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This medium gives you liberty to play different

Dasara: When a vagabond rises to the occasion QUOTE OF THE DAY the pioneer Increasing the prices of medicines that save people's lives by 12% is an act of taking away healthcare from poor and middle class people by the Centre. It is extremely disheartening and wicked act. Is this Ache Din or Sache din (death days)?

- T Harish Rao,

Minister of Finance of TS

'Paanakam' counters attract...

With the Karnataka Assembly elections only a few weeks away, political parties did not miss the opportunity to catch the attention of voters during the Sri Rama Navami festival on Thursday. In keeping with Karnataka's age-old tradition of celebrating Sri Rama Navami by distributing Paanaka' or Sharbat' and 'Kosambari' at public places, various socio-religious groups set up their Prasad' (offerings to God) ...

Unemployment rate high in ...

Nara Lokesh, TDP general secretary, has opined that the unemployment rate is high in the State. On Thursday, Lokesh crossed the 700 km milestone of his 'padayatra' on the 55th day at Guttur village of Penugonda. On this occasion, Lokesh said that he has been closely observing how the decisions taken during the TDP regime are being implemented and whether the people are happy with them are not. He said that TDP has distributed washing machines .

YSRCP charges baseless: Mekapati

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) rebel MLA Mekapati Chandrasekhar Reddy created a scene in Udavagiri town on Thursday by squatting on the road near the bus station. The rebel MLA dared the YSBCP leaders to him. He squatted on chair in front of the Udayagiri bus stand for about one and a half hours. He said that the YSRCP leaders challenged repulse him from Udayagiri and dared them to come and repulse him.

-PAGE: 4

IPL turns 'Sweet 16'

The never-ending speculations about Mahendra Singh Dhoni's impending 'last dance', Virat Kohli's endless pursuit of an elusive silverware and Rohit Sharma's customary nonchalance are things that make the IPL starting Friday a heady cocktail of cricket and entertainment, Megastars Dhoni, Kohli and Rohit have been the IPL's driving force in the past 15 seasons, getting the cricket crazy Indian fans hooked on the event for nearly two months every year. As it enters the 16th season. innovations introduced in ..

Clashes mar Rama Navami

11 devotees die after falling into well at temple in Madhya Pradesh

PNS NEW DELHI/INDORE/AURANGABAD

Ram Navami was celebrated across the country on Thursday with grand processions and special pujas, but the festivities were marred in Madhya Pradesh where 11 devotees died after falling into a well at a temple, and in Maharashtra where a clash left 12 injured.

In Delhi, a large number of people defied a police order and took out a procession in Jahangirpuri, which witnessed riots last year during Hanuman Jayanti celebrations, while stones were pelted at a march in Gujarat's Vadodara too.

The celebrations remained largely incident-free in the rest of the country with people coming out on the streets with religious fervour and enthusiasm and law-enforcement agencies on the watch.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished people on the auspicious occasion and said the life of Lord Ram will be an inspiration for humanity in every era. "Maryada Purushottam' Lord Ram's life was based on sacrifice, tapasya, restraint and resolve," he tweeted.

Ten women and a man died after the roof of a well collapsed during a havan, a fire ritual, at Beleshwar Mahadev Jhulelal temple in Indore's Patel Nagar, a senior official said.

Nearly 30-35 devotees fell into the well after the accident, Indore Police 12 hurt as mob goes berserk in Aurangabad of Maharashtra 13 vehicles torched by miscreants



People defy police and take out procession in Delhi

Law enforcement agencies heighten vigil in the country

Stones pelted at a march in Gujarat's Vadodara

Delhi Police deploy riots controls personnel in Jahangirpuri

said, citing eyewitness accounts. An eyewitness said the roof of the well caved-in as a huge huge crowd of devotees gathered on it.

In the Aurangabad city of neighbouring Maharashtra, at least 12 people, including 10 policemen,

were injured after a mob of around 500 people went berserk and hurled stones and petrol-filled bottles when the personnel tried to control the situation following a clash between two groups near a Ram temple, officials

The incident, in which 13 vehicles were torched by the miscreants, occurred during the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday in the city's Kiradpura locality that houses the famous Ram temple, they

The police used tear gas and fired some plastic bullets as well as live rounds to control the mob, the officials said, adding that eight teams have been formed to identify and arrest the perpetrators.

Elsewhere, leaders of the BJP and RSS led processions in different parts of West Bengal where the RSS organised about 1,000 small and large rallies across the state.

Chanting slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram', thousands of people took part in those processions in Howrah, Kharagpur, Barrackpore, Bhadreswar, Siliguri and Asansol. Drumbeats, saffron flags and large cutouts of Lord Ram featured prominently in these processions. Some of those participating in the processions were carrying swords and trishulas.

BJP leader Sajal Ghosh, who participated in one such rally in Howrah's Ramrajatala, said there was a need to use such weapons against the evil. "Lord Rama had used weapons to vanquish the demons," said Ghosh, a corporator





Priests performing special 'pooja' at Vontimitta temple on the occasion of the beginning of making of 'Goti Talambralu' for the Sita Rama Kalyanam to be solemnised at Vontimitta temple

Devotion, fervour mark Navami in AP

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Sri Rama Navami celebrations were held with devotion at various temples and the sacred Dhwajarohanam and the making of 'Talambralu' began at the famous Sri Kodandarama Swamy temple at Vontimitta on Thursday.

The Sri Rama Navami was solemnised with devotion at various temples. A large number of devotees thronged various temples across the state. At the famous Vontimitta temple, the making of 'Goti Talambralu' for the celestial wedding of Sri Rama and Sita to be solemnized on April 5, began on Thursday.

Ambati Rambabu visited the Vontimitta temple and offered prayers on Thursday. ZP Chairman Akepati Amarnath Reddy, MLA Meda Mallikharjun Reddy participated in a special 'pooja' at Vontimitta temple.

The Sri Rama Navami festivities were observed with celestial fervour in Kodanda Ramalayam in Tirupati on Thursday. After performing Abhishekam to Mulavirat in the morning, Snapana Tirumanjanam was rendered to the 'utsava' deities in Unjal Mandapam.



CM meets FM, seeks funds TDP lacks proper leadership at

PNS NEW DELHI

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy called on Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here on Thursday and urged her to release the NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme) ars of Rs 2,500 crore State besides increasing its credit limit. The Chief Minister appealed to her to enhance the credit limit of Rs 17,923 crore which was reduced from Rs. 42,472crore in 2021-22 for no fault of the State Government and take steps to ensure that the Telangana Government clears Rs. 7,058 crore outstanding from the TS Discoms to APGENCO for the power supplied between 2014 and 2017.





PNS VIJAYAWADA

Criticising the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), senior party leader and Prabhakar Reddy has said that the TDP has a strongly committed cadre but lacks proper leadership at the constituency level. The senior TDP leader who

joined party general secretary Lokesh's padayatra in the Tadipatri area said that the TDP lacks proper leadership at the constituency level. He said that the party workers have been struggling a lot for the last four years, but the leaders have



segment level: JC Prabhakar

disappeared and left the party in a

tain leaders who become active only

He advised Lokesh not to enterduring elections and further said

that those should not be given tickets, irrespective of their seniority. It is better for the TDP leadership to encourage fresh leaders by fielding them in the elections. They will win the seats with the support of a strong cadre, he said.

JC asked the party leaders to come out of their slumber and fight against the government. "What will happen? The government may file cases against you. They filed 72 cases against me. Nothing happened to me. We need to fight with courage and conviction," he said.



All eyes on Jagan's April 3 meet with party men

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy recently visited the national capital for two days, and he is now set to hold a meeting with the party MLAs, ministers, and key leaders. On April 3, the CM will meet with the party public representatives and other important figures.

The meeting has assumed importance as it follows the MLC elec-

tions, in which the ruling YSRCP party suffered setbacks in both graduate and MLA quota elections due to cross-voting by party legis-

Political analysts believe that the upcoming meeting will focus on the MLC election results and review the performance of legislators in the public interaction program 'Gadapa Gadapaku Mana Prabhutvam'. Additionally, sources suggest that

political strategies may be discussed in preparation for potential early elections.

According to YSRCP insiders, the party president will provide guidance and directives to party members regarding the 2024 elections. The CM has expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of several MLAs and ministers during his meetings with them in the past. When asked about the upcoming

meeting, ruling party legislator and Planning Board Vice Chairman Malladi Vishnu stated that the CM holds review meetings with legislators every three months to discuss During these meetings, the CM provides directives for the coming three months and encourages underperforming legislators to improve their efficiency. The main topics of discussion would be

'Gadapa Gadapaku Mana Prabhutvam', as well as the development and welfare schemes implemented for the public. The recent MLC elections and GIS investvarious issues and performance. ments are also expected to be discussed.

Overall, the meeting is expected to be a significant event for the YSRCP party as they prepare for future elections and address recent

Ajay Banga to become World Bank chief unopposed "Over the next few months, you will replace the current World Bank and over his personal views on clinomination, he has travelled to sever-

expire

PNS HYDERABAD

BJP President JP Nadda will direct Telangana BJP leaders to intensify party programmes as Assembly

Nadda to direct BJP

leaders to intensify

moves against BRS

elections are approaching.

It is learnt that Nadda will ask state leaders to intensify moves to attract leaders from other parties and to strengthen the party.

He would also direct BJP leaders to launch movements against the BRS government on issues like the TSPSC leak, unemployment, Dharani Portal, loan waiver and other issues, BJP sources said.

Nadda would do this at the meeting with Telangana BJP leaders in Shamshabad before going to New Delhi on March 31.

Indian-American business leader Ajay Banga is poised to become the next President of the World Bank after the nomination period closed and no country proposed an alternate candidate for the prestigious post.

In February, President Joe Biden announced that the US would be nominating Banga to lead the World Bank because he is "well equipped" to lead the global institution at "this critical moment in history."

The World Bank on Wednesday

closed a month-long window for nominations for its next president, with no alternatives announced to 63-yearold Banga

The former Mastercard Inc. chief, Banga currently serves as Vice Chairman at General Atlantic.

The bank's board is expected to announce the next steps in its selection process on Thursday, with a view to confirming a new leader by early May.

see the World Bank undergo an impor- president David Malpass, who will tant transition. We expect that Ajay Banga President Biden's nominee will be elected President of the World Bank," US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told lawmakers at a Congressional hearing on

Wednesday. "He will be charged with accelerating our progress to evolve the institution to better address 21st century challenges. This evolution will help the Bank deliver on its vital poverty alleviation and development goals," Yellen

If confirmed, Banga would become the first-ever Indian-American and Sikh-American to head either of the two top international financial institutions: the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Banga is expected to

mate change. step down in June, nearly a year Last week, reports emerged that

before his term is scheduled to China sounded doubtful about backing Banga, saying it is "open" to supporting "other potential candidates" Malpass faced strong criticism based on merit. Banga, however, over the bank's received overwhelming support from commitment to major countries across the world, climate action including India. Following Banga's

> Over the next few months, you will see the World Bank undergo an important transition. We expect that Ajay Banga President Biden's nominee will be elected President of the World Bank," US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told lawmakers at a Congressional hearing on Wednesday

al countries for support.

A coalition of 55 advocates, academics, executives, luminaries, and former government officials -- including four Nobel Laureates -- wrote an open letter to welcome and support Banga's nomination as the next President of the

Raised in India, Banga has a unique perspective on the opportunities and challenges facing developing countries and how the World Bank can deliver on its ambitious agenda to reduce poverty and expand prosperity, President Biden had said.

He has also worked closely with Vice President Harris as the Co-Chair of the Partnership for Central America.

He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2016. Banga is expected to take over the reins of the anti-poverty lender at a crucial time, with the US and Western nations pitching for reforms to focus on addressing a slew of wide-ranging global issues like climate change.

FINANCIAL IRREGULARITIES

Margadarsi accountant held, sent to remand

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Crime Investigation Department (AP-CID) police arrested Margadarsi Chit Fund Private Limited's accountant and auditor, Kudaravalli Shravan, on Thursday on charges of financial irregularities. Shravan was produced in the third additional chief metropolitan magistrate court and was sent to 14 days of judicial remand.

The CID officials said that Shravan had admitted that he had not done due diligence in verifying branch-level financial statements or bank statements before certifying the financial statements of the Margadarsi. It has also been found that principles of auditing were conveniently ignored at various levels by Shravan, especially when it comes to financial statements of bank balances - both current and fixed deposits.

The CID is investigating the charges of non-payment of monthly subscriptions/instalments in respect of multiple tickets held in the name of the Margadarsi, which were later substituted with new subscribers. The CID is also probing the charge that Margadarsi was illegally diverting the amounts deposited by the chit subscribers towards mutual funds, etc., to enable huge and unauthorised investments into speculation mar-





Enrolment for higher education in Andhra Pradesh up by 12.5%

PNS VIJAYAWADA

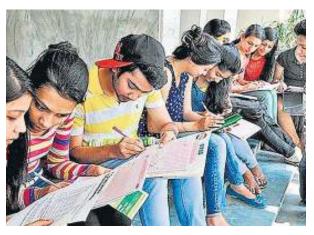
The All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) conducted in 2022 shows that enrolment in higher education in Andhra Pradesh reached 19,87,618 in 2020-21 as compared to 17,67,086 in 2014-15, an increase of 12.5%. Female enrolment in higher education in AP state increased to 9,31,553 in 2020-21 from 7,73,650 in 2014-15, an increase of 20.4%, shows the

The information was made available by Minister of State for Education Dr. Subhas Sarkar in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday while replying to a question raised by Member of Parliament Parimal Nathwani.

According to the statement of the minister, The All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) is a comprehensive source of Higher Education from 16.40 lakh in 2014-15.

Statistics wherein valuable data on various aspects is collected from Higher Education Institutions in the country. The 11th round of the Survey (AISHE 2020-21) was conducted in 2022. According to the findings of the survey, enrolment in higher education in the country has increased to nearly 4.14 crore in 2020-21, (crossing the 4 crore mark for the first time) from 3.42 crore in 2014-15. Female enrolment in the country has increased to 2.01 crore in 2020-21 from about 1.57 crore in 2014-15 as per the survey.

The survey results also show that at the national level, there is an increase in enrolment of Scheduled Castes students to 58.94 lakh in 2020-21 from 46.06 lakh in 2014-15, which shows an increase of 28%. The enrolment of Scheduled Tribes students in the country was up 47% to 24.12 lakh



Enrolment of Other Backward Castes (OBCs) in the country has increased to 1.48 crore, from 1.13 crore in 2014-15, indicating a rise of 32%. According to survey findings, 353 universities and 5298 Colleges have been added in the country between 2014-15

Nathwani wanted to know if the Government has conducted any survey of higher education in different states, the outcome thereof, and whether it has identified any special region which needs more

The minister stated that

Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), central support has been approved for setting up 130 Model Degree Colleges (MDCs) in unserved and underserved areas such as EBDs, aspirational districts, etc. Besides the establishment of MDCs, central support is also procentral support is also pro-vided for the improvement of higher education in unserved and underserved areas, through various other com-ponents of RUSA, such as Infrastructure grants to colleges, Enhancing Quality and Excellence in Select Autonomous Colleges, Upgradation of Existing Degree College to Model Degree College, etc.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisages by 2030, the establishment of at least one large multidisciplinary Higher Education Institution in or near every district, the statement read.

Gannavaram Police arrest NRI for cyberbullying

PNS VIJAYAWADA

An NRI was nabbed by the Gannavaram police on Wednesday for alleged social media posts against prominent people in the State including Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. On Thursday, the parents of the accused alleged that the Gannavaram police took their son into custody and seized his mobile phones, laptops, and bank credentials, but his whereabouts were not known.

Meanwhile, Gannavaram police, through a release, stated that they had arrested one Ponduru Anjan (Anjan Chowdry) (34) for posting derogatory posts on social media. Anjan's father Sambasiva Rao is a retired RTC conductor and his mother Ratna Kumari, is a retired teacher. Anjan had worked in America for three years and returned to India in 2015. Since then, he has been staying at home and trying to



through hateful posts on social media, said the police.

The police also stated that Anjan was an alcoholic and tortured his parents and friends for money for his addictions time and again. The police confiscated the mobile phone, tab, and other electronic gadgets used by Anjan and sent them to the forensic laboratory for further investigation. Anjan is a homosexual and the police found hundreds of gay porn videos on his phone and tab. He was involved in gay relationships through dating apps, say the police.

Anjan is also involved in

trolling and defaming prominent people and disturbing law and order in the State. The police have initiated legal proceedings against him in court. The case is being investigated under the supervision of cyber experts, the police said and added that a cyberbullying sheet would be registered against him and constant vigil would be maintained.

Meanwhile, Ratna Kumari told the media that the Gannavaram police seized Anjan's mobile, laptop and other gadgets. She alleged that her son's whereabouts were not informed till Thursday morn-ing. However, TDP chief Nara Chandrahaby, Naidu objected Chandrababu Naidu objected to the illegal detention of NRI youth Ponduri Anjan, and demanded that the AP police release him immediately. He asked the AP DGP to take stern action against the police who illegally took Anjan into custody over the allegations of creating objectionable posts

Will TDP join hands with BJP in Telangana?

PNS HYDERABAD

Going by early indications the TDP and the BJP seems to be joining hands in Telangana. So far both parties have not criticised each other openly.

The general impression is that the BJP will go for an alliance with the TDP and the BJP is not averse to the idea.

Jana Sena is reportedly bringing pressure on the BJP and the TDP for sailing together in Andhra Pradesh. Political observers say that this deal may extend to Telangana as well.

The TDP does not have any conflict of interest with the BJP support base in TS and can

influence many important pockets in Telangana. As of now, the TDP has a definite share of 5,000 to 6,000 votes in TS constituencies. These votes can become crucial if there is a close contest with the BRS.

Instead of condemning Rahul Gandhi's disqualification, the TDP hailed the BJP for releasing

a Rs 100 coin to honour NTR. On Wednesday Chandrababu Naidu said, "The Centre has decided to release a Rs 100 silver coin on the occasion of NTR's centenary. I thank Modi and the

Sources in the BJP, however, say that it is too early to decide of winning over regional parties will be in question. However, as elections are coming, signals will keep coming from everywhere for an alliance. Whether we want an alliance or not will be decided by the high command."

It may be mentioned here that the TDP supported the BJP in Port Blair. The BJP and the Congress won 10 seats each while the TDP bagged two seats and the DMK one seat. The remaining one was won by an Independent. With the TDP's support, the BJP's tally went up to 12. So an alliance was forged between the two parties. This is likely to have an impact on the

Hopefuls disappointed as TSPSC's schedule gets delayed

DEEPIKA PASHAM

The Telangana State Public Service Commission's indecision on releasing the schedule for coming examinations is dis-

appointing job hopefuls. A TSPSC official said that there is a struggle for time in scheduling the dates of forthcoming examinations.

Job hopefuls who were rushing to find a chair in the Chikkadpally library are now packing their bags to go back to their hometowns to look into the issue's

The hopefuls said that to avoid further expenses on room and food they are planning to take coaching classes at home.

