentrators. Portable machines are also available.

The last resort for extensively scarred lungs is lung transplantation, a highly specialized and expensive surgery now increasingly available in different cities in India.

Measures advised in rheumatoid arthritis ILD

It is very important to give up smoking as well as avoid passive exposure and exposure to air pollution. These patients are advised to get timely vaccinations against influenza and pneumonia. Patients are encouraged to talk with their physician to make sure that the medications are optimal for their joint symptoms, side effects are managed, and their lung health is monitored for early diagnosis and prompt action.

Can patients with rheumatoid arthritis detect that they have a lung problem? Once you are diagnosed with RA, an assessment for the presence of lung disease is advisable, as early lung disease may not produce any symptoms. Subsequently, any occurrence of prolonged cough, expectoration, and, most importantly, breathlessness with reduced exercise tolerance calls for an evaluation of a possible lung complication. Early diagnosis holds the best promise for a good response.

based meat that tastes just like meat! The top comedian is the brand ambassador of UnCrave, where he plants knowledge about why you should beleave in plant-based meat.

With five Netflix stand-up specials to his name, he's losing it sometimes, vouching *For India* on the global stage, going *Outside In* with his COVID stand-up routine, tackling nationalism and globalism in his cross-cultural special *Abroad Understanding*, before finally *Landing* on his *Greenlight Tour*. Will that be on Netflix too? Well! He's currently touring abroad. I guess we'll have to wait for the announcement.

When life becomes bland and everything goes out of focus, Vir Das says he channels himself to be creative. "That brings me right back up!"

"I am a hardcore meat lover, and the very idea of no meat on some days is not an idea in my head," says the comic, talking about what made him sign up for UnCrave by Licious. "So, the association between UnCrave and me is, like, me and funny. It's simply meant to be!"

Who's not big on food? The majority of us are, right? Otherwise, the world would be such a boring place. India is a land of diverse cultures, and as a result, we've got a plethora of dishes from various cuisines to choose from. What's the *Landing* comedian's favourite cuisine? "With all the traveling I do, food is always an important part of all the new places I discover and tour in. But, I love Asian food. The flavour always smacks."

All of us have our favourite comfort food. For some, it's a sturdy little Shawarma and for others, it is homemade dal and rice. We can't actually generalise because we all have our preferences. Okay! Time to know what the multi-hatter loves. "Having lived in Delhi, I think the lip-smacking aloo parathas are my go-to comfort food that I crave the most."

The kinds of things we do when we go on a diet are quite funny, but those quirks make us human. Especially, when we go on one of those extreme diets. In the first few weeks, we're determined and want to nail the diet, but those notorious cravings outsmart our short-lived willpower. The Bubble actor isn't that adventurous when it comes to his diet: "My go-to strategy is to find a diet that is realistic and not too extreme, in order to make sure that we then listen to our mind."

Vir Das is one of the finest stand-up comedians we have in the country right now. From performing on the *Conan O'Brien* show to casually conversing with the host on his podcast, *Conan O'Brien Needs A Friend*, the comic appeared on some of the most well-known international channels. This is not to say that just because international hosts and podcasters called him on board, Vir is great. The point is, his comedy has the power to transcend all boundaries and reach a wider audience. And he's the first Indian comic to do it so gracefully and successfully.

Let's make a segue into how the witty comedian measures success. Is he unfazed by the challenges that life throws at him? Especially when something doesn't go well in his professional life. "I think success is when people from the most unexpected places and parts, and enjoy your comedy, that's when you know that you're doing something right. The challenge has been to keep evolving with the times and to be aware of and balance between sensitivities and ward off unnecessary trolls. I do my own job. I stay in my own lane. Creative work is so unique to oneself. So I think, like any other comedian, staying true to your style is the way to go."

With so much happening in life, it is important to switch off once in a while. Letting us in on his creative process, he shares, "I switch off. Most importantly, I write with myself first and then jam with my team. To get in the zone I do prefer going away and creating something new."

The *Go Goa Gone* actor finds the lack of creative freedom the most dreadful when it comes to his craft. "The lack of creative freedom on some occasions, and the fact that no matter how much you tour, if a joke you terribly enjoy, doesn't land, it just sucks. That's the ultimate truth."