Job hopeful Supriya said, "I took a break from my regular job and am surviving on my savings and preparing for TSPSC exams. I am single here in Hyderabad. We heard different versions about the examination schedule. I think

we have two months to prepare. I am planning to go home and study there."
"We have lots of exams. Banks, UPSC

and universities are conducting exams. So we are struggling to fix a time for our exams. We are spending two to three days deciding the dates of exams. After a lot of exercises, we released one schedule and for other examinations, we will be releasing the schedule in a week. When we finalise one exam date we are told that dates for other exams are coming up. The schedules for major exams have been prepared. We have only exams for 100 osts, 50 posts etc remaining," Chairman Dr B. Janardhan Reddy said

Another hopeful says that as he was late in joining coaching he was told to pay a very high fee. After bargaining the coaching centre reduced it. He says that he paid around Rs 25K and took the coaching but now he is sitting in his village doing nothing as exams have been

The custodial questioning of the three suspects in the TSPSC leak case continued for the second day. On Thursday, the police shifted the accused from the CCS office to the Himayath Nagar Special Investigation Team's office. Sources said that SIT officials questioned A10 Shamim, A11 Ramesh and A12 Suresh about the Group-1 test written by them. It seems that the three accused told the SIT that they got the Group-1 question paper from Praveen. The SIT is investigating whether the three gave the question paper to anyone else. It is known that for the AE test question paper, accused Dakiya Naik collected Rs 25 lakh from five persons. Nilesh and Gopal Naik bought the question paper by paying

Rs 13.5 lakh. Rajender paid Rs 5 lakh



and Prashant Reddy paid Rs 7.5 lakh SIT officials are examining Dakiya Naik's bank accounts. Meanwhile, the investigation carried out by SIT officials has confirmed that AE test question papers were leaked to 12 people and Group-1 question papers to five people.

The number of arrests has now reached 15. The number of accused has increased to 16 with the addition of Rajasekhar Reddy's brother-in-law Prashanth Reddy who is in New

Clashes mar Rama Navami

Contineud from Page 1

BJP national vice-president Dilip Ghosh performed puja at the 300-year-old Ram Mandir in Ramrajatala. TMC leader Ariun Singh also took part in a and 'Jhanki' every year for the Ram Navami procession organised by a religious outfit in stopped due to turmoil in the Barrackpore in North 24 valley,"

The festival was celebrated the Yatra, said. with fervour and enthusiasm across Telangana with devotees offering prayers and also attending the celestial wedding of Lord Ram and Sita performed in

Hundreds of devotees witnessed the 'Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam' at the famous Lord Ram temple at Bhadrachalam, about 300 kms from Hyderabad. Police made elaborate security arrangements for the 'sobha yatras' (processions) on the occasion of Ram Navami in Hyderabad.

But in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, a fire broke out at Venugopala Swamy temple in West Godavari district, but nobody was injured. "It was a short-circuit and there was no loss of life or injury," West Superintendent of Police (SP) U

Ravi Prakash said.

The small Hindu population in Srinagar also celebrated the festival by taking out a Shobha Yatra amid tight security. "We have been taking out this yatra past 16 years. Earlier, it was said Pawan das the or

In poll-bound Karnataka, political parties used the occasion to catch the attention of voters by setting up 'Prasad' counters in various parts of the state. The festival was celebrated in Jharkhand amid elaborate security arrangements including drone surveillance. Saffron flags and banners depicting Lord Ram and Lord Hanuman were displayed in many parts of the state, while devotees sang bhajans, chanted mantras and read Ramcharitamanas and Hanuman Chalisa to commemorate the birth of Lord Ram.

Speaking at a conclave in Delhi on the occasion, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said, "Lord Ram is not merely an embodiment in stone, wood or soil, he is the centre of our culture and faith.

APOLOGISE TO NATION

KTR demands Centre on hiking fuel prices

PNS HYDERABAD

Demanding that the Centre should apolfuel prices, Industries Minister KT Rama Rao wrote a strong-worded letter to the Centre criticising it for burdening the common man with increased fuel prices. He said that the Centre was 'looting' the

prices as the reason for the fuel price hike but its deceit has been exposed. "In 2013, when the cost of one barrel was USD 110, the cost of one litre of petrol was Rs 76. Now, when the cost of one

public by citing international crude oil

crude oil barrel is USD 66, the cost of one litre of petrol is Rs 110," KTR pointed out. He added that the Modi government is fleecing the poor and the middle class by increasing fuel prices to help a few companies "Due to the 45% hike in fuel

ties became costlier," KTR said. He said that due to the rise in diesel prices, state governments were forced to increase public transport charges and the public transport system is facing a crisis due to the Centre. "Inflation is also at a

prices after 2014, all essential commodi-



He added that the Modi government is fleecing the poor and the middle class by increasing fuel prices to help a few companies "Due to the 45% hike in fuel prices after 2014, all essential commodities became costlier," KTR said.

45-year high due to the Centre's failures," KTR added He wondered that although the Centre

at lower prices from Russia, the benefit is not passed on to the common man and two oil companies are reaping huge profits. "The Centre is importing crude at low prices from Russia, refining it, and selling it to other countries. They are hiding this key information from the public," KTR said. He added that the Centre has also reduced the windfall tax on fuel to help some companies.

He took a potshot at Union Ministers for their remarks that bringing fuel under the purview of GST would reduce

"The price of LPG which is under GST has been hiked from Rs 400 to Rs 1200, making it the costliest in the world," he said. KTR asked why the Centre couldn't control LPG prices although it is under GST. He said that the Centre is conspiring to stop the discussion on the price rise in Parliament. "Rejecting the BJP is the only way to stop the Centre's loot and reduce fuel prices," KTR added.

'Paanakam' counters attract voters in pollbound Karnataka

With the Karnataka Assembly elections only a few weeks Conduct is in force, they miss the opportunity to catch the attention of voters during the Sri Rama Navami festival on Thursday.

In keeping with Karnataka's age-old tradition of celebrating Sri Rama Navami by distributing Paanaka' or Sharbat' and 'Kosambari' at public places, various socio-religious groups set up their Prasad' (offerings to God) distribution pandals in many parts of the

Paanaka' are generally made of cantaloupe, Bael or lemonade since they -- as also Kosambari (a salad generally made of drenched green gram, grated coconut, and chilli, seasoned with mustard seeds and coriander) -- have a cooling effect on the body to beat the heat during summer.

What was interesting this

time was the 'Prasad' counters put up by political parties.
Since the Model Code of

party flags but dropped subtle hints for the people. It was the flags and festoons

that made the distinction for people to identify the political party behind these Pandals. In Bengaluru, many such

Prasad' distribution counters popped up in close

In Thurahalli, there was a pandal dotted with saffron flags and yellow marigold flowers and those distributing them sported saffron scarves around their neck. Hardly 50 metres away, there was another counter with Torana' made of green' mango leaves. People said they were set up by the BJP and Congress, respec-

TODAY **ALMANAC** Month & Paksham: Chaitra&Sukla Paksha Tithi:Dashami: Dashami Nakshatram: Pushya: Ashlesha: Rahukalam 03:23 PM to 04:54 PM 04:16 PM to 06:04 PM Varjyam 07:46 AM to 09:18 AM Gulika: 06:46 PM to 08:33 PM Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:56 AM to 12:44 PM VIJAYAWADA WEATHER Forecast: Mostly Sunny **Temp:** 37° **Humidity:** 53% Sunrise: 6:15 AM Sunset: 6.25 PM Updated: MARCH 30, 2023 5:00 PM

TDP lacks proper ...

Contineud from Page 1 JC said he, too, was not expecting any party tickets in the next elections, and he was ready to work for the party as an ordinary worker.

He said, "I suggested that 60 percent of the tickets should be given to the youth. Chandrababu Naidu has a face value. He will definitely fetch votes for the party." Meanwhile, former MP JC Diwakar Reddy also met Lokesh on the padayatra and said the latter was getting a very good response from the people. He said everybody is now coming on the roads. The antiincumbency is clearly visible among the voters.

Margadarsi accountant ...

Contineud from Page 1

The company was transferring the future subscription amount to the Corporate Office Account and, in turn, issuing a "receipt" carrying interest at the rate of 4 to 5 per cent in the name of the subscriber, said the investigating agency. The company is also being investigated for its non-disclosure of revenue and expenditure accounts and statements of assets and liabilities and details of investment as per Rule 28 (read with Section 24 of the Chit Fund Act), said the CID.

Earlier in the week, the CID had sent notices to Cherukuri Ramoji Rao and Cherukuri Sailaja to be present at the CID office in Mangalagiri for questioning. Both Ramoji Rao and Sailaja were booked by the CID as A1 and A2 in the financial mismanagement in the Margadarsi.

CM meets FM, seeks funds

Contineud from Page 1

He urged her to release the pending amount of Rs. 36,625 crore under Resource Gap Funding for the fiscal 2014-15 to the State, sanction Rs.10,000 crore immediately on an ad-hoc basis to expedite the construction of the Polavaram Project and another Rs. 2020 crore to fill the scourge pits formed at the main Dam site due to the washing away of diaphragm wall in the flash floods.

AP has so far spent Rs. 2600.74 crore on Polavaram Project from its exchequer, he said and sought the reimbursement of the same from the Central funds and accept the Technical Advisory Committee's revised estimates of Rs. 55,548 crore on Polavaram Project. The Chief Minister also urged her to implement the promise of granting Special Status to the State.

Nadda to direct BJP leaders to intensify moves against BRS

Contineud from Page 1

State Executive Committee Members, district presidents and in-charges would attend this meeting.

Telangana BJP President Bandi Sanjay, Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy, Rajya Sabha Member Dr K. Laxman, BJP Vice-President DK Aruna, Telangana BJP incharges Tarun Chugh and Sunil Bansal and co-in-charge Arvind Menon would also attend the

meeting.
Nadda will be arriving on Friday afternoon and will go to Sangareddy by road. He will inaugurate the Sangareddy district BJP office. Nadda would also open the Bhupalpally, Warangal, Jangaon and Mahbubabad district party offices virtually.

Nadda would also open the BJP offices in the Anantapur and Chittoor districts of AP vir-

Later, Nadda will attend a public meeting in which 20,000 BJP activists from Sangareddy, Patancheru, Zaheerabad, Narayana Khede and Andole constituencies would be participating.

DK Aruna would participate in the opening of the BJP office in Bhupalapally, Eatala Rajender in the opening of the Warangal BJP office, Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy and Dr Boora Narsaiah Goud in the opening of the Jangaon BJP office and Garikapati Mohan Rao and Ravindra Naik in the opening of the Mahbubabad district BJP office.

Devotion, fervour...

Contineud from Page 1

In the evening, new 'vastrams' to deities were decorated to the main deities and 'utsava' deities and later Sri Rama Navami Asthanam was performed. In the evening, Hanumantha Vahana Seva was observed between 7 pm and 9

Devotees in large numbers attended the celestial wedding of Lord Ram and Sita performed at Ramatheertham in Vizianagaram. Minister of Education Botsa Sathyanarayana presented silk robes and offerings to the deity on behalf of the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

On the other hand, the canopies at Venugopala Swamy temple in Duvva village of Tanuku Mandal in West Godavari district accidentally caught fire on Thursday during the Srirama Navami celebrations. The accident is believed to have occurred due to a short circuit. No casualties were reported in the accident. More details about the accident are awaited. Fire engines rushed to the spot to douse the fire. The extent of the damage caused by the fire is yet to be ascertained.

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SPIRITUAL SPLENDOUR



Sri Rama Navami celebrations at the renowned Sitaramachandra Swamy temple in Governorpet, Vijayawada on Thursday.



Visakhapatnam-Tirunelveli leg (Leg 2) of the Sam No Varunah car rally was

Nara Lokesh, TDP general

secretary, has opined that the unemployment rate is high in

the State. On Thursday, Lokesh

crossed the 700 km milestone

of his 'padayatra' on the 55th

day at Guttur village of

On this occasion, Lokesh said that he has been closely observing how the decisions

taken during the TDP regime are being implemented and whether the people are happy with them are not. He said that

TDP has distributed washing

machines for Rajaka commu-

nity members and would give

free power supply to them at

Similarly, women have been

least 500 units per month

Penugonda.

Tamil Nadu, covering a dis-

Prior to flagging off the rally, the Chief of Staff inter-

acted with all participants and congratulated them for their voluntary participation. The participants undertook several outreach programmes in the city, including a cleanup drive on the RK Beach and an outreach programme at Desire Society Orphanage, Gajuwaka. The rally was scheduled to

halt at Machilipatnam transit-ing via Kakinada and Bhimavaram. This leg of the rally will culminate at Tirunelveli on April 3, undertaking many outreach programmes enroute including beach cleanup drives, awareness programmes on Agnipath and naval recruitment at

The 'Sam No Varunah' car expedition, which commenced from INS Netaji Subhas, Kolkata, is planned to terminate in Lakhpat, Gujarat, covering a total distance of over 7,000 km. It is aimed at creating awareness among the people about the Indian maritime history, issues pertaining to our maritime culture, coastal security awareness, showcasing of Nari Shakti, informing the youth on the Agnipath scheme, reaching out to Naval veterans and Sahara ladies and conduct of many social outreach programmes coordinated by the Naval Wellness and Welfare



Unemployment rate high

in Andhra Pradesh: Lokesh

complaining about the skyrocketing prices of essential commodities. Everywhere unemployment issue is haunting the youth and this will be on top priority for the TDP once it is back in power, Lokesh maintained.

Stating that the TDP's slogan

as the capital, Lokesh said that companies like Kia, Celkon, Adani Data Centre, Defense Academy, and TCL are not in the capital region. They have been set up in various parts of the State and this is decentralisation of development, he noted. Vakkaliga community repre-

sentatives met Lokesh and complained that this Government stopped the construction of the proposed building for Vakkaliga welfare at Madakasira though the earlier Responding on it Lokesh and that soon after the TDP said that soon after the TDP forms the government funds will be allocated to them as per the population ratio.

Second leg of 'Sam No Varunah' car rally flagged off

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

flagged off by Vice Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan, Chief of Staff, Eastern Naval Command, in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. A team of 36 participants A team of 36 participants including officers, sailors and NWWA members from the Eastern Naval Command and Naval veterans are participating in this leg of expedition in the coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry and

tance of around 1,770 km.



Officials directed to expedite | Guntur being developed developmental works

PNS BHIMAVARAM

Collector P Prashanthi has directed the officials concerned to expedite the development works and complete them by the prescribed time.

The Collector in her whirlwind tour on Thursday inspected various development works being carried out in the city. The Collector inspected the site for the establishment of a food court near the underpass. She also inspected the area where road encroachments

and gave directions to the

Collector Prashanthi inspected the land acquired for the Edward tank beautification works and the park constructed on the Municipal Corporation premises. The Collector ordered the officials not to compromise in removing any encroachments or obstacles to traffic in the city.

Stating that it is summer season, and dust rises within these two months, she asked the officials to take measures

removed in front of D Mart such as planting saplings in the road margins.

> Due to the empty space between the road margins and the shops, more dust enters the shops. Collector Prashanthi asked the officials to create awareness among the shop owners to set up paver blocks properly in front of various shops on the road margin in urban areas. Municipal Commissioner S Shivarama Krishna, DEE TV Narayana Rao, TPO Sitaramaiah, and other officials were among those

who accompanied her.



as model city: YSRC MLC

PNS GUNTUR

MLC Lella Appireddy said that the focus was laid on the overall development of Guntur city. The comprehensive development of Guntur city is the objective of the Municipal Corporation and the city is being developed as a role model to other cities, he added.

MLC Appireddy visited the walking track being constructed at Chuttugunta and inspected other development works. Speaking on the occasion, he said special attention has been paid to the development of the Poleramma temple and the development of the naturally formed pond, adjacent to the temple, as well as modernizing the walking track around it and making it suitable for sports,

exercise, and yoga.
MLC Appireddy said that all necessary measures are being taken to enhance the reputation of Guntur at the state level, adding that special plans and proposals have been prepared accordingly. He explained that a walking track, which is very



useful for the people of many surrounding divisions, would be designed in the latest state-ofthe-art, and the area around the pond would be developed so that the people could play games, do exercises, and practise yoga in a pleasant atmos-

He said that the pond would be beautified with two ghats, a music fountain in the middle, boating, CC cameras, plants around, and a children's play-

For the convenience of the

remove the shed, adjacent to the Poleramma temple, and replace it with a two-storied building. He stated that the plans have been prepared in such a way that the development, spirituality, entertainment, and games are all around. To this extent, MLC Lella Appireddy ordered the engineering officials to start the works on Friday and complete them quickly. Corporators Adaka Padmavati, Aacchala Venkata Reddy, Sheik Roshan, Guravaiah, and other leaders were among those who accom-

AAP launches campaign against Modi government

PNS VIJAYAWADA

A mass campaign by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) -Modi Hatao-Desh Bachao' -- against the BJPled Narendra Modi government has been launched to protest the suppression of political parties and organisations, said AAP AP State working president PV Rama

He said that the AAP would display 'Modi Hatao-Desh Bachao' posters in every nook and corner to inform the public about the corruption and failure of

the Modi government. Speaking to the media persons on Thursday, he said that the AAP was not afraid of police cases and would conduct a poster campaign vastly. He alleged that the BJP was trying to strangle the country's

Constitution by breaking it into pieces and framing Opposition leaders in cases. He said that saffron leaders were branding students as traitors and terrorists for raising voice against the atrocities of the BJP government. He further alleged that the BJP government went scot-free after violating labour laws and forcing workers to live miserable

He further said that Modi was developing the Adani empire wherever he visited and alleged that there would be no inquiry against Adani as long as the Modi government was in power. He exhorted the people of the State to fight against this dictatorial government and try to pacify the souls of the freedom fighters who protected the heritage of our

Hyd-Agartala train from April 2

PNS HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway (SCR) on Thursday announ ced a special weekly train from Secunderabad to Agartala, train number 07018, beginning from

The train will leave the Secunderabad station at 11 am on Sunday and reach Agartala at 11:15 pm on Tuesday.

The train will halt at

Pagidipalli, Nalgonda, Miryalguda, Sattenapalle, Guntur, Vijayawada, Eluru, Rajamundry, SamalkotJn, Duvvada, Visakhapatnam,



Road, Palasa, Berhampur, Khurda Road Junction, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Bhadrakh, Balasore, Khara gpur Junction, Andul, Dankuni, Bardhaman, Rampur Hat, Malda Town, Kishanganj, New Jalpaiguri, Jalpaiguri Road, Mathabhanga, New Cooch Behar [C], New

Alipurduar, Kokrajhar, New Bongaigaon, Golpara, Guwahati,Jagi Road, Hojai, Lumding Junction, New Haflong, Badarpur, New Karimganj, Dharmanagar and Ambassa stations during the journey. It will comprise AC II Tier, AC III Tier, Sleeper and General Second Class coaches.

17 new Covid cases recorded in Telangana in one day

HIGHEST NUMBER OF ACTIVE CASES IN LAST SIX MONTHS

PNS HYDERABAD

A total of 17 new cases have been recorded in Telangana on Thursday with the total number of active cases sitting at 158 which is the highest number recorded in the state, compared to last few months.

A bulletin released by the state department of public health and family welfare said a cumulative number 8,42,479 cases have been recorded thus far while 8,38,213 have recovered. The state officials revealed that there is extensive testing in the

state to control the pandemic. There were 13,509 active cases in India as on March 30, while most of the big numbers were recorded in Maharashtra, Kerala, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh. The Centre has recently issued a notice to Telangana government in this regard and instructed the officials to take

The state government has started testing at base level every day. According to the bulletin, 3,780 were tested on

necessary action.



Thursday and 147 reports are still awaited. Officials said that there is no need for concern as no deaths were recorded so far. The fatality rate is at 0.49% while the recovery rate is 99.49%. The state has also vaccinated 153 people on Thursday, adding the total number to 7,75,54,31

people.

The officials said that vulnerable age groups are children, less than 10 years of age and elders above 60 years. They advised the public to avoid going outdoors unless mandatory. They also added that there is a higher incidence of Covid in the age group of 20 to 50 years. Hence, people were requested to exercise due caution while going for work

and essential activities.

The bulletin read, "In case of any flu or influenza-like symptoms such as fever, cough, sore

throat, running nose, difficulty in breathing, body pains and headache, please report to the nearest government health facility and seek health services without any delay. People with co-morbid conditions like hypertension, diabetes, cardiac illness, chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cancer or any other chronic illness are requested to stay indoors and avoid any kind of travel except for medical care in order to avoid exposure





he pioneer

YSRCP's charges baseless: Mekapati

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) rebel MLA Mekapati Chandrasekhar Reddy created a scene in Udayagiri town on Thursday by squatting on the road near the bus station.

The rebel MLA dared the YSRCP leaders to come to him. He squatted on a chair in front of the Udayagiri bus stand for about one and a half hours. He said that the YSRCP leaders challenged repulse him from Udayagiri and dared

them to come and repulse him. A large number of followers of Chandrasekhar Reddy assembled near the bus stand extending support to the rebel MLA leading to the tense situation. The police rushed there

to regulate the crowds. Chadrasekhar Reddy was accused of voting in favour of TDP candidate in the MLA quota MLC election defying the whip of YSRCP. He was expelled from the party. The YSRCP leaders warned of repulsing him if he came to

Taking their challenge, the rebel MLA went to Udayagiri from Marripadu and sat on a chair on the road near the bus station. The rebel MLA told the media that he supported YS Rajasekhar Reddy when he was alive and later started supporting Jagan Mohan Reddy. He said that he is a four-time MLA and the people of the constituency are with him. The YSRCP leaders are making baseless allegations

against him, he slammed.

Vizag-bound Duronto exp rams SUV on track

PNS ELURU

Visakhapatnam-bound Duronto express hit an SUV on the railway track at Bhimadolu in the wee hours on Thursday. However, there were no casualties in the mishap.

Railway sources said some people were travelling in the Bolero vehicle, and they forcibly crossed the railway gate and tried to go forward. However, the vehicle came to a halt in the middle of the railway track. On noticing the approaching Duronto express, the driver of the SUV and others got off the vehicle and fled the scene.

The express train hit the SUV and dragged it for some distance. The engine of the train was partially damaged

due to the accident. The SUV turned into an iron mangle under the impact of the accident. However, no one was hurt in the accident. Following the accident, the Duronto express was detained on the track for about five hours.

The railway officials sent another engine replacing the damaged engine and the train continued its onward journey. In the meantime, some passengers, who were travelling in the Duronto express, got off the train and went to their destinations on the road.

The railway police began an inquiry on how the SUC came to the track when the railway gate was closed and launched a search for those who were travelling in the vehicle. Due to the accident several trains

Man ends life with his two sons

PNS ANANTAPUR

A man allegedly committed suicide along with his two sons by jumping into an irrigation tank Bukkarayasamudram and the bodies were fished on Thursday.

Police said the villagers noticed three bodies floating in the tank. The bodies were retrieved immediately.

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Rafi (35), and his two sons Imran (9) and Sohail (6). Mohammad Rafi quarrelled with his wife and left home with his two sons on March 28. The family members of Mohammad Rafi lodged a complaint with



the Three Town police station about their missing

The deceased Mohammad Rafi was eking out a livelihood by working as mason. Differences erupted between some family matters. The the GGH for postmortem.

police suspect that after throwing the children, Mohammad Rafi might have jumped into the tank. The family members identified the bodies. The police registhe wife and husband over tered a case and shifted it to

TWO YOUTH DROWNED IN RIVER KRISHNA

PNS GUNTUR

Two youth were drowned in the river Krishna at Amaravati on Thursday. Police said that Kesara Rajasekhar Reddy and Mallikharjun Reddy entered the river for a bath and drowned. The bodies were fished out from the river.



BJP takes out 'Sobha Yatra'

PNS ■ GUNTUR

BJP activists took out a huge 'Sobha Yatra'here on Thursday. BJP State president Somu Veerraju welcomed the rally at Shankar Vilas centre.

Addressing the activists, Veerraju said that Hindu consciousness among the people is growing and the Sobha Yatra' received an overwhelming response from the people. He said that the 'Sobha Yatra' was organised on the occasion of the Sri Ramanavami festi-

A large number of people irrespective of political party affiliations in the programme, he claimed.

Veerraju alleged that some vested interests are trying to vitiate the Hindu culture and traditions. BJP district president Patibandla Ramakrishna, Jupudi Ranga Raju, Chandu Sambashiva Rao, Thota Ramakrishna, P Ravikumar, S Umashankar, Yamini Sharma, Velagaleti Gangadhar, and Bhajarant Dal Ramakrishna were among those who participated in the programme.

Fire erupts at temple in West Godavari, no loss of life

PNS DUVVA (W.G)

A fire broke out at a temple in Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district on Thursday at the end of Sri Rama Navami festivities, an official said.

Nobody was injured as the devotees had already gone out of the Venugopala Swamy temple premises on a procession as part of the festival in Duvva village in Tanuku man-

"It was a short-circuit and there was no loss of life or injury," confirmed West Godavari district Superintendent of Police (SP) U Ravi Prakash.

The fire erupted at noon after the completion of puja (rituals) and when the procession was already on its way into the village.

According to police, the organisers had erected a tent made out of palmyra leaves in which electric lighting was given. The scorching summer



heat would have caused the fire, police said.

Except for the tent getting gutted, no other loss was observed. Police and fire officials reached the spot on time and brought the fire under control, SP Ravi Prakash said.

As this was a fire accident,

the police department did not file any case but the fire department would register one, the official added.

Meanwhile, a video of the incident has gone viral, in which the flames and smoke can be seen billowing out of the thatched tent

4 killed in two road accidents

Four persons were killed in two road accidents in Eluru and Anantapur districts and a Circle Inspector was seri-ously injured in another acci-dent in the Nellore district on Thursday.

Police said that two persons were killed when the motorcycle on which they were going was hit by a mini-truck at Devarapalli village at a sub-station Jangareddygudem mandal in

Eluru district on Thursday. CI Bala Suresh Babu told

the media that a mini-truck hit the bike killing Nakka

Ravi and Velpula Benjamin. Another woman was injured in the accident and she was admitted to the GGH in Eluru where her condition is said to be very critical. It may be mentioned here that two persons were in a similar accident at the same place a few days ago. A case was registered and the bodies were shifted to the GGH in Jangareddygudem.

In another tragic road accident in the Anantapur district, a middle-aged couple was killed when an SUV hit their bike at Vaddepalli village in Atmakur mandal. Police said that the couple Boya

Ramachandra (52) and Mutyalakka (48) were going on the bike to Anantapur. A Bolero vehicle hit their back from the rear end killing the couple instantaneously.

Meanwhile, In the combined Nellore district, Circle Inspector Prabhakar Rao suffered injuries when a tractor hit his bike at Patluru village in Naidupet mandal on Thursday. He was initially admitted to a private hospital in Naidu and later he was shifted to a corporate hospital in Chennai. Sullurpet MLA Kiliveti Sanjeevaiah visited the injured CI in the hos-



Take steps to tackle drinking water shortage: Minister

PNS ONGOLE

Minister for Municipal Administration Audimulapu Suresh directed the RWS officials to take all needed steps to provide drinking water to the areas which are facing scarcity.

He held a meeting with the RWS officials in his camp office in Markapuram on Thursday and reviewed the drinking water scarcity in the district.

The minister asked the officials to take steps to dig up boreholes immediately wherever underground water resources are available. Steps should be taken to drill three bore wells at Bommalapuram and Chinnadorna villages in Pedda Dornala mandal, the

minister told the officials. The minister said that bore wells would be dug up at Chennampalli and Gangavaram villages in Pullalacheruvu mandal and the YSRCP leaders would make arrangements to transport water through a pipeline from a distance. The officials explained to the minister that underground water resources are getting depleted in many places.

The minister said that the officials told him that Sagar water would be provided through a pipeline to Pullalacheruvu and announced the sanction of Rs 5 lakh immediately for the installation of taps at the village. The officials told the minister that the



drinking water shortage problem is lages of Tripurantakam mandal and high in the Duvvali and Lellapalli vil-they would supply water to them

The minister directed the officials to take steps to supply drinking water through tankers to Tammadapalli, Gurrapushala Panchayat, and all other villages in the constituency.

The officials informed the minister that some contractors had complained about the non-payment of their bills for supplying water through tankers.

The minister said that the issue is under the consideration of the Chief Minister and the Chief Minister assured of sanctioning the bills at the earliest. DE Ramakrishna, AEs, officials, and representatives of people among those who attended the meet-

Taking part in Srirama Navami cel-

ebrations at various temples in

Mahabubnagar on Thursday, Minister

for Prohibition and Excise V Srinivas

Goud expressed the wish that the

Mahabubnagar district prospers further

He took part in the celestial wedding

In the new State of Telangana, the

State government developed Bhadradri,

Yadadri and Vemulavada temples and developed the Manyamkonda temple

in an unprecedented manner. The

places of worship faced neglect in the

undivided AP regime. Development

works in Manyamkonda commenced

In Wanaparthy, Minister for Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy

and his spouse along with Municipal

Chairman Gattu Yadav and other lead-

ers proceeded in a procession carrying

silk clothes on their heads and present-

ed them to Lord Sri Rama and Goddess

Sita in the Sri Venkateswara Swamy

temple here. Atchampeta legislator and Government Whip Guvvala

with an outlay of Rs 100 crore.

celebrations held at various places in the

with the mercy of Lord Srirama.

Interest waiver gets good response from taxpayers

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has decided to exempt interest on property tax arrears. The orders issued in this regard by Special CS Y Srilakshmi helped the State government collect good revenue.

Around Rs 1892.09 crore has been collected as property tax by March 30 evening, which is Rs 529.43 crore extra

compared to the corresponding period of last year -- Rs 1,362.66 crore. The officials stated that the CM's decision

to waive off interest on property tax arrears had been giving good results for the past five days as the tax payments increased significantly.

According to the officials, people took advantage of the opportunity and as a result, the State government got an additional income of Rs 516.23 crore compared to the last year. They stated that the government's offer to those who

had not paid property tax in the current financial year was successful. All those who have been penalised for not paying the property tax till now got benefits and many people are coming forward to make the payments, they said.

The officials said that in the financial year 2021-2022, from April 1, 2021 to March 30, 2022, an income of Rs 1,362.66 crore was generated and from April 1, 2022 to

March 30, 2023 1,878.89 crore was generated. The last date for the waiver of interest offer is

March 31 and the officials are expecting more people to make use of the opportunity.

From March 17 to March 30, an income of Rs 337.25 crore has come to the exchequer, said the officials (Rs 25.23 crore on March 25, Rs 40.10 crore on March 27, Rs 48.83 crore on March 28, Rs 62.24 crore on March 29 and Rs 28.01 crore till Thursday

Leopard cubs found in agricultural fields

PNS NIZAMABAD

Panic has gripped the Gangaramanda village under Makloor mandal after leopard cubs were found in agricultural fields. Farmers are too scared to go into their fields.

Å farmer, while working in his field, spotted two leopard cubs prowling.

The farmers in the neighbouring fields took a video of the cubs running in an agri-

mobile phones. The video went viral on social media. The police visited the area and assured the people of protec-

The Forest officials were alerted. The officials asked the farmers to remain alert.

A police official, who visited the fields where the leopard cubs were seen, walked around the fields. Forest officials arrived in the village. The cubs could have been separated from their mother.

Grandeur marks celestial wedding at Bhadrachalam the town, the Minister presented silver jewellery to the deities.

PNS BHADRACHALAM

Traditional grandeur marked the celestial wedding of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita at Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Devastanam here on Thursday.

A large number of devotees from across the State and also from other parts of the country thronged the temple to witness the celestial wedding. The devotees witnessed the celestial wedding of the divine couple at Mithila Stadium on the banks of the River

The celestial wedding was performed by priests. The ritual was per-

formed from 2 am and 9.30 am. Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya and several guests were present at the ceremony. Andhra Pradesh Assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitharam, Mp Maloth Kavitha, MLC T Madhushudhan, MLA Podem Veeraiah and Commissioner of Endowments V Anil Kumar were present. District Collector Anudeep Durishetty and Superintendent of Police G Vineet

supervised the arrangements.

Minister for Endowments A Indrakaran Reddy presented Pattu Vastrams and Mutyala Talambralu to the divine couple on behalf of the State government. Silk clothes and Mutyala Talambralu were also presented by TTD and Vaddiraju Ravichandra.



Chinna Jeeyar Swamy at the celestial wedding of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita in Bhadrachalam on Thursday

Meanwhile, Minister for Finance T Harish Rao celebrated Sri Rama Navami, along with the residents of Siddipet, on Thursday by visiting 22 temples to witness the celestial wedding.

He spent six hours visiting temples. The municipal chairman presented silk clothes to Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy temple in Siddipet town on the

occasion of the Sri Rama Navami cel-

ebrations. Harish Rao took part in the celebrations and offered special pujas to the deities.

Taking part in the celebrations held

at Prasanna Anjaneya Swamy temple in

Balaraju, along with his spouse, presented silk clothes to Lord Srirama and Goddess Sita at the temple on Sirsanagandla hillock in Charakonda cultural field using their

CBI arrests Safdarjung Hospital neurosurgeon on corruption charges

he Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested a neurosurgeon of Safdarjung Hospital here and his four accomplices, who allegedly forced patients into buying surgical equipment from a particular establishment at exorbitant prices, officials said on Thursday. The agency raided several Delhi and Uttar Pradesh locations linked to Manish Rawat, the neurosurgeon, and busted the nefarious nexus, they said. After a thorough investigation, the CBI sleuths arrested Rawat and four of his cohort, including

Deepak Khattar, the proprietor of Kanishka Surgical in New Delhi, and middlemen Avnesh Patel, Manish Sharma and Kuldeep, a CBI spokesperson said. The charges levelled against them pertained to bribery and corruption. The CBI has accused Rawat of colluding with his accomplices to extract payment from patients for medical consultations and surgical procedures while flouting the hospital's established protocols.



Financial consultant duped of Rs 1.38 lakh while buying wine online

73-year-old financial consultant here lost Rs 1.38 lakh to cyber fraud while purchasing A bottle of wine through online search, police said on Thursday. As per the complainant, a city resident, he came upon a contact number while looking to buy a bottle of 'Creme De Cassis' online on March 21. He called the person and ordered the bottle for Rs 1,650, he said. The person asked for his credit card number, expiry date and CVV which the complainant provided, the First Information Report registered at Colaba police station said. Soon, he received

messages notifying that his credit card had been charged Rs 1,650, Rs 91,449 and Rs 45,725. He called the 'seller' again. The man told him that it was a mistake and the extra money charged will be returned. The complainant then informed his bank and blocked the card. Sometime later he received a message that another payment on his card had been declined, which meant someone was trying to withdraw money again.



No need to panic amid spurt in Covid cases: Delhi Health Minister

elhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj held a meeting with experts on Thursday to assess the Covid situation in the national capital and said there was no need to panic because of a spurt in cases. The meet came a day after Delhi's COVID-19 cases climbed to 300 for the first time since August 31 last year, while the positivity rate rose to 13.89 per cent, according to the data shared by the health department. Two Covid-related deaths were also reported, it said. Addressing a press conference

Bharadwaj said they were getting some indicators about the spike in Covid cases but they are fully prepared. "Last night, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal called me to discuss about the Covid situation and he asked me to convene an emergency meeting on Thursday. In the meeting today, epidemiologist, genome sequencing expert, special secretary (health) were present and we analysed the situation closely," he said.



INDIA'S BORDERS FULLY SECURE

Surgical strikes broke back of terrorists: Rajnath

PNS NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said Índia's borders are "fully secure" and asserted that surgical strikes conducted by India have broken the back of terrorists.

Addressing a conclave here, he also said that whether it was the "standoff with China or any ill intentions from Pakistan" Indian armed forces have been giving a "befitting reply"

Singh further said that India has led the world on issues like terrorism and has been successful in garnering support to eliminate the menace.

'Our borders are fully secure. Whether it was the standoff with China or ill intentions from Pakistan, our armed forces have been giving a befitting reply, whenever required.

The surgical strikes against terrorism have broken the back of terrorists. A strong and clear message has gone to the world that India has the

strength and it can strike (against terrorism) on its own soil, and if need be, on their (foreign) soil as well," he said. This is the result of strong

will of the government, the

defence minister said. He emphasised that countries, which use terrorism as a tool, are well aware of the fact that India never harms anyone unnecessarily, nor does it spare anyone who tries to hurt its unity, integrity and sovereign-

He was speaking at the 'India Rising Conclave' organised by a leading television media net-

From secure borders and self-reliance to a strong economy and transformed global image, India is rising as one of the "strongest countries" under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the defence minister said.

He termed the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir as another example of the strong will of the government, asserting that the Union territory has ushered in a new era of peace and progress due to the decision.

"One can assess this from the fact that Congress party while carrying out its 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' did not face any difficulty. The Yatra left Kashmir without any issue," he said.

Singh said that the government is carrying forward the vision of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, under whose leadership nuclear test was conducted in Pokhran in

"Today, we are producing big missiles, tanks, weapons and ammunition on our land.

South Kashmir woman makes world's smallest 'mandala' shikara

PNS ■ PAHALGAM (JK)

Childhood interest in drawing and painting led Mahira Shah to the world of 'mandala' art and today she holds the world record for making the smallest mandala shikara.

Mandala is an ancient Indian art pattern which involves drawing of circles in intricate designs. The art form was popularised by Indian artist SH Raza, who created several paintings of the mandala art and became world famous for them.

Mahira Shah entered the Indian Books of Records for making the world's smallest shikara in mandala art.

The artwork is more or less the size of an A3 sheet.

"During my free time, I would try my hand at mandala (art)

My husband and father-inlaw noticed that I had some talent and they encouraged me to take it up," Shah told PTI from her Pahalgam home.

Born and brought up in Tral township of Pulwama district, Maĥira Shah got married to Inamul Haq who hails from Pahalgam.

CONG ON LALIT MODI'S 'WILL TAKE RAHUL TO COURT' TWEETS

SAYS WASTE DISCHARGED INTO RIVERS, RIVULETS

SC concern over treatment of sewage in villages, cities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has expressed concern over the treatment of sewage generated in villages, towns and cities and said untreated waste is discharged into rivers and rivulets polluting the very sources of water upon which the survival of the population and bio diversity depends.