Are you a young budding stand-up comic? Do you bomb? Are you confused? Well! This one's for you. In this super quick interview with *The Pioneer*, Vir Das gives a short master class, "I would say that we should just keep performing. Do standup as many times as you can and practice. Do trial shows. Bomb terribly. See what the gap is and where it is. Sulk a little, be heartbroken but then address why your jokes didn't land. What and how can you improve that and use heckling as a good source of crowd work? Also always observe other artists."

'I feel one shouldn't focus on making reel-friendly music'

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Sometimes Zaeden just needs a gentle reminder of how far others have come starting from the same position — and not just him; all of us realised he has defeated the age-old idea of what an artist is and that being successful doesn't only mean being signed by a big label. For instance, look at his recent track with Amyra Dastur, titled *Jaana*. He's having a stellar career of his own!

He exclusively describes it to us: "The chorus is the coolest part of this song. I wanted to keep the chorus of the song as easy as falling off a log and something that people could instantly sing along to. So this is a song about the fight for love and tells the story of a person who is determined to win the heart of their beloved, no matter the odds. In a world full of distractions, fighting for the people and things you care about is worthwhile."

Laughing to himself and enjoying his much more private life at the same time, he exudes more amour, saying, "Amyra has been a fabulous co-star since day one. She featured in the music video of my debut single, too, and people loved our chemistry. I knew I had to work with her again in another music video of mine, and this felt like the perfect song to bring her back! It feels as if we have come full circle with this song."

In this game, Zaeden became a mega success all of a sudden despite not having the backing of a major record label like most independent artists do in the country. But abroad, hell no. Who began as Sahil Sharma and then changed his name to Zaeden had no idea his remix would be played on a Dutch DJ's radio show. Hold your horses. He went onto her, signed by the international label—she collaborated with

Borgeous, a closing act for David Guetta, performed at Tomorrowland's festival, with DJ duo Nina and Malika, with Kendrick Lamar, and you name it.

"Instagram has definitely become a great medium nowadays to promote your music. With the introduction of reels, it has become an added bonus for artists to make their music reach the right audience. The reach and engagement that reels see today are tremendous. "However, even though the platform provides a significant boost to making music more popular, I believe that one should not solely focus on making music that is reel-friendly, as this will limit one's creativity," he adds.

Let's hope to see him break more records, even in the mainstream jungle, and change the way a release of a music is seen.

Singer Zaeden, who is climbing the ladder of success through his music, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about his recent track *Jaana*, working with Amyra, and social media as a medium to promote music.



How rheumatoid arthritis affects lungs

er quality of life besides mortality. Most often, lung disease follows joint involvement, but rarely, RA may start as a lung disease and joint manifestations may follow later.

Different lung diseases caused by rheumatoid arthritis

The most common lung disease caused by rheumatoid arthritis is a shrinkage of the lungs called interstitial lung disease (ILD). Other lung conditions and diseases that can occur in RA include pulmonary nodules (one or more rounded masses of tissue of various sizes, confusing the possibility of lung cancer), pleural effusion (protein-rich fluid in the sac around the lungs), pleural thickening, bronchiectasis (dilatation of lung airways causing pooling of secretions and lung infections), bronchiolitis (narrowing of airways deep in the lung), pulmonary hypertension (high blood pressure in the lung) and increased tendency for lung infections like pneumonia. The drugs that are used to treat RA in general suppress immunity, increasing the risk of lung infections.

What is Interstitial Lung Disease?

ILDs are a group of conditions with diverse causes that have in common a reduction in lung size due to fibrosis that usually worsens with time. RA is one of the more common causes of an ILD. There are several types of ILD patterns, and treatment, prognosis, and natural history differ according to the ILD pattern.

A patient with ILD develops breathlessness on exertion, initially on running or



a case where the diagnosis of RA is already established by clinical features and characteristic blood tests, a lung biopsy is not required. Some of these tests are required from time to time after treatment is started to evaluate for a response as well as the progress of the disease.