The top court asked the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to ensure that an accountable mechanism is set up in Uttar Pradesh to take stock of the performance of the sewage treatment plants (STPs), providing for adequate funds for upgrade and maintenance as required and for attending to all other administrative issues and problems.

The Uttar Pradesh government said that total sewage generated in the state is 5500 MLD, which is one of the highest in the country and 100 per cent treatment of sewage in the state would be done by June

A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala passed the order after hearing

an application of Uttar Pradesh government seeking more time to install and operationalise 100 per cent STP coverage in the state.

The top court had on February 22, 2017 directed the states to adhere to the mandatory timelines for the setting of common effluent treatment plants and STPs within a period of three years for treatment of untreated wastes generated in different villages, cities an towns.

The Uttar Pradesh government contended in its application that timelines which were provided by the court in 2017 are impractical and artificial and impossible to implement in the time frame, given present funding and institutional tive priorities of the state"

The state government said that the total sewage generated in Uttar Pradesh is 5500 Million Litres Per Day (MLD) and it has operational 122 STPs with a treatment capacity of 3860 MLD, 52 STPs with a treatment capacity of 1004 MLD are under construction and are to be commissioned by December 2024.

"15 STPs with a treatment capacity of 854 MLD are under 'tendering' and are proposed to be commissioned by June 2025," the state government said, adding that 317 STPs with a treatment capacity of 1593 MLD would be installed by December 2025.

he bench noted that in sum and substance, it has been submitted by the state government that 100 per cent treatment of sewage would be envisaged by June 2025.

It said that the mere setting up of STPs is not enough and the maintenance of the STPs and their performance and capacity to deal with sewage which is generated is another matter which has to be duly scrutinised and monitored.

Mamata gives 'aur ek dafa Delhi chalo' call to oust BJP from power

PNS KOLKATA

attack against arch-rival BJP, other schemes of the housing Banerjee, who has been on an overnight 'sit-in protest' here against the Centre's alleged discrimination against West Bengal, called for an "aur ek dafa Delhi chalo" (another

march to Delhi) to oust the rightwing party from

A day before, the West Bengal chief minister and stormy petrel of Indian politics had in a change of stance urged all parties in the country to unitedly fight the BJP in

next year's Lok Sabha election, a departure from an earlier decision to remain equidistant from both the Congress and the saffron party.
The "aur ek bar Delhi

Chalo" call made from the feet of the Dr B R Ambedkar's statue on Kolkata's Red Road, an obvious take on Netaji Subhas Bose's more famous "Delhi Chalo" clarion call delivered in Singapore 80 years ago, resounded well with her supporters, who had thronged the venue of the sit-in, in large numbers.

Banerjee had started the two-day demonstration on

Wednesday noon against the Centre's "stoppage" of funds to the state for MGNREGA and and public works departme

> "All of us have to unite, fight against the BJP and defeat it. If needed, we will march to Delhi to protest against the Centre's attempts to destroy the country's federal structure and keep states ruled by non-BJP

parties bereft of "I was under the impression that the Union government would communicate and inform us that it would pay our dues. But,

nothing like that has happened. The BJP is running a government by the (central) agencies and of the agencies. The party is trying to project all opposi-

tion parties as corrupt, and itself as saint," she said.
Stating that the 2024 Parliamentary polls will be a fight between the citizens of the country and the BJP, Banerjee had Wednesday said people across religions must unite to defeat the saffron party and save the poor of the

She described the BJP as 'Dushasana' and 'Duryodhana' the two antagonists from the epic Mahabharata'.

DMK convenes Opposition meet in Chennai

"This is a conclave on rising

India. And, the idea of rising

India has been described dif-

ferently by different people.

Some economists see it as a ris-

ing economy of India, while

some sociologists describe it as

betterment in social living.

Some political scientists term

the political stability in the

country and strengthening of

democratic values as rising

speaking contrary to this too

are also active, and for them,

'democracy seems to be on the

wane in India', but such peo-ple are very few and far

However, some people

India," Singh said.

PNS NEW DELHI

DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin has called a meeting of opposition parties in Chennai on Monday to discuss issues relating to social justice in the

Leaders of around 20 parties, including the Congress, are slated to attend the meeting either in person or virtually, opposition leaders said.

The meeting will discuss the topic: "Taking social justice in India forward - Social Justice, the Way Forward". Among the speakers who

have confirmed their participation include Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav, National Conference patron Farooq Abdullah, BRS leader K Keshav Rao, CPI(M)'s Sitaram Yechury, CPI's D Raia, AAP leader Sanjay Singh and TMC's

Derek O'Brien. The BJD's Sasmit Patra and YSRCP's A Suresh are also among the likely attendees. If they do, then their parties would be attending such a meeting for the first

time, sources said. However, the two parties are yet to confirm their presence to the DMK.



used embattled IPL founder to take Rahul Gandhi to court, to attack the BJP and said that "global scamsters" were now coming to the defence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Former IPL chief Lalit Modi,

accused of financial irregularities in India, launched a scathing attack on Rahul Gandhi on Thursday, and also hit out at the Congress party for referring to him as a "fugitive of justice" even though he had never been convicted of any charges.

Reacting to his remarks,



Congress general secretary incharge organisation K C Venugopal said,"Lalit Modi is a fugitive in multi-million dollar frauds whose cowardice made him run away. He now enjoys a plush life abroad thanks to BJP's inaction. It's laughable if he thinks anyone takes him seri-

"A new low for PM Modi, that global scamsters are coming to his defence," Venugopal said. Taking a dig at the BJP, department chief Pawan Khera said,"Is now Saheb taking help from abroad to threaten Rahul i with legal action?"

"Will pressure be put on Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi, Vijay Mallya etc. to file a case against Rahul Gandhi?" Khera said. The Opposition party has been relently attacking the BJP for allegedly allowing economic offenders such as Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi and Mehul Choksi get away and flee abroad with people's money.

20 litres free drinking water for Pondy BPL families along coast

PNS PUDUCHERRY

PWD Minister Puducherv Lakshiminarayanan told the territorial Assembly on Thursday the government had drawn up a plan to supply 20 litres of drinking water, free of cost, to families living below the poverty line in coastal villages that fall in the salinity zone in the Union Territory.

Replying during the debate on demands for grants to departments including the PWD in the Assembly, the Minister said families in the "red zone areas' would be supplied 20 litres drinking water in cans daily. The "red zone

areas" are identified as pockets where the level of TDS (total dissolved solids) is high.

Lakshminarayanan also said a necessary survey was being conducted now for construction of a road-overbridge (ROB) linking the airport junction to Indira Gandhi Square through Rajiv Gandhi Square. This project would involve an expenditure of Rs 440 crore, he added.

Under the centrally sponsored 'Swadesh Darshan scheme', a sum of Rs 5.9 crore had been spent to give a facelift to the famous shrines of Gangai Varaha Natheeswarar in neighbouring Tirukanchi village and Tirukameeswar in Villianoor.

Karnataka HC disqualifies JDS MLA for electoral malpractice

PNS BENGALURU

constituency in Karnataka D C been announced. qualified by the High Court of Karnataka on Thursday in a case relating to alleged electoral malpractice.

The Court, however, kept the disqualification in suspension for one month,

allowing Swamy to file an appeal in the Supreme Court. A single-judge bench of the high

court was delivering its verdict on a petition filed by defeated BJP candidate B Suresh Gowda, which alleged electoral malpractice by Swamy for distrib-

uting fake insurance bonds to voters during the 2018 Karnataka Assembly election. The disqualification, under Section 101 of the The Representation of the People Act, comes five years after the original complaint by Gowda. Justice S Sunil Dutt Yaday,

who had reserved the judgment after completion of arguments on February 17, dictated the orders on Thursday from the Kalaburagi bench of the Karnataka High Court. The advocate for Swamy, Hemanth Raj, sought the suspension of the order as per Section 116(B) of the Act to allow him to file an

appeal before the Supreme Court, as elections to the MLA from Tumakuru Rural Karnataka Assembly had already

upcoming elections, the high court was told. Though the advocate for complainant

Gowda opposed this request, the HC allowed the plea and kept the order in suspension. Apart from

Swamy, the court also found the other accused, Balanetraiah, Arehalli Manjunath, Krishnegowda, Renukamma and Sunanda, guilty of corrupt election practices. The suspension of the

order was only in respect of Swamy and not the other accused, the HC said. After the Model Code of Conduct came into force on March 27. 2018, Swamy and his associates allegedly distributed fake insurance bonds to 32,000 adults and 16,000 minors, thereby violating Section 123 of the Act, the election petition by Gowda had alleged.

He had approached the high court in July 2018 and the judgment has come a day after the Election Commission announced the election schedule for the 2023 Assembly election, as per which polling will take place on May 10.

ANOMALY IN CODE OF CIVIL PROCEDURE

Law panel recommends amending sub-rule

PNS NEW DELHI

The Law Commission has recommended amendment to a sub-rule of Code of Civil Procedure to remove an anomalv for the convenience of courts, lawyers, litigants, and the general public.

The report "Urgent need to amend Rule 14 (4) of Order VII of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908" was submitted to the government earlier this week.

In its 18-page report, the Commission, headed by Justice

Ritu Raj Awasthi (retd) point ed out that in sub-rule (4) of Rule 14 of Order VII, mention is made of the cross- examination of the plaintiff's witnesses. The words "plaintiff's witnesses" mentioned in sub-rule (4) of Rule 14 of Order VII require to be corrected as "defendant's witnesses", it said.

"A plaintiff cannot, except as provided in Section 154 of the Evidence Act, put questions which might be put in crossexamination to his own wit-

"Sub-rule (3) of Rule 1 of



Order XIII also makes the position clear when the expression "cross- examination of the witness of the other party"

is employed therein. Therefore, the anomaly in sub-rule (4) of Rule 14 of Order VII is evident," it said. The Supreme Court in Advocate Bar Association vs. Union of India dealt with the various amendments made to the Code of Civil Procedure by the 1999 and 2002 amendment acts.

While dealing with Rule 14(4) of Order VII, the Supreme Court took note of the anomaly and held that the words "plaintiff's witnesses' are to be read as 'defendant's witnesses' till the time the legislature corrects it, the report

Hon'ble Supreme Court pointed it out in the year 2005, the Parliament has not so far made any amendment to Rule 14 (4) of Order VII to rectify the anomaly," the report observed.

The Commission said is of the considered view that subrule (4) of Rule 14 of Order VII requires to be amended by substituting the words "the defendant's witnesses" for the words "the plaintiff's witnesses".

Simply put, a plaintiff is a person who files a case in a court. Defendant is the one against whom a case is filed. read. "However, even after the

Govt to buy 3 lakh tonnes of onion in Rabi season: Goyal

Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday announced that the government agencies will buy 3 lakh tonnes of onion once the winter harvest starts com-

Goyal, who handles the Consumer Affairs, Food and Public distribution portfolio, said that last year, the overall buying of the rabi harvest stood

at 2.5 lakh tonnes. "I have already ordered an

increased onion purchase from Rabi harvest from 2.5 lakh tonnes last year to 3 lakh tonnes this year to ensure that farmers get a fair price," Goyal told reporters here.

He added that the National Cooperative Consumers Federation and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed) have also been instructed to pick up 'late kharif' harvest stocks, but are not finding the produce in the markets now.

been protesting after a steep fall in onion prices over the last month. Marketplaces, including the largest one in Nashik district's Lasalgaon, have been shut down and onions have also been dumped by farmers.

Farmers claim they are get ting very low rates for the harvest, which is a fraction of the input costs and have been demanding the state agencies to step in, given the wide-ranging

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Fighting hate speech

Some sort of mechanism must be developed to curb hate speech, but it'd be better if it is informal

he Supreme Court and the Government made important points about hate speech on Wednesday. A bench of Justices KM Joseph and BV Nagarathna said, "Hate speeches are like a vicious circle. One person will make it and then another will make it. When our Constitution was founded, there were no such speeches. Now cracks are coming up in the idea of fraternity. There has to be some restraint. Some sort of mechanism needs to be developed by the state so that we can curb these kinds of statements." The apex court's insistence on restraint is welcome, but the objective conditions are not conducive for it. The biggest reason is that politics, as



practiced by all parties, has been reduced to realpolitik, in which principles and scruples play a very little role; emphasis is on winning elections, whatever be the cost. Hence mindless populism, with politicians vying with each other in offering freebies, throwing fiscal prudence and caution to the wind. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has underlined the perils of freebie culture but there is little to suggest that parties are willing to behave responsibly. Then there is the instinct to play to the gallery and appeal to the lowest common denominator. There are leaders who became popular and important not by public service but by making deplorable remarks. This is not surprising because political debate is rarely illumined

by cogent arguments and elevating oration; it is rather animated by loud sloganeering and sanctimonious posturing.

On the subject of hate speeches, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta also made an important remark: such speeches are also made against Hindus. On the face of it, this might appear whataboutery, but this is factually accurate. Two wrongs don't make a right, so statements against Muslims or Christians are not justifiable because similar ones are also made against Hindus. Mehta informed the court that in Tamil Nadu, "a spokesperson of DMK" said "whatever Periyar says should have been done... if you want equality, you must butcher all Brahmins." Against such a backdrop, as the Supreme Court said, some mechanism has to be developed, but it would be better that this mechanism is informal rather than formal. There are already a zillion laws; what is needed is a code of behaviour that political parties, rather than the Indian State, should evolve together. Something like the model code of conduct that governs the behaviour of parties and candidates before elections. It is not legally enforceable, yet it is widely adhered to. We should not forget that behavioural patterns are difficult to change with laws, rules, and fiats; when people themselves realise that something should be avoided, they avoid that. After all, politicians do observe the code of conduct. Therefore, the best way out would be a consensus among politicians and parties that decency in political discourse would be nice.



Artistes dressed as Hindu deities distribute sweet juice and buttermilk to celebrate Ram Navami, in Bengaluru

China resorts to 'buying' support



Globally, China is rapidly gaining influence over the US and asserting its diplomatic muscle by investing disproportionately in seedy regimes

n 2000, China accounted for less than 2% of South America's exports which spiralled thereafter at over 30% annually to reach \$180 billion in 2010, \$450 billion by 2021, and expected to exceed \$700 billion by 2035! Beijing is now South America's top trade partner with countries like Chile accounting for nearly 40% of their exports to China. It didn't happen by chance, but by concerted Chinese design. China had invested disproportionately and knowingly with a 'no-strings-attached' policy that necessitated no preachy conditions or reform insistence. This leniency appealed to a host of illiberal and undemocratic regimes (e.g., pariahised Venezuela was given loans of more than \$64 billion, causing fears of a debt trap to arise) China's internal 'South-South cooperation' policy was further bolstered by the inclusion of initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or even the more recent 'Covid-19 diplomacy' that ensured transactional support and investments. Besides the reciprocal gratification of raw materials and the emergence of an alternative power centre, China replaced US control and assert its iplomatic muscle and leverage on the world stage.

One obvious element of quid pro quo sought by the Chinese for oosening their purse strings in economically struggling South America was the switch to derecognize its nemesis Taiwan (Republic of China) to the 'One-China' policy (with the assumption that Taiwan is an essential part of the Chinese mainland, to be reunified one day). South American countries were especially in large numbers among those who recognised Taiwan as the Chinese had little or no leverage, historically – today, with its deep pockets and flexing of bargaining muscle, one South American country after the other flipped sides in favour of China. Oddly enough, even the US and China' stance, grandstanding and sabre-rattling notwithstanding.

Honduras became the latest to fall prev to the Chinese 'buyout' as its President, Xiomara Castro, did a brazen flip-flop within weeks of downplaying



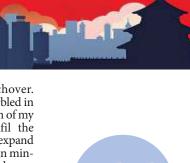
piece, Global Times noted bluntly, "The US does not have enough resources to assist Honduras or make any effective pledges to Honduras in exchange for Honduras' change of mind. The case of Honduras shows that as long as countries stay firm, US obstruction and interference will not work. This will have a domino effect on Taiwan's remaining "allies" such as Guatemala, Belize and Paraguay." The Chinese have no qualms about simply 'buying out' the last bastions in South America, as the USA cannot make a counteroffer that is financially attractive enough to spurn Beijing's advances. As if to confirm its intent, the Global Times concludes, "The sleepwalking of "Taiwan independence" is end-

Taiwan or its allies in Capitol Hill cannot compete with the Chinese coffers and are getting outbid, but that does not mean that there are no underlying concerns in accepting the Chinese terms. The reality of Chinese debt traps is legendary and shortterm bailouts do not end well Micronesia's outgoing President, David Panuelo had accused Beijing of 'political warfare' by insinuating that it was interfering and preventing the switchover from China to Taiwan. China remains hyper-

sensitive to the Taiwan issue and shows very short patience with what it insists are its internal issues. Recent developments in the wars in Afghanistan and Ukraine have exposed the limits of the socalled 'superpowers' ability to take over and control the targeted landmass infinitely. Therefore, ensnaring and controlling those regions through 'buyouts' is decidedly easier, and even more sustainable.

Honduras recognised the Taipei government for 82 years. However, the wanton lure of a hydroelectric dam and billions of dollars in 'aid' was irresistible. Not too many believe the Chinese line of Honduras sees through 'Washington's bullying diplomacy' as the pattern and accompanying terms of the switchover are eerily consistent and seemingly generous (initially). The price for the switchover was the upfront admission by the Honduran authorities that there is "only one China in the world". The days of principled diplomatic stands are over, and commerce and coercion define the new global order China is the high temple of realpolitik.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)



THE CHINESE MAKE NO **QUALMS ABOUT** SIMPLY 'BUYING OUT' THE LAST **BASTION IN** SOUTH AMERICA, AS THE USA CANNOT MAKE A COUNTEROFFER THAT IS **FINANCIALLY** ATTRACTIVE **ENOUGH TO** SPURN BEIJING'S ADVANCES

THE EDITO

WELCOME MOVE BY HIMACHAL DY CM

Sir — Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri who announced in the HP Vidhan Sabha on March 28 that no appointment would be made on an outsourced basis in the Jal Shakti Department in future is a praiseworthy decision. Outsourcing recruitment is a backdoor entry. It violates all recruitment requirements, such as ads inviting applications, competitive tests followed by personal interviews, meanwhile germinating corruption and exploitation by service providers because it is typically only known individuals who are appointed. The employees recruited through the outsourcing method need to be stopped in every department which generates corruption and hampers government functioning. The government should appoint the required staff regularly in all departments after following the due selection

and St Vincent and the

Grenadines. Access to the

Chinese market and Treasury

triumphs over all moral and

diplomatic positions.

Ironically, Taiwan remains for-

mally unrecognised even by its

most prominent allies, the

USA (despite bipartisan unity

on Taiwan). Jimmy Carter's

abandonment of diplomatic

ties with Taiwan to recognise

Beijing instead, initiated a

complexity and absurdity of

relationship that the USA con-

tinues to grapple with as it supplies weapons to a nation that

it does not fully recognise.

China's unofficial mouth-

SK Khosla | Chandigarh

RAHUL'S MANOEUVRES Sir — After being disqualified as an MP, Rahul Gandhi appeared before the media and said that whatever may come, he would keep asking questions in the Adani case. Rahul Gandhi's attention is more focused on the political fight than on the legal fight. Rahul Gandhi and Congress want to turn this court sentence into BJP revenge. But Rahul Gandhi and Congress have to accept that Rahul Gandhi has been punished for defamation. Rahul Gandhi has 30 days to appeal. It will be interesting to see how elections in India as the winning chances Rahul Gandhi's politics overshadow the BJP in the coming days and how Rahul Gandhi overcomes these difficulties.. Rohit Pandey | New Delhi

AMERICA'S DIVERSIONARY TACTICS

Sir — Playing blame games is the order of the day. As a result, our politicians play a crucial role in making the public feel bad about our country's expansion

Why not set up a JPC on Adani?

ddressing a gathering after inaugurating an extension of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) headquarters in Delhi, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi linked the coming together of opposition parties against the BJP to his Government's campaign against corruption and said "anti-India" forces are attacking constitutional institutions — the "strong foundation of a rising India" — to stall the country's growth. To hear this, an aam aadmi with heavy hearts wants to know from PM Modi, why the Government is not investigating Adani. In addition, what about shell companies, stock parking, and stock inflation? And don't forget the recent controversy over Elara and Shell's companies receiving defence contracts what is going on there? People want to know if corporate cronies were given undue favours ter. Alas! He has no courage. to jump from 600 to the top 10 in top business

rankings under your rule? They also want to know if the Government was involved.

Moreover, why the reluctance to call out fugitives Lalit Modi, Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi and Vijaya Mallya? The public wants transparency and accountability, and it's time for the government to answer these burning questions. Not only this, PM Modi fought to change the election funding law to secretly allow black money. Is PM Modi not the same who supports his Karnataka MLAs to take crores of bribes? He remains silent, even when BJP politicians get caught "red-handed" there, with crores of cash? Why are there no investigations by the CBI, ED or IT? Why do corrupt politicians from opposition parties join the BJP, and cases against them miraculously disappear? It means all BJP MPs/MLAs/politicians are absolutely above corruption. As people wonder when the honest PM Modi implemented demonetisation and secretly converted his friend's money from Black to White, or who changed coal mining tender rules for Adani so that he would benefit from them? Is he not the PM who doesn't have a problem with foreign companies owning defence projects? And the list goes on and on. In view of this, before PM Modi's declaration that all those involved in corruption have come together on one platform, the anti-corruption crusader should set up a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to investigate the Adani mat-

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

are dim. It is impossible for a country as large and about to be the most populous in the world as India to function according to the whims and fancies of Johnnies and Alices in Wonderland at the US Department. The US has no locus stan*di* to lecture India on democratic values. As the US's pathetic position worsens, they left their business and entered the Indian politics scene.. When the US could abroad. Moreover, they seek the help of not play a decisive role in bringing a superpower and are not ready to face about its own economy's revival, the show

diverted towards India. That country's GDP is falling drastically and there is no hope for immediate improvement. India is better placed and so it could not see Indian progress and wanted to exhibit and poke its nose into Indian political scenario. However, India stands united and the erroneous elements will be eliminated sooner or later.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Let them write an essay on Khalistan



This protest has no content except vilification and terror. It dodges issues of territory, Government form, State-religion ties and economy

ndian diplomatic missions in the UK, USA, Australia and Canada have recently been subjected to violent and abusive protests by pro-Khalistan Sikhs. If I were at Ground Zero, I would have simply walked around with a sheaf of foolscap papers and asked the agitators to write an essay about the proposed Khalistan. The essay must address the issues of territory, a form of government, the relationship between the state and church (SGPC), economy, demography (38 per cent non-Sikhs in Punjab, and Sikhs in the rest of India) etc. However, the essay reveals the "Khali-stan" (empty space) that exists in their minds.

Over the last 50 years, the 'movement' has preferred to dodge these fundamental questions. Thousands of lives have been lost in an organised misconception. Territory is the basic component of a sovereign state. The maps of the proposed Khalistan are ludicrous. In the 1980s, Khushwant Singh purchased a Khalistan map published in England, for £2. "According to this map", he wrote in 1992, "Kĥalistan will include



Haryana, New Delhi, chunks of UP, Rajasthan and Saurashtra to give the state an outlet to the sea. By rough reckoning, the Sikh population will be 13 per cent. What kind of Sikh state will this be? Clearly, not democratic." (My Bleeding Punjab, P.155-156).

A recent example of this lack of clarity is the fanciful Khalistan map issued by Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, of Sikhs For Justice, in June 2022 at the Lahore Press Club. Besides the Indian Punjab, it encompasses almost the whole of Haryana, Himachal, five Rajasthan districts, several Uttarakhand districts (including Dehradun and Haridwar), and a number of districts of UP. It included

Gurugram, though Delhi was left out. Shimla was the capital of Khalistan, though Sikhs comprised 1.95 per cent of the city. Pro-Khalistani graffiti was actually found pasted on the Assembly Building at Dharamsala (Kangra district) on May 8, 2022, and scribes in Himachal Pradesh received pre-recorded Khalistani threat calls on their mobiles. However, in the Melbourne round of a referendum by the outfit in January, the question was whether "Indian-governed Punjab should be an independent country— Yes or No". Where does that leave the June 2022 map?

As per the referendum, sovereign Khalistan would be a landlocked country between India and Pakistan. Punjab farmers, overwhelmingly Jatt Sikhs, are heavily dependent on rice and wheat from the Centre. This was borne out by the massive farmers' agitation (2020-21) compelling the Government to cancel the farm laws. One would be interested in knowing how Khalistan proponents plan to offload Punjab rice and wheat mounds.

Nobody has yet seen a draft Khalistan constitution

even after 50 years. The Khalsa Raj Party Constitution issued by Lt Col Partap Singh (Retd) on May 15, 1991, at Chandigarh, issued towards the end of the Khalistani insurgency, was expected to condense all wisdom on Khalistan. It advocates an independent, sovereign Sikh homeland and restricts its boundaries to Punjab and adjoining Punjabi-speaking areas 'fraudulently kept out during a Punjab reorganisation in 1966". Herein, Lt Col Singh assumes all Punjabispeaking persons in India are Sikhs, and vice versa, wherein in reality 38 per cent of Punjab population according to Census 2011 is Hindu.

Will Khalistan be a democracy and a theocracy at the same time? It is open to multiple interpretations but it says nothing about the SGPC. The 'movement' is a bundle of imponderables, deliberately retained by its sponsors. It fits American author Paul Elridge's description, "Man is willing to die for any idea, provided that idea is not clear to him.

(The writer is an author and independent researcher based in New Delhi)

FIRST COLUMN

JAPANESE THRUST TO OUR LOOK EAST POLICY

The policy needs more push for stronger relations with SE Asia through NE States



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

ndia's vision of a 'Look East' policy and Japan's vision regarding a free and open Indo Pacific meet in India's landlocked northeast. India for long has championed its 'Look East' policy. This aims to develop deeper relations with countries in South East Asia and the Bay of Bengal region through northeastern (much to be tapped) States as a major gateway. Meanwhile, for more than a decade, Japan has been focusing on free, open and fair Indo Pacific policy, with emphasis on free movement of people, trade across land, sea and air routes, all through the region. India's northeastern States form an important access node.

Last week Japanese Prime Minister Kishida, during his India visit, reemphasised the desire to pursue a more engaged Indo Pacific policy. This has for the past two years become the most strategic foreign policy component for the US and Europe. It is also the glue holding together India, US, Australia and Japan in their QUAD grouping. Japan has been promoting key infrastructure projects in India's



northeast to create seamless trade and transport routes. It has been assisting in developing northeast road network connectivity improvement projects in Assam and Meghalaya, sewage and water supply projects in Assam, development of schools in Manipur, projects related to forest management in Tripura and Nagaland and sustainable agriculture projects in Mizoram. Japan's investment in the northeast is \$2 billion so far. In addition, the Japanese Government has picked up key infrastructure projects such as the MatarBari deep water port in Bangladesh. This will be complemented by the construction of connecting roads in Assam, Mizoram and Tripura. Once completed, these infrastructure projects would provide seamless access from the northeast to Bay of Bengal sea ports. In addition, they would serve as a major trade transit route for goods from Southeast Asia and beyond.

This promises to bring more prosperity to the entire region, not just within India's geographical boundaries. It fits well into the Japanese vision of comprehensive economic and regional development, based on law. It may be noteworthy that the other Asian giant, China, has rapidly expanded its sphere of influence in the region through its opaque Belt and Road Initiative. This has tied many of these countries into multiyear fatal debt traps. India and Japan are the major economies not part of China's debt trap infrastructure financing projects. Their vision for the Indo Pacific is different from China's.

India and Japan, during the leadership meeting in New Delhi, highlighted the need for expanding the partnership to more ASEAN countries. Even the QUAD Foreign Ministers' meeting in March emphasised the centrality of ASEAN and the need for greater engagement. It is significant that Japan is working in a structured manner in India's neighbourhood. This is with some of India's most trusted allies such as Bangladesh on a path of regional prosperity. Japan has been working with India since 2017 to support NE's development. Japan has clearly articulated that it is keen to tie the two ports, one in Bangladesh and the other in India's NE, for greater economic cooperation.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for External Affairs Rajkumar Ranjan Singh while addressing a BIMSTEC meet in Kolkata this week stressed the need for India's north eastern region to be the leading edge of India's Act East diplomacy. He emphasised the need for developing transportation facilities and trade within BIMSTEC partners. His caution for BIMSTEC countries was to follow a modest yet practical approach. Any creative solutions for increasing trade in this region also click well with Japan's push for increased economic prosperity and connectivity for the Indo Pacific.

(The author is a foreign affairs commentator)

Societal needs stretch beyond skill formation VINAYSHIL GAUTAM



The current overemphasis on acquiring skills at the cost of compromising life fundamentals would be counterproductive in the long run and needs a relook

owadays, the most popular phrases are skill formation and employability. There's nothing wrong with that. These are apparently innocent favourites which also contribute to social growth. Even innocent phrases can have ramifications, even for the purpose of social growth. Illustratively, skill formation would reference educational institutions. Educational institutions cannot just focus on 'skill formation' and 'employability'. Educational institutions must have as their priority training the mind, educating a person and making him a worthy member of society capable of contributing to overall growth. There is indeed a school of thought which argues that education requires as its end objectives character building, preparing for responsible citizenship and the like. Ever since the current system of university education with its segmented approach to degrees came into being, there has been a running debate on the objectives of edu-

Mind training and general orientation towards learning are multi-layered processes. Liberal education is supposed to cater for them. It is difficult to conceive of a skilled person who is not a good human being, ethical and contributes to collective welfare.

Individual growth, by definition, is embedded in a social environment with sound values and norms. There is clearly not much debate on the issues outlined above. However, factoring in the economic context, including gaps and shifts in livelihood processes, becomes a poignant element in its own right. An illustration may be in order; consider India's rural sector. There are various processes and learning segments in agriculture which give the farmer a position of primacy in the country's economic framework.

However, a closer look at the lay of the land, both literally and methodologically, will show two things. The amount of land on the subcontinent is constant. Other variables are not. The number of people who rely on a livelihood from agriculture has exponentially increased. This means, the number of people deriving their livelihood from agriculture has grown to the extent that the land available per head has substantially 'receded'. Further even as the productivity of agriculture has grown, the revenues to the farmer per head have declined. This is, also, because the portion of land per head has become smaller with an increasing

That is not the end of the story. Additionally, there is the factor of the switch in crops, at times, from cereal to cash crops, and from cash crops to cereal. This means that, in certain cases, the total income from agricultural products has gone down for various reasons. Not the least of which would be the consequences of continuing cereal cultivation. Further, however, if the farmer switched to cash crops, it would be difficult to sustain. This is due to a lack of understanding of how to choose, cultivate and market cash crops.

The problem does not end there. There are other shifts because of the economic transition as cereal land value declines. There emerges an exponentially rising demand for tertiary sector earnings in rural areas, such as for carpenters, blacksmiths, electrical workers, and the



LEVEL, FEW STATES HAVE SHOWN A TENDENCY OR **PROPENSITY** TO FRAME **ECONOMIC POLICIES THAT WOULD HELP** CREATE A SOCIAL **FEEDBACK** LO_{OP}



introduction of technology changed all that. Technology caused a serious disruption of the economy and disturbed the economic viability and health of the existing socio-economic system of the villages. The present excessive serenading of technology virtues eschews taking a balanced view of the prerequisites

people, in terms of percentages,

from agriculture in any significant

way. In agriculture itself the mar-

ket was not a prime determinant

of switching from cash to cereal

crops or vice versa. The market

remained essentially local. The

To illustrate the point, consider a family of five young men living with an elderly gentleman (their father?). If three of them entered the wage market of the tertiary sector and two of them continued making their livelihood by tilling the land, even then there would be further land fragmentation. As a result, the return per head would go down since the 'elderly gentleman"s labour and talent would now be split among two

heads. This would be a generational issue. Whether the output was cere-

al or cash crops would be a separate consideration. The one producing cash crops would likely be better off than the one producing cereals. So in effect, among the five young men in the family, there would be an income differential among those (three of the five) who earned from the tertiary sector and even between the two still tilling the land.

This economic reality is the outcome of social disturbances, which could affect the collective social fabric of the village's occupational profile. If allowed to run its course, the real need is economic policies at a local level. This would rationalise and smoothen the disruptions caused.

Unfortunately, at a local level, few states have shown a tendency or propensity to frame economic policies that would help create a social feedback loop. This will grow talent in each of the required income-generating avenues.

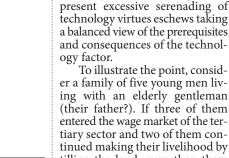
This is a serious matter that seems to be escaping the attention of policymakers at a time when it needs to be addressed. For a stable society, with proper wageearning channels and comparable lifestyles arising therefrom, a requirement is viable and organic economic growth. Having a system so severely divided will create gaps in the economic framework

in general, not only in the hinterland but elsewhere. This could lead to manpower shortages in critical sectors of the economy and, among others, encourage population growth in urban areas. Social and economic equity require talent and compensation to be available in equal measure in all critical sectors of the nation's life.

As noted earlier it is not as if in the earlier dispensation the blacksmith and the cobbler were not required. It has also been analysed how, as the population grows and the income from the tertiary sector in the rural areas grows, fewer and fewer people take an interest in the tilling of the land. Further, even in the tilling of the land, cash crops are preferred over cereals.

It has further been argued that this is a serious distortion of the economy. It creates dissonance in the economic viability and health of the social fabric of the villages. Many professionals and policy makers seem to have missed the point, and employment promotion based on catchy slogans seems to confuse the issue.

To conclude, nobody grudges the emphasis on skill formation, but like everything else, overemphasis on skill formation to the neglect of fundamentals of life and distorted by profit oriented economics, is something which requires a good second and third



(The author is an internationally acclaimed management consultant. The views expressed are personal)

A film festival with its heart in the right place

The Habitat International Film Festival, an annual treat for the Delhi-NCR film lovers, was back in its full-fledged form this year

he 10-day Habitat International Film Festival (HIFF) was a visual treat for film-loving communities in Delhi and the NCR. Thanks to Sunit Tandon (Director, India Habitat Centre) and Vidyun Singh (Programme Head) along with her team to bring the awardwinning, critically acclaimed films from Cannes, Berlin and other renowned film festivals.

This year, HIFF screened 60 films from 20 countries, with Australia as the focus country. From factual to fantastical, from surreal to sci-fi, this edition took place from March 17 to 26.

Tandon says, "The HIFF is back in its full-fledged form this year. We also bring a cutting-edge VR Section to the festival for the first time.



want to miss the unique opportunity provided by Kieslowski Film School Documentary Workshop."

From Australia, six of the finest contemporary films of 2022 and 2023 have been screened with the opening film, The Dreamlife of Georgie Stone, showcasing the elliptical memories of the teen activist's historic fight for transgender rights; Ivan Sen's Limbo arrives fresh off the boat from its Berlinale 2023 premiere; others include The Lonely Spirits Variety Hour, Sweet As,

and Survival of Kindness. Filmmakers and editors from the Kielowski Film School from Poland trained the young minds in a four-day documentary workshop. Grzegorz Paprzycki, an

Aspiring filmmakers will not acclaimed upcoming voice in contemporary Polish cinema and Kieslowski Film School alumni was one of the workshop trainers. A hands-on workshop, with live editing sessions, discussions and practical exercises designed to hone their skills as filmmakers was an added advantage for the local young filmmakers.

For the first time as part of the festival, cinema's latest innovation - VR and 360° video — was presented in partnership with the Goethe Institute. The Virtual Reality programme — a package of animation, short and documentary films — explores the relationship between the past and present. It also adds a whole new dimension to film watching for the audience.

Friday section that approach of 16 awards and 51 nominathe anarchy of love and its expression across different eras — the classic *In The* Mood For Love by Wong Karwai, to the contemporary Paris, 13th district by Jacques Audiard and The Worst Person *in the World* by Joachim Trier, even the futuristic Crimes of The Future by David Cronenberg.

Eight biggest attraction at HIFF were: *Elvis*, the buzzing Austin Butler-starrer, Baz Luhrmann biopic that premiered at Cannes (and has won many awards subsequently); Rheingold, Fatih Akin's (Germany, Netherlands, Morocco, Mexico) highoctane adaptation of the swagger and bombast of German rap star Xatar's 2015 autobiog-Four films in the MUBI raphy 'All Or Nothing'; winner

tions, including the muchcoveted Golden Bear (Berlinale 2022) - Carla Simón's (Spain), Alcarras, a deeply intelligent and empathetic humane drama that engulfs you in the heat and dust and dysfunction created by market forces; Perfect *Number* - the return of veteran Polish filmmaker Krzysztof Zanussi and his search for philosophical answers in mathematical theories; the poignant We are Still Here, an anthology film about stories of indigenous heroes from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific; winner of the Best

Screenplay at Cannes 2022,

Boy From Heaven, takes us into

the heart of a ruthless power

struggle between Egypt's reli-

gious and political elites; the

latest Berlinale awardee (2023), The Survival of Kindness, follows a black woman's escape from a cage in the middle of the desert to the city, recapture, and tragedy; and Oscar nominee 'EO' by Jerzy Skolimowski (Poland) follows a donkey that encounters good and bad people, experiences joy and pain, exploring a vision of modern Europe.

Further enriching the feature line-up are some equally remarkable documentaries, shorts, and animation films. DOC NYC 2022 nominee Closed Circuit by Tel Inbar (Israel) is a documentary that captures the heart-pounding trauma of the 2016 terrorist attack in Tel Aviv's Sarona Market; Winner of 'Best Documentary Feature' at The

Festival and Filmocracy Fest, Hostile by UK filmmaker Sonita Gale explores the UK's complicated relationship with its migrant communities; Winner at the Warsaw Film Festival 2022, Region of Heroes by Artur Lerman (Ukraine) is the story of those who selflessly saved thousands of Úkrainians during the Russian occupation; winner of the Special Jury Award at Roxbury Film Festival and the International Humanitarian Award at Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival, The Bengali by Kavery Kaul (USA) is the story of a writer from Louisiana who embarks on a quest to India to look for her grandfather's descendants. Curated packages from Poland and Sri Lanka Roxbury International Film also embellished the festival.