Treatment of ILD due to RA has variable effectiveness and may produce relief from symptoms. This is in addition to the drugs that are being given for other symptoms of RA, including joint disease. While effective treatments are now available for RA according to the severity and extent of the disease, treatment of lung diseases like ILD is more difficult. The drugs that work for the joints do not

GRACE KNOCKS RCB, GG OUT OF WPL

PTI ■ MUMBAI

UP Warroirz's Grace Harris (72 off 41 balls) once again set the stage on fire with her heavy-duty hitting, as the team defeated Gujarat Giants for the second consecutive time by three wickets with just one delivery to secure a place in the playoffs of the inaugural season here on Monday.

Following the win, Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals and UP Warriors have made the grade, while Gujarat Giants and Royal Challengers Bangalore have been eliminated from the tournament.

Grace smashed the Giants attack to smithereens, hitting seven fours and four maximums in the chase of the Giants' 178/6. When she departed at 172, caught by Kim Garth of Harleen Deol, there were still seven runs to be scored for victory.

There were a few nervous moments when Simran Shaikh departed and it became 177/7 for the Warriorz. Two runs off the last two deliveries can always be a tricky proposition, but Sophie Ecclestone swept a Sneha Rana delivery to the boundary to signal the win with just one ball to spare.

Grace was involved in two productive partnerships, with McGrath was worth 78 runs, with Sophie it fetched 42 runs and it ensured an easy passage into the knockouts with just one balls to spare.

The partnership between Grace and Tahlia had laid a solid foundation and the former con-

tinued even after her country-mate had departed at 117/4.

Grace, who had scored an unbeaten 59 the last time the teams had met at the DY Patil Stadium and ensured a thrilling victory for the Warriorz with just one ball to spare, played with such ferocity, it made the Giants bowlers look mere pedestrians.

All this despite the UP Warriorz being off to a rank bad start on a pitch that offered good bounce and carry. The team was down in the dumps at 3/39 before Grace and Tahlia came together to turn the tables on the Giants.

Skipper Alyssa Healy (12) went early after giving indication she meant business.

Young Giants medium-pacer Monica Patel took the prized scalp in just the second over of the innings after being dispatched for consecutive boundaries by the Australian.

Monika was given a pep talk by team-mates, and the result was the big wicket two deliveries later. The left-arm kept a back-of-length delivery on middle and leg stump that bounced a bit extra and Healy committed herself to a pull shot slightly early, getting an edge which flew to Harleen Deol at deep deep square leg.

The third over saw the Warriorz lose their second key batter in Kiran Navgire with Australian right-arm quick Kim Garth dismissing the quick for just four and reducing the Warriorz to 2/19.

To add to their woes, left-arm spinner Tanuja Kanwar got Devika Vaidya caught behind the stumps by Sushma Verma in the fifth over. Devika aimlessly raced down the track



to flick the ball only to get a feather touch which flew to the keeper.

Earlier, a brilliant 93-run partnership between Dayalan Hemalatha (57 off 33 balls) and the second costliest player Ashleigh Gardner (60 off 39 balls) helped Gujarat Giants post 178/6 in their do-or-die clash.

The authority and attacking ways with which the duo played indicated they were on a mission, given the do-or-die nature of the contest as the tournament enters its business end.

By the time the partnership ended, with Hemalatha dismissed by Parshavi Chopra in the 17th over with the team total on 143, the stand had put the team on course for a competitive total.

South African opener Laura Wolvaardt and Sophia Dunkley went about their task of scoring runs in powerplay with a lot of urgency. Runs flowed freely while the two batting stalwarts were at the crease, with Wolvaardt smacking a fine boundary off just the third ball of the opening over bowled by left-arm pacer Anjali Sarvani.

The 23-year-old used the width on offer to steer it past backward point, making her intentions clear. Just two overs into the match and Gujarat Giants were in overdrive, with the team having scored 26 runs.

The powerful six by the South African off a length delivery outside off stump from left-arm India spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad in the second over had class and power written all over it.

Soon England batter Dunkley took charge, giving a further fillip to the scoring rate.

Gujarat Giants gave bewildering reasoning for my omission: Dottin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

West Indian Deandra Dottin has expressed disappointment at her exclusion from Women's Premier League franchise Gujarat Giants, terming it "bewildering".

The 31-year-old Caribbean all-rounder was signed for Rs 60 lakh by the Adani-owned side, but before the start of the tournament, she was excluded from the squad on medical grounds.

The Giants had stated that Dottin failed to get medical clearance by the deadline, which was the reason why they replaced her with Australia's Kim Garth. But Dottin refuted the claims made by the franchise.

"I wish to issue a brief statement in light of ongoing speculation surrounding my recent exclusion from the inaugural Women's Premier League that is currently taking place in India.

"I remain deeply disappointed by what can only, plausibly, be described as bewildering reasoning for my omission from the tournament," Dottin said in statement which she posted on Twitter.

"I was bought at the WPL auction by the Gujarat Giants, a franchise owned and operated by the Adani Group. At the commencement of the tournament, the franchise claimed that I was excluded from the team because I was apparently "recovering from a medical situation".

"This was followed by a

subsequent, clarifying statement that contended that I was, in fact "unable to obtain medical clearance" despite being granted as recently as February 20th," she said.

The veteran of 143 ODIs and 127 T20Is said that she was shocked by the decision taken by Giants' team management.

"I would like to make it clear that I had experienced minor abdominal pain and swelling for which I had sought treatment in December 2022. This was followed by two further referrals to specialists for second opinions in December and January 2023, respectively.

"Following testing and investigations by the specialists, I was asked to rest until February 13th and was cleared to resume fitness and playing activity from February 14th.

"Consequently, I recommenced my personal training and fitness regime according to the guided timelines and experienced some soreness on the first day of resumed training which was anticipated and reasonable, given that I had been asked to rest in the weeks preceding training." Dottin said her words were misinterpreted by the Giants.

"I was transparent about this in correspondence with the Gujarat Giants physiotherapist, however, this was misconstrued and later conveyed to members of the franchise's management team as me "experiencing abdominal pain post-session" which was not what I had indicated.



New Zealand whitewash Sri Lanka

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Lanky fast bowler Blair Tuckner and spinner Michael Bracewell slogged all day in a Basin Reserve gale to bowl New Zealand to an innings and 58 run win over Sri Lanka in the second Test on Monday and a sweep of the two-match series.

The win was completed with only minutes remaining on the fourth day and capped New Zealand's extraordinary summer of home Test matches, which includes a one-run win over England at the Basin Reserve and a two-wicket win over Sri Lanka from the last ball of the first Test.

Once again New Zealand couldn't win without drama as it pursued Sri Lanka's last two wickets in fading light and a blustering wind on Monday. Had it not bowled out Sri Lanka, it would have had to have returned to try to do so on the final day, when rain was forecast

in Wellington.

Sri Lanka's last two pairs defied the New Zealand bowlers for almost two hours before the home team secured the wickets it needed for victory. New Zealand had to bowl 142 overs to dismiss Sri Lanka in the second innings, after bowling 67 in the first innings before enforcing the follow on.

Dhanahaya de Silva made 98 and Dinesh Chandimal 62 to help Sri Lanka bat throughout all but a few minutes of the final day. Kusal Rajitha then batted for 2-1/2 hours, Prabath Jayasuriya and Lahiru Kumara for an hour each as the Sri Lanka tail gallantly tried to force the match into the fifth day when weather might intervene. Southee took 3-21.

New Zealand claimed an extra half hour as the light faded and Rajitha's long vigil ended when he fell to Tim Southee for 20 as Sri Lanka was all out for 358.

"Losing the toss and being asked to bat and being able to put a score on the board was very pleasing to see, and set up the performance the bowlers produced over the last two days," New Zealand captain Tim Southee said.

"There are few weary bodies tonight so it's good to have that extra day off. We thought if we could put that one last push in tonight it was one less warm-up to do tomorrow."

Double centuries by Kane Williamson and Henry Nicholls allowed New Zealand to post 580-4 in its only innings before it bowled out Sri Lanka for 164 and enforced the follow with the tourists 416 behind.

New Zealand came into the fourth day in a commanding position: Sri Lanka was 113-2 when play began, still 303 runs behind, and New Zealand found itself in a race to complete the win against the possibility of a rained-out final day.

Swiss Open: Title holder Sindhu eyes turnaround

PTI ■ BASEL

Enduring a wretched run of form, defending champion PV Sindhu will hope to get back to winning ways when she competes at the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament, beginning here on Tuesday.

World number 9 HS Prannoy, who had finished runners-up in the last edition, too will eye a better show after a second round exit in the All England Championships.