(The writer is a Delhi-based film festival curator, freelance writer, *filmmaker and producer)*

Domestic stainless steel demand will continue to see growth

ne pioneer

Softbank-backed e-commerce firm Meesho has crossed the 11-lakh sellers milestone on its platform, with more than 6 lakh small businesses signing up in the last one year, the company said on Thursday. The company has achieved this feat in eight years of its inception and claims that half of the total sellers registered belong to tier 2 and smaller towns. "Meesho recently crossed the milestone of 1.1 million sellers on its platform," the company said in a statement. The unicorn e-commerce firm said that over 80 per cent of

its 11 lakh sellers are new-to-ecommerce and Meesho was their first exposure to the world of online selling. "Nearly 50 per cent of these sellers come from Tier 2+ regions and deep corners of the country like Pulwama in Kashmir, Una in Himachal Pradesh, Nagamangala in Karnataka, Jowai in Meghalaya and Mount Abu in Rajasthan -- validating the company's mission to democratize internet commerce for everyone and bring the smallest seller online," the company said.



SpiceJet CMD Ajay Singh takes over as Assocham President

piceJet's Chairman & Managing Director Ajay Singh has assumed charge as the President Assocham, replacing Renew Power MD Sumant Sinha after the completion his tenure. Sanjay Nayar, founder and Chairman of Sorin Investment Fund is the new President Assocham, replacing Renew Power MD Sumant Sinha after the completion of Senior Vice-President of Assocham, the industry body said in a release on Wednesday. "I am taking over at times which are both exciting and challenging. As an economy, India stands out as a robust economy in the midst of global headwinds. Even when major economies of the

world are facing the threat of recession, the Indian economy is growing between 6.5-7 per cent," Singh said. He emphasised that the chamber would stay engaged with the government, Centre and states, leading academicians, economists besides corporate leaders to find solutions to the issues, which may crop up in a fast-changing global economic and political landscape. Singh studied at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, where he received a degree in engineering, and got his Master's degree in Business Administration from Cornell University in the US.



Punjab govt sets up panel to look at alternative crops to paddy

unjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday said he has formed a committee Dunder the chief secretary to look at alternative crops that require less water compared to paddy. Mann said sowing of the paddy crop over the years has led to several problems including depletion of underground water table and issues related to stubble burning. He said he has formed a committee under the chief secretary which will meet farmers in different villages and see which crops consume less water and bring

more income to farmers as a replacement of paddy. The committee will submit the report to him, he said in a video message. The CM said his government was taking steps to promote basmati, cotton, moong and pulses. He said his government wanted to increase the area under the cotton crop. The CM said from April 1, canal water will be made available for irrigating cotton crop up to tail ends. He said 33 per cent subsidy was being given on cotton seeds which are certified by the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU).



Credai urges RBI not to hike repo rates

• Says any rise in borrowing cost may hit housing sales

PNS NEW DELHI

Realtors' apex body Credai on Thursday requested the RBI not to increase the repo rate in the upcoming monetary policy as this would raise the borrowing cost of builders and customers, impacting housing sales.

With retail inflation remaining above the comfort level of 6 per cent and most global peers, including the US Fed, continuing their hawkish stance, industry experts feel the Reserve Bank of India may go in for a 25 basis points hike in the bi-monthly monetary policy to be announced on April

Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Association of

India (Credai), having more than 13,000 developers as members, has "urged the RBI to not to increase the repo rate any further, citing the financial challenges faced by developers and the potential impact on housing sales due to the consequential rise in prices and home loan rates".

In the last one year, the body said, the repo rate has increased from 4 to 6.5 per cent and another hike would lead to even higher borrowing costs for developers.

Credai National President Harsh Vardhan Patodia said, "In the last 1 year, the cost of construction has risen rapidly due to the gradual increase in repo rates by the RBI, which has adversely impacted many developers as they struggle to cope financially. Another repo rate hike would not only make certain projects financially unfeasible, but it would also deter homebuyers as home loan rates will be at an all-time

HCL Tech to hire 1,000 people in Romania

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT services company HCL Technologies will hire 1,000 people in Romania in the next two years as it scales up operations in that country.

HCL Tech, which completed five years of operations in Romania, will ramp up its offices in Bucharest and Lasi.

A third of the new roles will be offered to graduates recruited through partnerships with leading Romanian universities, the company said in a statement on Thursday.

The company plans to hire 1,000 people in the next two years in Romania.

Currently, it employs nearly 1,000 people in Romania to serve global clients by leveraging its portfolio across digital, cloud, engineering and

India needs \$540 bn investment by 2029 to meet renewable targets: S&P Global Ratings PNS NEW DELHI India needs USD 540 billion cash flows.

of investment between 2020 and 2029 to meet its ambitious targets for electricity generation from renewable sources, S&P Global Ratings said on Thursday as it saw private-sector-led energy transition entering a new phase.

India is targeting to cut its emissions to net zero by 2070. In the transition to that, it is targeting 500 gigawatts (GW) of non-fossil electricity capacity, half of the energy from renewables, a reduction of emissions by one billion tonne and an emissions intensity of the GDP by 45 per cent by

"Meeting India's renewables target of 500 GW by 2030 requires more than 40 GW of new capacity additions annually (compared to 10-15 GW actual)," it said.

In its report 'Asia-Pacific's



Different Pathways To Energy Transition', S&P Global Ratings said the addition of renewables capacity in India is outpacing coal, but demand growth and intermittency issues are leading to greater coal usage and new coal plants.

"Policies are creating an enabling environment while private sector investments will lead the energy transition," it

said, adding investments of USD 540 billion are required from 2020 to 2029 to meet India's renewables target.

Half of these investments will be in renewables and batteries, and another third in strengthening the grid.

"Private sector will lead generation capex while public sector utilities will likely lead grid investments," it said. "Domestic available against projects and

There is, however, limited appetite for unsecured holding

company funding.
India is the world's fourth biggest emitter of carbon dioxide after China, the US and the EU. But its emissions per capita are much lower than other major world economies. India emitted 1.9 tonnes of CO2 per head of population in 2019, compared to 15.5 tonne for the US and 12.5 tonne for Russia that year.

Net zero, or becoming carbon neutral, means not adding to the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Energy transition refers to the shift from fossil-based systems of energy production and consumption - including oil, natural gas and coal - to renewable energy sources like wind and solar, as well as lithi-

Office space demand in Jan-Mar at 6-quarter low

PNS NEW DELHI

Net leasing of office space fell 34 per cent in January-March to 7.63 million square feet across seven major cities as corporates were cautious on expansion amid global uncertainties, according to JLL India.

The net leasing fell to the lowest in six quarters, as per the data by real estate consultant Chennai, India. Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune

O Net leasing down 34 pc in top 7 cities: JLL India

saw a decline in demand, while office space absorption rose in Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru and Kolkata.

Net leasing stood at 11.55 million square feet in the yearago period across seven cities Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune.

JLL India attributed the fall in net leasing or absorption of office space to reduced expansion activity, delayed space plans and a hybrid workplace strategy that is still evolving.

'Companies were consolidating and relocating to save on real estate costs, while there were fewer pre-commitments

in new completions during the quarter. This reflects the challenges faced by the corporate world amid global headwinds and an uncertain business environment,"

Net absorption is calculated as the new floor space occupied less floor space vacated. Floor

explained.

space that is pre-committed is not considered to be absorbed until it is physically occupied. As per the data, Bengaluru

witnessed a 14 per cent increase in net office leasing to 1.91 million square feet in January-March 2023 from 1.67 million square feet in the yearago period.

Net office leasing in Delhi-NCR rose 47 per cent to 1.96 million square feet from 1.34 million square feet.

BIF for comprehensive framework to address digital age issues

PNS NEW DELHI

A new report by Broadband India Forum (BIF) mooting suggestions for the proposed Digital India Act has underlined the need for improved institutional frameworks to deal with cybersecurity, establish processes for oversight of surveillance, enable fairer con-

tent curation decisions and grievance redressal. As the country moves forward on the Digital India vision, it becomes imperative that the proposed Digital India Act (which will replace IT Act) promotes trust in the digital ecosystem. BIF noted that this requires careful balancing of multiple interests such as national security and

public order, online safety, protection of fundamental rights, and promoting innovation.

In the report, Rishab Bailey, Visiting Research Fellow, XKDR Forum, highlighted how they have examined the proposed law in how it dealt with four focus areas -- online censorship. intermediary liability, surveillance, and cyber security.

To repay US\$ 23 billion debt

Adani pins hopes on 20 pc earnings growth every year

PNS NEW DELHI

Embattled Adani Group is looking at a 20 per cent growth in earnings across businesses spanning from sea ports to airports, edible oil and commodities, energy, cement and

data centres, to repay about USD 23 billion of debt over the next 3-4 years in a comeback s t r a t e g y, sources said.

Adani group executives have met bankers, bond holders, analysts and investors from Singapore to the US in the last three weeks to address stakeholders' concerns in the aftermath of a damning US short seller report that ripped off USD 135 billion in market value of listed companies of the conglomerate. Sources aware of the development said Adani at these roadshows presented the growth story of the sprawling conglomerate that is refocusing its energies on higher efficien-

cy in business and bringing

breakneck speed expansion. The group saw a 20 per cent growth in EBITDA or earnings before interest, taxes,

down debt rather than

depreciation, and amortization, helping it pare debt. Between 2013 and 2022, earnings grew by 22 per cent year-on-year. And a 20 per cent growth will help bring down the

CAG red flags slow development of hydro power

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) said out of 374 identified project sites with power generation MegaWatts, only 10 projects with 79.75 MW capacity had been commissioned with time overrun ranging between four months and seven years.

The hydro power potential of Jammu and Kashmir has been estimated at 20,000 MW which includes 1,500 MW in respect of small hydro projects.

Small stocks lag behind in FY23; take bigger hit than bluechip firms

PNS NEW DELHI

Small stocks have lagged behind the equity benchmark Sensex in 2022-23, falling nearly 6 per cent amid a host of negative factors like higher interest rate regime, high inflation and the Russian-Ukraine war. According to market analysts, it was a tumultuous year for the

Indian equity market. The Russian-Ukraine war made the first quarter of the Indian equity market particularly difficult, but the second and

third quarters witnessed a

respectable rebound, they

noted. Headwinds such as high inflation, the Russia-Ukraine war and higher interest rates hit investors' appetite for small stocks. With just one day of trading left in the current fiscal, the BSE smallcap gauge has fallen by 1,616.93 points or 5.73 per

cent so far in 2022-23. The midcap index is down 270.29 points or 1.12 per cent in the 2022-23 financial year. In comparison, the BSE Sensex has declined 608.42 points or 1.03 per cent.

"Many factors contributed to the underperformance of the Indian stock market in FY23. The Indian market performed remarkably well in FY21 and FY22, as both the Nifty and Sensex produced double-digit returns. When the Indian stock market performs strongly for two years in a row, profit booking is inevitable in the third year.

Shift to products based on manmade fibre

APEC TO INDUSTRY PLAYERS

PNS NEW DELHI

Apparel exports body AEPC on Thursday asked industry players to take advantage of free trade agreements and diversify to Man Made Fibre (MMF) based products to cater to the global demand and boost

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) also said that it has collaborated with the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) to organise a capacity building programme for promoting Noida as an export hub.

Speaking at the programme Additional DGFT Gangadhar Panda said the government's supportive policies can further help capturing the great market demand owing to FTA and reorienting of supply chain.

Naren Goenka, Chairman AEPC said that it is promising



to see that many initiatives are being taken by multiple stakeholders across the value chain to adapt to these new sustainable practices.

Mithileshwar Secretary General, AEPC stated that with the same level of investment, the employment generation capacity in the apparel sector is more than six times as compared to other sectors. He also appealed to the members of trade and industry to "take advantage of FTAs signed by the government recently and requested them to diversify to Man Made Fibre (MMF) based products to cater to the global demand and boost

CURRENT SAVINGS, INVESTMENT RATES CAN'T PROPEL GDP TO 8% GROWTH ORBIT: REPORT

PNS MUMBAI

Clawing the economy back to an 8 per cent growth path will require bringing savings and investment rates closer to 35 per cent on a ture, which can help revive sustained basis, which were private investments by easing

30.2 and 29.6 per cent, respectively, in FY22, according to a report. As per India Ratings, a

large part of investments will have to be in infrastrucsupply constraints and offset the weakening of external demand due to global head-

Higher investments will have to be accompanied by higher domestic savings to keep the savings-investments report noted.

gap under check. The big missing link now is the government's focus on steppedup capital expenditure on infrastructure, but not enough commensurate steps to encourage savings, the

TAKING INDIA'S GOODS AND SERVICES EXPORTS TO USD 2 TRILLION BY 2030

debt-to-EBITDA ratio from

7.6 per cent to 3 per cent by

India to unveil new Foreign Trade Policy 2023-28 today

PNS NEW DELHI

India will unveil its muchawaited new Foreign Trade Policy 2023-28 on Friday, with a view to boost exports

amid slowing global trade. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will announce the foreign trade policy, according to the min-

The current foreign trade policy (2015-20) is in force till March 31, 2022.

The term of the previous five year policy had ended in March 2020. However, it has been extended repeatedly in wake of Covid outbreak and resulting lockdowns.

The last extension was given in September 2022 till March 31, 2023

Goyal will announce the foreign trade policy which is expected to outline the vision statement for taking India's goods and services exports to USD 2 trillion by

The country is likely to end this fiscal year with total exports of USD 760 billion as against USD 676 billion in

FSSAI allows labelling curd in regional names Standards Authority of India

PNS NEW DELHI

Food safety regulator FSSAI on Thursday revised its order and allowed the use of regional names in printed labels of curd packets amid political controversy in Tamil Nadu.

Food Business Operators (FBOs) are now allowed to use the term 'curd' along with any other prevalent regional com-mon name in brackets on the label. For example, 'Curd (Dahi)' or 'Curd (Mosaru), 'Curd (Zaamutdaud)', 'Curd (Thayir)', 'Curd (Perugu)' can be used, the Food Safety

(FSSAI) said in a statement.

The order has been revised following various representations received recently on the omission of the term 'curd' from the Standards of Fermented Milk Products and only the word 'Dahi' was mentioned.

The controversy erupted after the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers Federation -- which sells dairy products in brand name Aavin declined to use the Hindi term 'Dahi' in its printed sachets as directed by FSSAI



and said that it would only stick On Wednesday, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin to the Tamil word 'Thayir'.

decried the move as an attempt to "impose Hindi". Dairy Development Minister SM Nasar said the government had received a letter asking it to implement the directive before August. "the unabashed insistences of

#HindiImposition have come to the extent of directing us to label even a curd packet in Hindi, relegating Tamil & Kannada in our own states. Such brazen disregard to our mother tongues will make sure those responsible are banished from South forever," Stalin said in a tweet.

what's brewing?

Wes Anderson's Asteroid City trailer unites Hanks, Johansson, Dafoe, Cranston



→ he trailer for Wes Anderson's upcoming comedy Asteroid City has been released. The film is set in the 1950s in a fictional American desert

At a Junior Stargazer/Space Cadet convention, which is designed to unite stu-dents and parents in scholarly competition, chaos ensues as world-changing events take place, reports 'Variety'.

The film's main cast includes Margot Robbie, Tom Hanks, Hong Chau and Scarlett Johansson. Also featured in the film are Jeffrey Wright, Tilda Swinton, Bryan Cranston, Ed Norton, Adrien Brody,

Liev Schreiber, Hope Davis, Stephen Park, Rupert Friend, Maya Hawke, Steve Carell, Matt Dillon, Jason Schwartzman, Willem Dafoe, Tony Revolori, Jake Ryan, Grace Edwards, Aristou Meehan, Sophia Lillis, Ethan Lee, Jeff Goldblum and Rita Wilson.

Asteroid City is the latest on Anderson's long list of credits that include Fantastic Mr. Fox, Isle of Dogs, The Grand Budapest Hotel, Moonrise Kingdom, The French Dispatch and The Royal Tenenbaums. As per 'Variety', Anderson's Netflix-

backed *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar*, based on the Roald Dahl book, is also slated to premiere in 2023.

Asteroid City was penned by Anderson and Roman Coppola, who has worked with the director on films including The French Dispatch, Isle of Dogs, The Darjeeling Limited and Moonrise Kingdom.

Anderson produced the film with longtime collaborators Jeremy Dawson and Steven Rales of Indian Paintbrush. John Peet and Octavia Peissel co-produced the film with executive producers Christoph Fisser and Henning Molfenter.

Asteroid City is set for a limited theatri-

cal release on June 16 with a wider expansion on June 23. The film is expected to world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival.

POONAM PANDEY is back with a bang with the digital premiere of her highly-anticipated film LOVE IN TAXI

The controversy queen and internet sensation Poonam Pandey, never fails to surprise her fans with her moves. Now, Poonam is back with a bang to make heads turn in a never-before-seen avatar in Love in Taxi that premiered on Thursday. Poonam along with the popular actor Puneet Vashist will take viewers on an enthralling journey in their film Love

Set in a city that never sleeps, Love in Taxi explores one night in Mumbai that brings together a couple on the verge of a breakup, an actress on the run, and a man desperate to win back his ex-girlfriend. As their taxi navigates the city streets, tensions

rise and passion ignites at every turn.

Directed by filmmaker Benjamin Manjaly, *Love in Taxi* takes viewers on an adventurous journey of three taxis navigating through the chaotic streets of the bustling city. With each passenger dealing with their secrets and struggles, witness the drama that ensues as the taxis speed towards their destinations. The night is



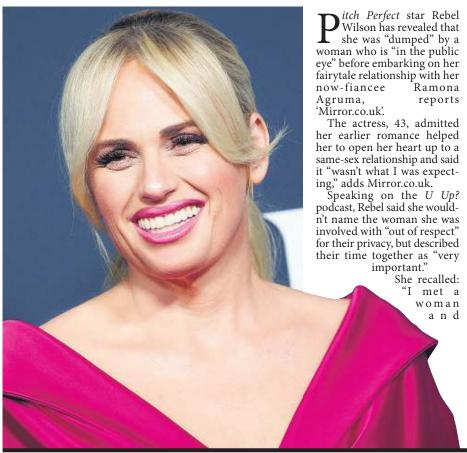
filled with surprises and the fate of each passenger hangs in the balance as they face unexpected twists and turns. Will they make it through the night unscathed?

Known for her uncountable controversies, Poonam Pandey plays the role of a struggling actress on the run in the film. Poonam, with her exceptional acting skills and bold personality, will portray the challenges of an aspiring artist trying to climb the ladder of success in the film. Actor Puneet Vashisht, on the other hand, portrays the character of a man desperately trying to win back his ex-girlfriend.

As the world gears up for the digital premiere of *Love In Taxi*, excitement is building for this must-watch digital premiere. With its gripping storyline and power-packed performances, *Love In Taxi* promises to be a wild ride that will leave you on the edge of your seat. So, fasten your seatbelts and get ready for a heartpumping journey with Love In Taxi.

The ultimate ride packed with emotions, love, blackmail and murder; Love In Taxi is now available for digital streaming worldwide.