The fifth seeded Indian, however, will have a tough task at hand as he opens against 2018 world championships silver medallist China's Shi Yuqi, who finished second best in Birmingham last week.

While Prannoy has been the most consistent singles player from the country, Sindhu and Lakshya Sen have struggled this season, making early exits in a series of events.

Sindhu, who parted ways with Korean coach Park Tae-sang after failing to get results following a long injury



lay-off, made a first round exit last week after losing to Zhang Yi Man of China.

A double Olympic medallist, Sindhu will hope to regain her confidence as she returns to the \$210,000 event, opening her campaign against local player Jenjira Stadelmann.

Sen, who had made early exits from Malaysia and India Open, notched up an intense win over Chou Tien Chen last week but faltered against former world number 2 and two-time world championships medallist Anders Antonsen of Denmark.

MI bags New York franchise in Major League Cricket

AP ■ NEW YORK

After Delhi Capitals and Chennai Super Kings, Mumbai Indians have now joined the US cricket revolution bandwagon as they acquired the New York franchise in the upcoming Major League Cricket (MLC), here on Monday.

The team will participate in the inaugural edition of Major League Cricket (MLC) subject to completion of customary due diligence; negotiation, and execution of definitive binding agreements, and receipt of required corporate, regulatory and third-party approvals and compliances," a press release stated.

Earlier, GMR group, co-owners of Delhi Capitals, have invested alongside Microsoft CEO



Satya Nadella in Seattle Orcas, while Chennai Super Kings are part of the Texas team.

"I am thrilled to welcome our New York franchise to the growing MI Family! With our entry into the first cricket league in the US, I hope we are able to establish Mumbai Indians as a global brand of fearless and entertaining cricket! This is another new beginning for MI and I look forward to the exciting journey ahead," owner Nita Ambani said.

The MI New York will be the fifth franchise after Mumbai Indians (IPL), MI Cape Town (SA20), MI Emirates (ILT20), and Mumbai Indians (WPL), in three different continents, four different countries, and five different leagues.

RR to continue with Sangakkara

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kumar Sangakkara will continue to serve in the dual role of Rajasthan Royals' director of cricket and head coach, and will be assisted by Trevor Penney, the IPL franchise said on Monday. Fellow Sri Lankan legend Lasith Malinga also continues with the franchise as fast bowling coach, along with Zubin Bharucha as strategy, development and performance director, Giles Lindsay as head of analytics and technology, Siddhartha Lahiri as support coach and Dishant Yagnik as fielding coach.

The Sanju Samson-led team has also retained the services of John Gloster (head

physio), Dr. Rob Young (team doctor), and AT Rajamani Prabhu (strength and conditioning coach). The IPL 2022 finalists have also on-boarded Mon Brokman as their mental performance coach and Neil Barry as the assistant physio.

Brokman, who has previously worked with athletes from various Olympic sports, joins the Royals to assist with mental conditioning and help the players with their decision-making during pressure situations. Meanwhile, Barry has served Rajasthan Royals' partner franchise Barbados Royals in the Caribbean Premier League, and will be assisting John Gloster during the IPL season.

Hima Das, Ancy Sojan win gold in 200m and long jump in IGP

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Star sprinter Hima Das won the 200m race quite comfortably in 23.79 seconds while long jumper Ancy Sojan shared the limelight with a best effort of 6.49m in the Indian Grand Prix-1 athletics event here on Monday.

Assam's Hima beat Aishwarya Kailash Mishra (24.81) of Maharashtra and VK Vismaya (24.82) of Kerala to take the women's 200m gold at the Laxmibai National College of Physical Education here.

Sojan, meanwhile, produced a series of leaps beyond 6.00m and won with a best effort of 6.49m, just past the 6.45m mark laid down as the Asian Games qualifying standard.

The meet though received lukewarm response with very

few top athletes competing in it. Many events had just three athletes competing.

Women's high jump and men's triple jump saw just two competitors each, men's 400m hurdles four, women's 400m hurdles three — one disqualified later —, women's shot put three, 800m women three and women's 5000m three participants.

Haryana's Krishan Kumar stepped up the pace approaching the halfway mark and topped the men's 800m race, clocking 1:47.26, his second best time over the distance. The Army man went past the Asian Games qualifying standard of 1:49.05.

The men's 5000m race saw three Uttar Pradesh runners come home inside the Asian Games qualifying mark of 14:00.00.

Lovlina, Sakshi advance to quarterfinals of Women's World C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain made a winning start to her campaign as she and Sakshi Chaudhary moved to the quarterfinals of the Women's World Championships with dominant victories here on Monday.

Both Sakshi (54kg) and Lovlina (75kg) notched identical 5-0 unanimous decision wins respectively.

While Lovlina out-punched Mexico's Vanessa Ortiz, Sakshi got the better of Zhazira Urakbayeva of Kazakhstan to progress to the last eight stage.

But the most electrifying Indian performance of the day was displayed by Preeti (54kg). The youngster though eventually lost her bout to last year's 52kg silver medallist Thailand's Jitpong Jutamas by a 4-3 verdict, the bout was so close that a review had to be taken.

Preeti entered the tournament on the back of a selection row, where her place in the side was questioned as she

didn't win the National Championships.

However, the 19-year-old justified her place in the Indian team with her fearless performance.

The tenacious Preeti showed aggression against a more experienced opponent to take the first round 4-1.

She fought toe to toe with Jutamas as both pugilists connected punches but the Thai was able to edge the Indian and took the remaining two rounds with the final result being decided by a bout review.

"I learned a lot from this bout, the competitor was also good. I need to work harder. I was aggressive in the first round and I should have continued that and I should have dominated the bout," Preeti said.

Competing in her new 75kg category, Lovlina, who received a first round bye, won her opening encounter to walk one step closer to a medal.

"It was my first bout, the boxer was shorter than me. I was not able to follow by strategy to the T. I am not



very happy with this performance, I could have done better. She was coming ahead so I was forced to move back," Lovlina said after her bout.

"It is my first World Championships in this weight category. It will be difficult as the other boxers are already competing in this weight class. We will have to see how to play with which opponent. I think I can do better."

Sakshi, the 2021 Asian Championship bronze medallist, utilised her height and long reach to her advantage. She would punch Urakbayeva and step back quickly, not letting her opponent counter-attack.

The Indian danced around the ring, playing with aggression and released a number of punches to emerge victorious.

"I played much better than I expected. She is a good boxer so I thought it would be a 19-20 fight but the strategy worked for me and I was able to dominate," Sakshi said after the bout.

Aditi Rao Hydari: I walk onto a set and I'm like a sponge

AMARTYA SMARAN

Aditi Rao Hydari belongs to the pantheon of the most beautiful and charismatic leading ladies in Indian cinema. She made her Tollywood debut with director Indraganti Mohanakrishna's *Sammohanam* (2018). After the success of her maiden Telugu film, she went on to star in a couple of other T'wood flicks: *Antariksham 9000 KMPH* (2018), *V* (2020), and *Maha Samudram* (2021).

Her portrayal of the iconic mythic

character Anarkali, in Zee5's *Taj: Divided by Blood* is gaining widespread critical acclaim. The web series was released on Zee5 on March 3 and is available for viewing in three Indian languages (Hindi, Tamil, Telugu). Recently, the actress paid a visit to Hyderabad as a part of the webseries' promotions and *The Pioneer* didn't miss out on the opportunity to dig deeper into what fascinated her about Anarkali and *Taj: Divided by Blood*.

"My reference was my script," said Aditi Rao speaking of her character's reference. "Anarkali has been played by the iconic Madhubala ji and I think there can be no better Anarkali than her. We were not making *Mughal-E-Azam*, we were making a story about the Mughals, the succession, love, and betrayal. Actually, this is a family

her."

Initially Aditi thought the makers were remaking *Mughal-E-Azam* and was not quite keen on signing the project, "I thought that we were remaking *Mughal-E-Azam* and I was like, 'You can't touch that film. It's too perfect.' And then I realised that they were not making *Mughal-E-Azam* and they were so determined to have me. Once I heard it, it was such a new perspective and such a human story, I was very excited to do it. I got to delve into the very fragile, but courageous part of a girl who is the secret of a palace. It's such a beautiful combination of innocence and courage."