Rebel Wilson recalls when she was 'dumped' by a woman 'in the public eye'



had, like, feelings for her, which totally came as a blindside. It wasn't what I was expecting."
According to Mirror.co.uk, the mum-of-one admitted she

had a "hard" time telling the person she was "attracted to them." She explained: "I said the words, 'I don't want to offend

women? "I've never had a conversation like that (before) because I was dating dudes and never had to talk about sexuality."

you, but are you interested in

Rebel continued: "She was like, 'I have feelings for you as well." She said their connection "didn't end up going any-where really" and revealed she "got dumped."

The actress, though, credited the experience with opening (her) heart up for a samesex relationship and said Ramona was "the next woman (she) felt that way about."

Rebel and Ramona got engaged last month in front of Cinderella's castle in Disneyland and are reportedly looking at the theme park to provide a fairytale backdrop to their big day.

Maidaan teaser presents the story of Indian football's 'Golden Era'

he teaser of Bollywood superstar Ajay Devgn's upcoming film Maidaan was unveiled on Thursday. One minute and 30 seconds long, the teaser tells the story of a fight against the odds as it takes a period sports drama route.

The trailer opens with monochrome shots from the 1952 Summer Olympics held in Helsinki, Finland, and narrates the story of India's best-ever performance in football. The decade from 1952 to 1962 is regarded as the Golden Era of Indian football.

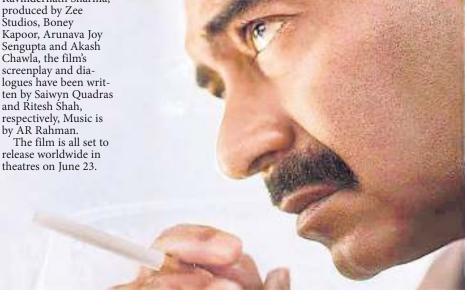
The film follows the true story of Syed Abdul Rahim, the legendary football coach from Hyderabad who led the Indian team in

its most glorious days

The film also stars Priyamani, Gajraj Rao, and Bengali actor Rudranil Ghosh.

Directed by Amit Ravindernath Sharma, produced by Zee Studios, Boney Kapoor, Arunava Joy Sengupta and Akash Chawla, the film's screenplay and dialogues have been written by Saiwyn Quadras and Ritesh Shah, respectively, Music is

The film is all set to release worldwide in theatres on June 23



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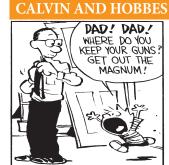
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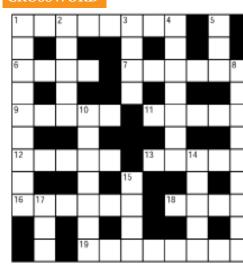




THE TREATS HAS ANYONE ACTUALLY



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- Train stops 6 Tumble over and over
- 7 Young cows
- 9 A tall type of building
- 11 A feeling of rage
- 12 Bees make this
- 15 A type of blood vessel 13 One third of twenty-one 16 Instructions for cake making 17 Pixie 18 The part along the side or
- end of something 19 Always ready to give away or share what you have

A thing with handles for

- carrying an injured person 2 Let 3 Say this when you get hurt



4 Complete quiet

8 People unknown to you

10 The late part of the day

14 A machine that can

record television

programmes

5 Tell a fib







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Friday March 31, 2023

Actress Avantika Dassani is soaring to the heights of success ever since her debut with Mithya, starring opposite Huma Qureshi. And so, *The Pioneer* connects with the actress for our weekly segment of Travel Tales, and she joyfully speaks to us about her trip to Bangkok.

Dassani

awaits a rooftop inn on a holiday

SHIKHA DUGGAL

alking along the lines of history, some culture and architectural beauty was the latest actress in line Avantika Dassani, also the daughter of desirable actress Bhagyashree.

Avantika made a name for herself by giving a blockbuster hit series titled *Mithya* opposite Huma Qureshi and since then she is only soaring to the heights of success. Very swiftly, she agreed to do a special travel tales segment with us and we get to hear a lot about her time in Bangkok.

"This trip to Bangkok almost fell like a homecoming, these trips are something that mom and I started as a ritual for taking short holidays together. It's our favourite way to bond! Sometimes dad and brother tag along, however, we know how to reminisce about our time together and enjoy ourselves even though others are

So very recently they went for a celebration and, "We celebrated my birthday at a lovely rooftop bar called Pastels and it had fabulous service. There were live performances by a musician playing the djembe and saxophones for us. Whenever on a holiday, I always look forward to a rooftop bar like this. There were other places like pastels where we went to grab some drinks and just take in the view of the

Bangkok nightlife." Totally agreeing with us that sometimes the hotel that one chooses is a stavcation on its own and describing to us her

favourite hotel hues, she says, "There was a wedding to attend and we were staying at

> too — "I went on a trip to Edinburgh with my best friend that included a bunch of haunted tours for us. Post having dinner, we went to our rooms and sort of tried

Riverside Resort, a

stunning property

hotels. Give us an

incredible view of

a water body or sun

knows I am a Bombay

girl, grew up with the privilege of having Juhu

Beach around but now

that I have grown older

I want some solace in

the views that I see. It

should be a lake view

and I have never met a sunset that I can ever

Bangkok. So any spot where I can see

setting is like my thing. Everyone

with connected

to catch up with each other and didn't realise the time. We rushed out hoping to make it our last tour and while we were walking we got lost on our way back. Really quiet and dark lanes, we crossed under a bridge and

dislike." Yes, she had a frightening moment saw a huge castle looming over us and its shadow on the road.

> hotel, anyhow." The next location she would like to tick off her bucket list is South America. Why so? because she really wants to see the Bora Bora islands and Peru. It's her dream destination! Sunny climate and a sandy beach will seal the deal for her. And if it's about Peru, she thinks

We ran our feet way back to the

that while travelling if you watch multi-cultural and colourful places it liberate you even more.

Adding to it, "Shooting in Darjeeling, hands down became my favourite place. The tea plantations and a nearby forest were the best places to be at while shooting with Huma Oureshi.

Though it was her debut, what a debut at a hill station!

ctress Donal Bisht has been

one of the most celebrated faces of the television industry. She is popularly known for her portrayal of Sharanya Bisht in Ek Deewaana Tha' and Ishika Patel in Roop - Mard Ka Naya Swaroop, and Kavya Thapar in Tu Zakhm Hai.

Donal, who is currently enjoying the success of the new season discusses with The Pioneer over an exclusive chat, about reprising her character,

what was something that she enjoyed

playing Kavya Thapar, and more. While she's known and been loved for

playing strong characters, in Tu

Zakhm Hai, it was for the very first time that she played the character of a

psychologist. In fact, she also revealed that she always wanted to be a psy-

chologist, and it happened with the series. "When I got to know that I had

ups and downs in Kavya's emotions so

I think I was well prepared (she laughs) for playing this. Since I had already studied psychology in my 11th

research, and a lot of googling went on so that I could play the character well,

playing. I always wanted to be a psychologist also and hence this medium,

the film industry gives you the liberty to play different parts on screen."

and 12th, I was very excited to play

as it is very important to study the background of the character you're

the character. I had done a lot of

to play a psychologist role and there will be a lot of variations and lots of

TEIAL SINHA



In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, actress Donal Bisht discusses reprising her character in Tu Zakhm Hai, what she enjoyed the most playing the character, and more.



What should you look for in a

MOBILE PAYMENT SYSTEM?

Money moves across the spectrum in terms of refunds, cashbacks, rewards, and so on. Payments have undergone several changes in the last 4-5 years. With a goal to make payments convenient, instant, secure, invisible, and low-cost, we have seen many countries in developed markets achieve all of these, and this was possible by using cutting-edge modern technology to power digital payment rails like UPI in India.



TOKENISATION: In the year 2023, we

MERCHANT ACCEPTANCE: We will accept digital payments by deploying

will see more and more cards getting tokenised, introducing customers to a more secure and reliable payment experience wherein a 16-digit card will get tokenized into a unique code that varies every time a transaction

have more and more merchants QR codes, M-PoS, and contactless payments like TapNpay using NFC (near-field communication technology).

Mobile Wallets: They will continue to play a pivotal role in making cashless transactions possible. Newer use cases will emerge for mobile wallets in the next 2 years; wallets will be interoperable; and new use cases like mass transit, employee benefits, expense management, corporate gifting, rewards and recognition, banking for teenagers, etc. will grow over 3X in the next 2 years.

GEN Z: More specifically, the teen population of the Gen Z segment is a more tech-savvy or techexposed generation. This generation is ready to experiment, wants instant gratification, and will raise the demand for digital payment systems in 2023.

was something that she'd enjoyed the most playing the character, she mer-rily replied, "The different kinds of emotions. Every scene is very different and the part that Kavya is playing with every different character is very different. I also enjoyed playing the character because of the thriller part of it actually. She is a hostage and captive yet she falls in love with the captor and how everything happens and the whole process of it and get-ting so good reviews from the viewers of it. I am happy that the kind of graphs the makers had given to Kavya is amazing and when people are able to connect to it, people said that it's very touching it feels great when you give your 100% to a project and then when it comes it's flying colours come in." As we moved forward in the

The way Donal transformed her-

audience. And so, sharing about what

self into the character of Kavya is much appreciated by the fans and

interview. Donal described the char-

BUY NOW, PAY LATER:

its affordability and easy

cases using Standing

a convenient payment

option, increasing

merchant sales and

allowing lenders to offer

simple repayment terms

small-ticket loans with

while earning interest

Instructions (SI)

This has scaled because of

repayment process in most

Customers find BNPL to be

acter as 'Ulta Coconut'. Seemingly, "(She laughs) Kavya might be soft and sweet but inside she's like this ulta coconut, outside needs to be soft and inside needs to be strong so aisa characters I get to play and with versatility definitely. It's great to play that sort of a part and people get inspired by what you're playing on the screen. People are still like we want a girl like Ishika from *Roop* in our house and the aunties and mummies were mailing me that 'we want a bahu like you'. So in this playing Kavya, people are very interested because she's the girl who understands everybody, understands everyone's emotions very differently and that is how Kavya is and that is why it's very very relatable to the people. I loved playing Kavva and also the love that we are getting from around the world outside. People have sent me videos of people watching the show and people are asking me about when is the 3rd season coming out."

In the year 2023, we will see the following trends in mobile payments across the world:

BIOMETRIC AUTHENTICATION: With the increasing trend and risk of identity theft and fraud, biometric authentication can become a reliable and secure option for all digital payment transactions. Further biometric authentication also helps reduce the cost of authenticating a digital payment transaction.

CENTRAL BANK DIGITAL CURRENCY: Like India, we will see the central banks of various developed countries and economies pilot and launch their own digital currencies in 2023. Digital currency, like the e-Rupee in India, is issued in the form of a digital token that represents legal tender. It is being issued in the same denominations as the fiat currency (modern paper currencies).

FRAUD AND RISK MANAGEMENT:

With the increase in digital payments, we will also see an increase in fraudulent transactions. Modern RBA (riskbased authentication) will be used by banks and payment companies to detect and prevent fraudulent transactions while facilitating digital payments. We will see more tech service providers offering fraud and risk management solutions to banks and payment companies in 2023.

(The author Mehul Mistry is the Global Head-Strategy, Digital inancial Services & Partnerships at Wibmo, a PayU company)

PL TURNS 'SWEET

he never-ending speculations about Mahendra Singh Dhoni's impending 'last dance', Virat Kohli's endless pursuit of an elusive silverware and Rohit Sharma's customary nonchalance are things that make the IPL starting Friday a heady cocktail of cricket and entertainment.

Megastars Dhoni, Kohli and Rohit have been the IPL's driving force in the past 15 seasons, getting the cricket crazy Indian fans hooked on the event for nearly two months every year.

As it enters the 16th season, innovations introduced in the form of potential game changer like the 'Impact Player' rule, DRS on wides and waist-high no balls, and two broadcasting giants locked in an ugly war of 'TV vs Digital' act as ingredients garnishing the mouth-watering dish, which will be devoured by millions for more than 50 days.

However, the product will remain the driving force and players the main stakeholders, as the likes of Dhoni, Kohli and Rohit set the narratives for their respective franchises with amazing fan bases.

Nearing 42, Dhoni has defied the law of diminishing returns when it comes to his manic following among CSK fans, who thronged the Chepauk to see their 'Thala' hit towering sixes at his spiritual home.

They say it will be his last year in the 'canary yellow' jersey, but when it comes to MSD, never say never. Even Rohit agrees with that, and won't be surprised if his "captain" continues playing till 45.

Having finished outside the playoffs in 2022, Dhoni would like to equal Mumbai Indians' record with five titles, and he knows how to get the best out of the resources available at his disposal.

He will have Ben Stokes in his roster to give him the firepower in batting — in powerplay and at the

Devon Conway and Ruturaj Gaikwad both understand the grammar of IPL cricket and Ambati Rayudu with the willow and Deepak CSK, MI remain premier contenders as RCB eye fresh start



Chahar with the white Kookaburra have all been there and done that.

CSK have never been a grooming school. There it's more about the finished product or those in whom the skipper sees the potential, like he saw in Simarjeet Singh last year, or someone like Matheesa Pathirana, who could be an 'Impact Player' if the CSK begin with three foreigners. Stokes, Moeen Ali and Conway look sure-shot starters as of now.

For Rohit, it will be a season in which he would like to sing the redemption song. Rohit has a casual exterior but scratch the surface, and he can be as intense as anybody, and being the most successful skipper in the history of IPL, losing isn't an option. Before last year, Rohit never knew what it feels to be the wooden spooner. This season however, Mumbai Indians appear to be the

team to beat, at least on paper.

A lot will depend on the skipper's own batting form and the two marquee men in Ishan Kishan and the world's No. 1 T20 batter Suryakumar Yadav, who would like to brush off the three first-ball ducks against Australia recently as an aberration in an otherwise sterling journey.

Jofra Archer's presence does boost the pace attack, but Jasprit Bumrah's absence, to some extent, nullifies the advantage.
But what MI is doing is to pre-

pare a team for the next five years with young guns like Dewald Brevis, Tim David, Cameron Green, Tilak Verma, Hrithik Shokeen and Kumar Kartikeya set to serve them for the longest time. This core will be a formidable one in the years to come.

Just like Dhoni and Rohit, Kohli has landed up in every IPL with fire in his belly, but the rub of the green hasn't gone his way.

He has had a 973-run season, in 2016, something that will be difficult to surpass even in these day and age where the shelf life of records is too less. He has played a few finals but, as far as winning the title is con-cerned, the IPL has had a fickle relationship with one of India's greatest batters. He is no longer the skipper and is probably in the best mental phase that he has been in the past

The hunger is intact, but the desperation isn't there. The swagger remains, but the aggression is no longer there to be found.

hree to four years.

Maxwell and Dinesh Karthik ready to do the heavy-lifting, Kohli will be free to play his own game and also help skipper Faf du Plessis in putting his best foot forward.

This season holds special significance for Hardik Pandya. Having led Gujarat Titans to title triumph in only their inaugural year, the 16th IPL will be a platform for Pandya to soar high-

er and higher with bigger ambitions.
With coach Ashish Nehra for company, he would want the Rashid Khans, Mohammed Shamis and the Shubman Gills to maintain the tempo of last year from start to finish. An encore would certainly make him Rohit's heir apparent in the ODI format post the World Cup.

The only tactical shift is the absence of Lockie Ferguson and the jury is still out on whether trading him to bring in Shivam Mavi was a good choice or not. For Aiden Markram, it will be an onerous task to lift a perennially under-performing Sunrisers Hyderabad. However, the composition is

better compared to previous years with talented Indian players like Mayank Agarwal, Rahul Tripathi and Abhishek Sharma in their ranks. Glenn Phillips and Harry Brook are among some top overseas batting recruits.

However, bowling remains a worry with Umran Malik, now well studied by analysts, and Bhuvneshwar Kumar past his prime. A lot will depend on whether SRH are able to use their fourth foreign player as per conditions. There is Marco Jansen with his left-arm seamers and Adil Rashid with his wrist spinners.

Punjab Kings under Shikhar Dhawan is another team that has never believed in continuity and never got results since their runnersup finish in 2014.

They have kept on changing captains, unceremoniously dumping coaches after one bad season, and the team never had any stability. This time they have got Sam Curran in excess of USD 2 million dollars.

A good start is key but not getting Liam Livingstone (injury),

first couple of games could upset the team's tempo.

Save Arshdeep Singh, the Indian pace unit lacks quality and the PBKS could again be out of the play-off race. The team simply doesn't inspire confidence and the composition indicates lack of proper homework.

KL Rahul is having a nightmarish 2023 and a good IPL can raise his profile which has been on a downward spiral despite him being a top performer in the league. Rahul's captaincy has been devoid of any tangible improvisation and his style of run gathering is archaic.

LSG have a balanced team and in Gautam Gambhir a tactician par excellence, one who could safely be called the non-playing captain. The presence of utility players like Krunal Pandya, Deepak Hooda and Ayush Badoni in the middle-order adds a lot of depth, while Mark Wood's 150 click thunderbolts will be a nightmare for the opposition.

Nicholas Pooran, who was paid an astronomical Rs 16 crore, would look to justify that billing after a forgettable last season with SRH.

When it comes to remote-control captaincy, there can't be a better example than KKR head coach Chandrakant Pandit, who will have to do all the planning and plotting on behalf of Nitish Rana, who will be leading a side that isn't looking very strong in the absence of regular

skipper Shreyas Iyer. In fact, Andre Russell and Sunil Narine's form will dictate how far

KKR progress.
Ditto for Delhi Capitals, who will find it difficult to have anyone get remotely close to Rishabh Pant's impact, even though David Warner wouldn't mind winning a second IPL

Amid all the chaos in some teams, Rajasthan Royals look the most sorted outfit. The world's most dangerous T20 hitter Jos Buttler, wily wrist spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, and the best cricketing brain, R Ashwin, will look to ensure that the legend of skipper Sanju Samson grows exponentially.

Its Dhoni vs Hardik in IPL 2023 opener



PTI AHMEDABAD

Hardik Pandya's youthful leadership template will meet its match in Mahendra Singh Dhoni's time-tested improvisations as defending champions Gujarat Titans clash with eternal title contenders Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League opener here on Friday.

The 2022 was Pandya's first year as an IPL captain and despite his flamboyance on and off the field, he did invoke a certain sense of calm in Titans' campaign that had the an identical start to finish tempo, unmatched by any other team.

With Shubman Gill in the form of his life, Rashid Khan not losing one bit of his consistency and Pandya himself having his worth weight in gold, Gujarat are once again the team to beat.

David Miller's absence from the opener due to national duty will reduce some

middle-order muscle but Rahul Tewatia, who has improved by leaps and bounds in recent years, could compensate for the temporary miss.

Kane williamson might not be most sought after in this format but in low-scoring games on difficult surfaces, he could still be the man to watch out for.

Pandya has never shied away from admitting that he has learnt the ropes of leadership from Dhoni, who has always been his 'Mentor'

But at 42, playing from IPL to IPL, Dhoni knows the template of IPL success only too well. There have been blips here and there, like last time when they failed to qualify for the play-offs but even with shut eyes, one can vouch that there was no fault in planning but the execution wasn't on expected lines.