She says playing a girl from the 16th century who overturns the kingdom and has the courage to stand up to the emperor, to love, and stand by her loyalty was sort of a blessing. "Anarkali is a vibe. I was very happy that they didn't take no for an answer and they convinced me that I should do it. Now that the show is a success and people are loving Anarkali, I'm very relieved and grateful. I genuinely feel that it's Madhubala ji's blessings that have made this work for us."

"My work is to give them a platform or the stage to make their space look believable and plausible," said the director of the webseries, Ron Scalpello, while in an exclusive interaction with *The Pioneer* ahead of the show's release.

We asked Aditi as to what kind of direction she received from Ron Scalpello. She said, "The showrunners William and Ron described Anarkali to me as this epic tragic heroine. I know there's a lot of romanticism and poetic quality to that. Through my discussions with them, I was determined to also bring out the very steady courageous heart of Anarkali. Her power is her innocence and purity. The fact that she has been violated as a little girl but she has done no wrong. Her only fault has been to dream of freedom and fall in love with a boy, who happens to be a prince; she doesn't know that. She falls in love with the boy who respects her and who loves her and will go to any length for that love. Don't all of us want that?"

Aditi informed us that she was

extremely determined to work on her lines. "When you're translating from English to Urdu, translations can be complicated," explained the V star. "I worked a lot on my dialogue because I felt like Anarkali should be soft, poetic, and graceful. But, because she has truth and purity on her side, I felt like whatever she says should hit you like a dagger."

The *Maha Samudram* actress was so empathetic towards her character that she personally requested the creators of the show that at no point should Anarkali lower her eyes out of fear or shame because she's not done anything wrong. "She just wanted to love and dance. Now that the makers were so collaborative, they encouraged me to play it like that and not to just play her as a damsel in distress. Even when she runs, I said she runs with courage, that she will be free. Even when she dies, she dies looking straight into the eyes of her love. Love is the most powerful thing," asserted the charming lady.

The *Sammohanam* actress only looks forward to great things and she's ever-so passionate to learn new things in life. "I realised one thing growing up in this industry, that I'm a person who functions from the heart," earnestly shared Aditi. And continued, "A lot of people think that, if they touch me, I'll break or if the wind comes, I'll just fly away and they think I'm this very sort of delicate person who needs to be saved but trust you, I will save you in a storm because I listen to my heart and I stand very steady. My vulnerability is my biggest strength, and I think I've learned to accept that over the years."

Wrapping up the interview, she expressed how delighted she is, now that she fulfilled her childhood dream of being a Mani Ratnam heroine, "My childhood dream of working with Mani Ratnam Sir and being a Mani Ratnam heroine really changed my life. I love to be challenged, nurtured, and learn everyday. These are the things I've learned over the years and I continue to learn. I walk onto a set and I'm like a sponge. That is why it's very important for me to work with people I really respect."



Angad Bedi to soon make his south debut with Nani

Actor Angad Bedi is all set to make his debut in the south with Telugu superstar Nani in his upcoming *Nani 30*.

The movie stars Mrunal Thakur as well. This won't be the first time Angad and Mrunal will be coming together. Both actors have already worked on R. Balki's shorts in *Lust Stories 2*, which is set to be released.

A source close to Angad said: "He is preparing for his southern debut with Telugu movie *Nani 30*. It is one of the highly anticipated movies that's coming this year. One of the prime reasons for Angad making south Indian movies is because he wanted to try out movies which cater to different kinds of audiences."

Nani 30 is an emotional drama movie directed by



Shouryuv, which revolves around a father-daughter relationship.

Actress Karthika Nair receives Golden Visa from UAE government

Karthika Nair, the prominent actress, has been honored with the distinguished UAE Golden Visa. As the Executive Director of Uday Samudra Group, the young entrepreneur has played a remarkable role in developing her business operations for several years.

Hamad Almansoori, a dignitary from the UAE, handed over the Golden Visa to the actress at a function held at TwoFour54 head office in Dubai. Commenting on the occasion, Karthika expressed her gratitude for being warmly welcomed into the UAE as a young female entrepreneur. She is honored to receive this recognition, and appreciates the UAE government's encouragement and openness to new talent and business ventures in their country.

Earlier, Radha, Karthika's mother and star heroine of the 1980s, was honoured with the Golden Visa after duly considering her contributions to films. Radha is credited with giving starry performances in a number of films across languages, especially Telugu and Tamil. She also acted in Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi.

Uday Samudra Group's operations are firmly established in Kerala, encompassing a network of hotels and resorts, convention centers, and educational institutions. Karthika is confident that the latest recognition will enable her business to make significant contributions in the future.

Das Ka Dhamki will be a milestone movie in Vishwak Sen's career: Nivetha Pethuraj



Dynamic hero Vishwak Sen's first Pan-Indian film *Das Ka Dhamki* is all set to hit the theaters on March 22. In the upcoming film, the actor is not just a protagonist, but has simultaneously directed and produced the film. The songs of the film have already become a chartbuster.

Infact, the recently released theatrical trailer 2.0 has set high expectations on the film. The film also stars Nivetha Pethuraj, starring opposite Vishwak Sen in this film. Ahead of the film's release, the actress interacted with the media, and shared some insights about the film.

This is not going to be the first time that Nivetha and Vishwak will be seen together in the film. After *Paagal*, this is going to mark their second collaboration together. But guess what? The actress was also approached for *Ori Devuda*, while she was working on *Paagal*. However, "I don't feel like the role was suitable for me. And later as I heard the script of *Dhamki*, and this being Vishwak's direction, I was sure I was going to do it."

Recently, the *RRR* star NTR Jr. in a recent event had said, "I wish *Das Ka Dhamki* will become a block-

buster. I hope Vishwak will stop direction. There are many young directors who are wishing to direct youngsters. It's a golden period for Telugu cinema. We should encourage such talent. I hope, this will be his last directorial movie. Vishwak told me that he spent everything on this movie." Meanwhile, while the scribes asked the lead actress about the same, she said, "Vishwak is a director with great energy. He has many excellent points. But I think he should direct other heroes instead of being an actor. Vishwak has a lot of mass. There is a touch like Lokesh Kanakaraj. Vishwak has the ability to direct big mass heroes like Balakrishna. He is crazy about gangster movies. He will be a very good gangster director. He has many good stories."

Das Ka Dhamki is a mass commercial entertainer, and the actress thinks "It will be the biggest opening in Vishwak's career, and the film stands as a milestone movie in Vishwak's career."

According to Nivetha, the main strength of the film is the story, and the music. While talking about the direction, she says she has no plans for it. "Apart from acting, I am focusing on business as well, opened a restaurant in Chennai," ends the actress who is currently working in a film under the production of Sushmita, and a film in Hindi.



Krishna Vamsi, the renowned Telugu director, is making a grand comeback with his latest film, *Rangamarthanda*. After a prolonged gap without delivering a significant blockbuster, the director has left no stone unturned in making this film a masterpiece. He has focused on his strength in presenting the core human emotions, and *Rangamarthanda* seems to be a reflection of just that.

Judging by the trailer and other promotional materials, it is evident that *Rangamarthanda* is a treasure trove of human emotions that are bound to resonate with the audience on a deeper level.

The film is an official remake of the Marathi film *Natsamrat*, and Krishna Vamsi has done justice to the original by bringing out the essence of the story in his own unique way.

Krishna Vamsi has assembled an outstanding cast for the film, including the likes of Prakash Raj, Ramya Krishnan, and Brahmanandam, all of whom are renowned actors in their own right. With such an exceptional lineup of actors, it is safe to say that *Rangamarthanda* promises to be a cinematic treat.

As per the latest announcement from Krishna Vamsi, the film is all set to release on March 22.



Rangamarthanda promises a complete package of emotions



Trivikram Srinivas felicitates young artiste at Natyakadambam

Under the guidance of Soujanya Srinivas, wife of renowned filmmaker Trivikram Srinivas, Sishtha Vaishnavi, impressed the audience with her fine dance routines at the Natyakadambam event. The Natyakadambam was organised in the presence of Central Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee eminent dance teacher Pasumarthi Ramalinga Sastry, director of culture department of Telangana, Dr. Mamidi Harikrishna, and director of NIGL Hospital, Dr. RV Raghavendra Rao. On this occasion, a guru pooja was also performed for the couple Trivikram Srinivas and Soujanya Srinivas. Trivikram Srinivas, who was also the chief guest at the event felicitated the young artiste, and said that the way in which the youth are excelling in many aspects is pleasing.