On Friday, as the 16th edition starts, it will be very different from earlier ones as 12 players per side will take part in the pitched battle at the Motera Stadium with the 'Impact Player' rule coming into play for the

Dhoni, who manoeuvres his resources

having put in a lot of thought into his actions, might well make himself the 'Impact Player' if need be during chases.

That for sure won't happen in the first few games as both teams try to make optimal use of the rule.

For CSK, the presence of Ben Stokes is sure to make the opposition wary but to the England tain perhaps won't bowl at least in the initial phase of the tournament.

That makes him an ideal candidate as 'Impact Player' depending on whether the team bats first or second and accordingly Dhoni can think of playing three foreigners instead of four.

Devon Conway, Stokes and Moeen Ali at this point look the non-negotiable three starters in the playing eleven.

A lot will depend on how well Ravindra Jadeja, Ambati Rayudu and Dhoni himself perform with willow as the Indian pace bowling unit of Deepak Chahar and Simarjeet Singh will have their task cut out. How well Dhoni can use either spinner

Mahesh Theeksana or slinger Matheesa Pathirana will also go a long way establishing a pattern in selections. As far as GT is concerned, there is one

strategic decision which has been baffling and that is release of tearaway quick Lockie Ferguson and bringing in Shivam Mavi. However Alazarri Joseph's presence is a bit reassuring in this format.

Save $\bar{\mbox{M}}\mbox{ohammed}$ Shami, the only other pacer of repute is the skipper himself. Yash Dayal had a good first season hasn't been in great form in Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy with only 2 wickets from 6 games but to be fair, he was coming back from injury. Pradeep Sangwan and Mohit Sharma are both experienced campaigners but they are now well past their prime.

The other cause of worry for GT will be keeper's slot. While Wriddhiman Saha was decent as an opener last year, they have a better T20 batter in Kona Bharat this time round, who incidentally bats in the top order in the shortest format

Vice-captaincy is reward of my hard work: Patel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Axar Patel is excited about his new role as Delhi Capitals vice-captain, terming the responsibility entrusted upon him as a reward for all the hardwork he has put in for the franchise over past few sea-

"In my opinion, if you have gotten this role that means you are growing as a senior player. that you've done for the team. I'm excited about this role," the lanky all-rounder said in a video posted on DC's twitter

"Our team is mostly the same, we have the same players from the last 3-4 years. We know our players well and that will be an important point."

Axar will be deputy to

Australian David Warner, who has been named as DC skipper for this season in place of Rishabh Pant, who is currently undergoing rehabilitation following a horrific car accident in December.

provide full support to new skipper Warner.

David is a talented player. I will provide him with an atmosphere where he can make



ferent feeling altogether when you join DC Camp. It's been 3-4 years with the franchise now and it feels like home," Axar DC will start their cam-

best use of his abilities. It's a dif-

paign with an away game against Lucknow Super Giants on April 1 before returning to their home base to play defending champions Gujarat Titans on April 4.

Kotla after so long. I feel it will be really important. We will have our fans here and I'm sure the fans would be excited to cheer for us," Axar said.

Guwahati gears up

The Northeast is all set to debut as an Indian Premier

League (IPL) host for the first

ment started, with two Rajasthan

Royals' 'home' games sched-

uled in Assam's Ğuwahati next

ciation (ACA) Stadium has been

designated as one of the 'home'

venues for RR, which will take

on the Punjab Kings on April 5

The Assam Cricket Asso-

time since the marquee tourna-

IPL beckons

Northeast as

for 2 matches

PTI GUWAHATI

1PL-16 wonderful opportunity for Bharat to showcase talent'

PTI CHENNAI

 ${
m F}^{
m ormer}_{
m committee}$ rational selection MSK Prasad says the IPL-16 is a wonderful opportunity" for wicketkeeper KS Bharat to showcase his talent in white-ball cricket and stake a claim for India selection.

"Bharat is a Test cricketer and now he has an opportunity to showcase his talent in white-ball cricket. So, it will be a wonderful opportunity for him to do that," Prasad said of the Andhra stumper, who made his Test debut in the recent Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia.

The wicketkeeper, however, came in for some criticism over his not being able to make big contributions with the bat.

Prasad, a former India player, said in an interaction, "He (Bharat) is there in a good franchise like Gujarat Titans, so, it's a good opportunity for him to showcase his talent as a white-

ball cricketer, too.' Noting that Bharat has performed reasonably well in domestic cricket (in whiteball), Prasad said it was a chance for him to deliver again.

See, now it is in his hands. So he has done reasonably well in domestic cricket, so in a few opportunities that he got for RCB, he did well. So, this is a wonderful opportunity for him to again deliver in white-ball cricket and put himself in a strong position," he added.

Bharat was drafted into the Test XI after the flamboyant Rishabh Pant was unavailable after being injured in a horrific road mishap late last year.

Speaking about this year's IPL beginning on Friday, Prasad, a Star Sports Telugu commentator, said defending

champions Gujarat Titans would be expected to do well though they face a tough chal-

He also said he expected the MS Dhoni-led Chennai Super Kings to bounce back strongly after a poor run in the 2022 edition.

"Gujarat because it is a young side, it has got a very good balance and it is led by a good captain also. CSK will come back very strong this time. Why, because they have had one of the worst seasons last year. So, they will come back strong and you never know, there are a lot of rumours that this could be Mahi's (Dhoni's) last year or something

"So they will come with two

times more vigour and more energy, to give a fitting tribute to what MS has done in the IPL and Delhi Capitals on April 8. "We were allotted two IPL matches of RR in 2020. But, the matches couldn't happen due to the outbreak of COVID-19. We are happy two games have been scheduled here this year," ACA

secretary Tridib Konwar said. He said preparations are in full swing, and ACA is working in close coordination with the

Rajasthan Royals team. 'We urge the cricket lovers of Assam as well as the entire Northeast to come and watch the matches. Rajasthan Royals has already started online ticketing for the games," Konwar said. The Jaipur-based franchise had earlier partnered with the association for a cricket academy, which is now functional at

the ACA Stadium.

Devajit Saikia, joint secretary of the BCCI, said there are a lot of aspiring cricketers who cannot make it to the national side due to tough competition, and the IPL is a good opportunity for them. All eyes will be on local boy Riyan Parag, who plays for the Rajasthan Royals, during the two matches.

Sindhu, Srikanth enter quarterfinals of Madrid Spain Masters

Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth moved to the singles quarterfinals of the Madrid Spain Masters badminton tournament with straight game wins here on Thursday. Two-time Olympic medallist, Sindhu dispatched Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonasia 21-16, 21-14 in a little over half an hour to enter her first quarterfinal in 2023.

World no. 21 Srikanth, on the other hand, pulled off a 21-15, 21-12 second round win over compatriot B Sai Praneeth.

Ŝecond seed Sindhu has been struggling for form this

season since returning to action following a long injury lay off. It is the first time in 2023 that the 27-vear-old former world champion has crossed the second Sindhu, who has dropped

out of the top 10 for the first time since November 2016, will take on 25-year-old Danish Mia Blichfeldt in the last eight stage of the Super 300 tournament.

While World no. 21 Srikanth, seeded fifth, has a tough contest ahead of him as the former world No. 1 is pitted against top seed Kenta Nishimoto of Japan in the quarterfinals.

Nishimoto was handed a walkover by France's Arnaud



Merkle in their second round contest. Kiran George and Priyanshu Rajawat crashed out of the men's singles event after suffering second round defeats.

While George went down to Denmark's Magnus Johannesen 17-21, 12-21 in 31 minutes, Rajat was outplayed 14-21, 15-21 by eight seed Toma Junior Popov of France. Later in the day, Aakarshi Kashyap, Ashmita Chaliha Malvika Bansod and Sameer Verma will play their second round matches.

The men's and women's doubles pair of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila and Sikki Reddy and Arathi Sara Sunil will also

Hazlewood to miss initial stage of IPL Maxwell uncertain for RCB's opener

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

R oyal Challengers Bangalore fast bowler Josh Hazlewood is set to miss the initial stages of the Indian Premier League beginning in Ahmedabad on Friday. According to a report in cricket.Com.Au, Ha?zlewood is, however, hopeful of playing a part in the later stages of the T20 tournament.

The 32-year-old is currently recovering from an Achilles problem which kept him out of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in India. Hazlewood will consult Cricket Australia's medical staff



before deciding on his participation in the IPL, the report said.

In another big development, all-rounder Glenn Maxwell, who missed Australia's final two ODIs against India earlier this month, is also doubtful for RCB's opening game against Mumbai Indians on April 2 in Bengaluru as he is yet to recover from a leg injury.

tollywood

Dasara: When a brooding vagabond rises to the occasion

rikanth Odela's debut film *Dasara*— starring Nani, Keerthy Suresh, Dheekshith Shetty, and Shine Tom Chacko in important roles is set in a small village called Veerlapalle. This not-so-scenic village surrounded by traces of murky coal dust is located approximately eight kilometres away from Singareni eight kilometres away from Singareni quarters near Godavarikhani.

The filmmaker took inspiration from major real-life incidents that occurred within the region. Thus, right off the hook, we are introduced to the world of

It is 1995! The then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N.T. Rama Rao announces a statewide liquor ban. The men of Veerlapalle have a major drinking problem, but they think it's their tradition to booze their guts out. The camera points to Kanakayya, owner of Silk Bar(named after late actress Silk Smitha). The rather

owner has a reality check as he sees the CM make the announcement. Sarpanch Nambayya makes the most out of this crisis. His sons Rajanna (Sai Kumar) and Shivanna(Samuthirakani) part ways after Nambayya's death; each forms their own little parties. Shivanna's son, Chinna Nambayya(Shine Tom Chacko) plays a role in retaining the family's monopoly over the liquor bysiness and manager to over the liquor business and manages to put Rajanna on the sidelines. This sets the tone for village politics which drives the film forward.

In the midst of all this, you've got three childhood friends-Dharani(Nani),

Soori(Dheekshith Shetty), and Vennela(Keerthy Suresh). Dharani can take a bullet for Soori and vice-versa. The young Dharani falls for Vennela for the first time in his childhood. You can call that true love. It is made really clear from the onset that Dharani is someone who's timid. A cat meowing in the middle of the night can make him pee. One day, the boy fights his way to the counter outside Silk
Bar. By the way, people from the lower
classes are not allowed inside the bar.
Alright! Dharani buys a mini alcohol

bottle, runs home and gives it to his grandmother and asks out of curiosity, "Why do you drink?" She replies, "For courage!" A quick transition makes

way for a bril-liant introduction of our hero. Two mini bottles tied to his waist, lungi and a messy shirt with sleeves folded. Nani looks fabulous. When he's not drunk, Dharani is coy and reluctant but when he pops a few bottles and gulps down the alcohol; he's the most cocky per son on the field He fights, makes over

He fights, makes over the top promises and even succeeds and loathes his life like a perfect filmy vagabond. Vennela on the other hand is an Anganwadi teacher. She's bubbly, brave and naughty. Soori, Dharani's best friend doesn't differentiate between classes. He stands by his friends and unlike Dharani, he's super brave.

Dharani, he's super brave.

The background score is one of The background score is one of Dasara's biggest strengths. Santosh Narayan puts his heart and soul into this film. Each tune is so pure and reflects nothing but honesty. While Dhoom Dham Dhosthaan underscores the trio's friendship, Ori Vaari reminds Dharani that the girl of his dreams is out of his reach and the reel worthy Chamkeela Angelesi is a cute wedding gir that ignites Angeelesi is a cute wedding gig that ignites

feelings of trust and renewed love. Santosh Narayan brilliantly uses the background Narayan brilliantly uses the background score to immerse you so deeply into the film that you'll think of that clinking of glasses' beat that plays soon after Vennela asks Dharani if he ever loved someone. Sathyan Sooryan brings every element on the screen to life with his cinematography. A special shout out to Kolla Avinash(production design) — the set pieces, houses, the lone standing Silk Bar and entire set in the climax. A freaking visual treat.

The film falters a bit here and there. It hits the highest of the high notes and spends a few minutes in the shallow darkness. All that is covered up with stylistic

ness. All that is covered up with stylistic cinematic choices, music and acting by the lead cast. A few shots will just stay with you. Pre-interval and climax sequences matter a lot for the Indian audisequences matter a lot for the indian audience. I sat with my mouth open after the pre-interval scene played. It took me a few moments to sink in what I just saw. Nani is one of the few stars who can actually act and I wish the director left the camera hanging for a few more moments in the

act and I wish the director left the camera hanging for a few more moments in the interval bang to make us weep a bit more. The climax is as intense and over the top as the interval bang.

Dasara is not just about the village politics or how Chinna Nambayya(Shine Tom Chacko) lusts after women; he is a crook of the first kind. Shine Tom Chacko is cheeky and with with his performance cheeky and witty with his performance here. The film is about friendship. How far would you go to stand up for your friend? Srikanth Odela could have easily gone wrong with the film but the way he blocks the scenes and takes the film forward with almost no filmmaking experience is shocking. The originality of the story and the performances are sure to stay with you. Yes! There are flaws but if you can sit through a few negligible moments of dullness, nothing like it. A fontagic debut and even with all its bru fantastic debut and even with all its bru-tality, the director manages to bring sensi-tivity to his characters. Especially in the form of Vennela. He brings to the fore the inherent problem of the cast and class division masterfully. If you don't want your favourite stars to resort to remakes... support original films like *Dasara*.

Rating: 3/5

Sita Kalyanam from Anni Manchi Sakunamule is a wedding anthem



Anni Manchi Sakunamule, a feel good family entertainer has all the positive vibes surrounding the film. Right from the production house to director and promotional material, everything gives a positive feel towards the film. This summer release starring Santosh Sobhan and Malvika Nair is said to provide wholesome entertainment in the cinemas.

The teaser, then the title song generated interest towards the movie. On Thursday, on the auspicious occasion of Sri Rama Navami, the makers came up with the second single Sita Kalyana Vaibhogame. This is an ideal song for Sri Rama Navami. This is going to be the wedding song of the season. The visuals indeed show

wedding celebrations.

Director Nandini Reddy showed her mark yet again in picturising the song in a pleasant manner composed by Mickey J Meyer. Oscarwinner Chandrabose penned the lyrics, while Chaitra Ambadipudi and Sri Krishna lent the vocals. The song is shot aesthetically and will.be a feast to watch on the big screen.

Anni Manchi Sakanamule features Rajendra Prasad, Rao Ramesh, Naresh, Gauthami, Sowcar Janaki, Vasuki and many more prominent actors in important roles. The movie is produced by Priyanka Dutt, in association with Mitra Vinda Movies. The movie is scheduled for release on May 18th.

Makers unveiled the divine poster of Adipurush



With the gleam of lights and echo of the chants, the makers of *Adipurush* release the glorious poster of the film on the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami. The poster depicts Prabhas as Raghav, Kriti Sanon as Janaki, Sunny Singh as Shesh, and Devdatta Nage bowing down to them as Bajrang. The film carries forward the virtue of Prabhu Shri Ram that entails Dharma, Courage and Sacrifice which rightly reflects in the elegant poster.

As Ram Navami celebrates the birth anniversary

of Lord Shri Ram and beginning of goodness, the makers reveal a significant symbol of divinity that marks the establishment of dharma to beat adharma. Indian epic Ramayana, Adipurush is all set to hit the big screen on 16th June, 2023 in IMAX and 3D.

Adipurush, directed by Om Raut is produced by T- Series, Bhushan Kumar and Krishan Kumar, Om Raut. Prasad Sutar and Raiesh Nair of Retrophiles and will be released globally on 16th June 2023.

Saagar K Chandra to team up with **Bellamkonda Sreenivas**

opportunity to helm Bheemla Nayak in which Power Star Pawan Kalyan and Baahubali fame Rana Daggubati played the lead roles. In the past there was a strong buzz in the film industry that Saagar K Chandra would team up with the young hero Bellamkonda Sreenivas. Finally, today on the occasion of Sri Rama Navami, the official announcement came about this association. Accordingly, Saagar K Chandra will direct the 10th film of Bellamkonda Sreenivas.

The industry tracker Ramesh Bala confirmed

Sagar K Chandra came into the limelight in Telugu Film Industry with the film Appatlo Okadundevadu. Then he got the golden @BSaiSreenivas's next to be directed by the MASSively talented @saagar_chandrak Produced by @RaamAchanta & #GopiAchanta under @14ReelsPlus #BSS10."

The upcoming project #BSS10 will be bankrolled by Ram Achanta and Gopi Achanta under the banner of 14 Reels Plus. Currently the makers are in the hunt for a female lead and soon the announcement regarding the remaining cast and crew will be made. On the other side, Bellamonda Sai Sreenivas is currently working for his upcoming Hindi film Chatrapathi under the



direction of VV Vinayak. In this film which is a remake of the same title, Sreenivas is reprising

Lyrical song Padipothuna from Game On released



ame on movie starring Geetanand, NehaSolanki, Madhoo Bala, Adithya JMenon, Vasanthi Krishnan, Kireeti Geetan and and Neha Solanki are acting in lead roles in the movie.

Madhoo Bala, who is a very well known senior actress, is acting in an important role in the movie.

Ravi Kasturi is producing this movie under the banner Kasturi Creations and Golden Wing Productions under the direction of Davanand

Ánd music by Ashwin-Arun and Nawab gang who sung mega star Chiranjeevi *Bhola Shankar* movie title song and they done great job in the movie, whole team is very happy

awaited teaser

he much-

same title.

Gada has bankrolled the project in association with Dhaval Jayantilal Gada and Aksshay

Jayantilal Gada under Pen Studios

banner.

for the tremendous response form audience for songs

Lyricist Kittu Vissapragada has given beautiful lyrics for this song. Singers Anurag Kulkarni and Harika Narayan have sung this song with their euphonious voice and cinematographer Arvind Vishwanathan has given great visuals.

On this occasion, Producer Ravi Kasturi said that the movie came out really well with the support of all the technicians and actors. We are very happy to release our movie songs through T-Series. He also said that all the post production work is completed and preparations are being made for the movie to be released in theatre soon.

NUMAN CHALISA

HanuMan's first single Hanuman Chalisa to come out on April 6

PAN Indian films to arrive this summer. Directed by Prashanth Varma, this is the second film for the actor-director duo after Zombie Reddy. The teaser has left one and all in amusement with its amazing visual

After a long wait, the makers have finally announced the release of the first single. Titled Hanuman Chalisa, the song would come out on 6th April on the eve of Hanuman Jayanthi. The

anuMan, starring Teja Sajja, is team released a terrific poster of Lord Hanuman to announce the song's

arrival. Produced by K. Niranjan Reddy under Primeshow Entertainment's banner, the movie has the gorgeous beauty Amritha Aiyer as the female lead. Ýaralaxmi Sarathkumar, Vinay Rai, Raj Deepak Shetty, and Vennela Kishore play key roles. Gowra Hari, Anudeep Dev, and Krishna Saurabh are combinedly scoring the music.

HanuMan releases on 12th May

Chatrapathi's actionfor young Tollywood packed teaser action entertainers specialist VV Vinayak's maidunveiled en Bollywood film, Chatrapathi, has been unveiled today on the auspicious occasion of Sri Rama Navami. It's

