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Teachers demand safety

Jeba Janet

Members of all teachers' associations in Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu, protested to urge the government to enact a law to protect teaching service personnel and ensure their safety from violence and abuse.

On March 22, a brutal attack was unleashed on a headmistress and a teacher by a 2nd-grade student's parents in a village in Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu. The teacher instructed a student to sit before him because of his inattentiveness in class. When the student slipped and fell, his grandfather threatened the teacher, and the parents trespassed into the school, chasing the teacher down and thrashing him. The unruly behaviour was caught on video and circulated on social media, prompting police action against them.

Sam Manickaraj, a government school official, said, "Government school teachers in rural areas are now worried for their security after the attacks; so to ensure their safety and to avoid more attacks on teachers, they started the protest. The goal of the protest is to pass a 'teachers' protection law. We have requested the teaching personal protection policy from the government." He added that teachers would feel safer knowing that the law protects them.

SJU & Eurofins unite to unleash discoveries

Angeline & Ishika

Campus: One of the primary challenges that we face while collaborating with academic institutions is the slow pace at which things get done. However, with St Joseph's we found a partner who shared our passion for science, a desire to provide unique opportunities to students, and a drive to accomplish tasks at a faster pace, said Neeraj Garg, the regional director of Eurofins India and the Middle East.

St Joseph's University (SJU) on March 29 announced its partnership with one of the world's largest testing companies, Eurofins, to establish an Advanced Analytical Chemistry laboratory for the Department of Chemical Sciences. The dignitaries for the inaugural ceremony were Neeraj Garg, Pankaj Jaiminy, Managing Director of Eurofins, Fr Joy



Neeraj Garg addressing the gathering

Shariq Ahamed

Rodrigues, Secretary and Treasurer of BJES, along with Vice-Chancellor of SJU Fr Dr Victor Lobo, Pro-Chancellor Fr Swebert D'Silva, Fr Dr Xavier, Director of Research and other members of the academic fraternity.

Speaking to The Beacon, Garg said, "The objective of the lab is to make the students accustomed to

professional equipment and make them industry ready. With these new pieces of equipment, we hope the students will utilise the infrastructure and the facility to the fullest and conduct their research here."

Fr Swebert D'Silva, while addressing the audience said that for years we have been training our students, but the industry has been constantly

criticising us, for a lack of job-ready students. "This has been a challenge for us, but now we have a reason to be happy. Eurofins has stepped forward to provide our students with practical experience and training while they are still young, which will help them to excel in their careers."

We must be able to create new knowledge, he

said. The experiments and research must be relevant to ordinary people and, most importantly, poor people. Our main concern and aim are to bring research to the ground level and help poor people, said Fr D'Silva.

"SJC has become a university recently, but just becoming an ordinary university is not our goal. Our goal is to become a world-class university and have global research capacity and capability," he added.

"This is just the start, there are many more programmes we can come up with. Our next step would be to get more students, maybe for a postdoctoral programme or a doctorate programme where the university and the company students can partner and do more research. We will hope to see more joint research in the future," added Garg.

SJU alumni win accolades for film 'Photo'

Dhamini & Shariq

As the socio-political drama 'Photo' wins rare reviews and a standing ovation at its premiere, Dinesh Divakaran, the Director of Photography (DOP), feels that all the hardships that went into the movie were worth it. As the film is about migrant workers walking back to their hometown during the lockdown, the crew had to walk along with them throughout the shoot, which gave them a first-hand experience of the trials and tribulations faced by the underprivileged.

The feature film, which premiered at the Bengaluru International Film Festival



Former SJU students who worked on 'Photo' Special Arrangement

(BIFFes), had a packed house at both screenings, and the crowd asked for more shows. Former SJU students Dinesh Divakaran, Omkar Garde, and Goutham Soratoor have worked in the movie as DOP, Associate Cinematographer, and

Associate Director, respectively.

"The government's handling of the situation and their attempts to conceal it from the public are well-known. So, we have shown exactly what went down and how helpless people were then," said Divakaran. He believes it

is important not to spoon-feed the audience and give them room to think for themselves.

Speaking about how SJU has shaped their craft and life, Garde said, "SJU set a foundation to uphold myself as an artist and provided me with great mentors, for whom I am forever grateful."

Marudhu Varadhan, their mentor, recalled how the students were always eager to learn, and all their college projects were done professionally. "They were very passionate and curious; therefore, seeing them blossom into well-appreciated filmmakers makes us proud. This gives us the greatest validation as a teacher," he said.

Tax regulations undergo overhaul

Kannika S

With the government coming up with a new system of pre-filled tax returns for small taxpayers and individuals, the taxpayers need to double-check the information on their tax returns and make sure that all income, deductions and exemptions are accurately reported, said Vagish CM, an official from the Income Tax Department.

New income tax regulations will come into effect on April 1st, and it's expected to bring major changes to India's tax-paying system. To streamline the tax code and boost taxpayer compliance, the Indian government has made several changes.

"To encourage saving and investment, the government has also introduced several new tax deductions. There are two of these: A deduction of up to 1.5 lakh for investments in certain long-term infrastructure bonds, and a deduction of up to 2.5 lakh for contributions to the National Pension System," said Vagish.

He further said that the goal of the new income tax laws is to increase the effectiveness of the tax system and make it simpler for taxpayers to comply with. The government hopes that the reforms will ultimately result in greater compliance and increased tax revenues, which can be used to finance essential public services and infrastructure.

A collaboration for innovation

Sreeja Deb

Campus: The East is the Eurofins, and the West is St Joseph's. The dreamer and the planner in the story of the collaboration with Eurofins are Fr Denzil E Lobo from SJU and S J Rajiv Malik on the other side. They are the ones with whom the university had the shortest corporate meeting to confirm the agreement, said Fr Dr S Xavier, the Director of Research at St Joseph's Research Institution.

At the Inaugural ceremony of the lab Eurofins held on Wednesday, Fr Dr Xavier

shared with the audience the journey of how SJU and Eurofins collaborated to set up an Advanced Analytical Chemistry Laboratory on campus.

Fr Dr Xavier explained how Arun Kumar, an employee of Eurofins, put forward the information about the Eurofins lab, which brought the first piece of good news to SJU. This led the way for the university to be equipped with top-notch laboratory facilities.

"The three individuals, Dr Victor Lobo, the Vice-

Chancellor, Fr Denzil E Lobo, the Pro-Vice chancellor, and Dr Melwin Colaco, the Registrar came together and took various paths to bring in Eurofins and make the collaboration a big success," added S Xavier.

As soon as the institution received approval from Eurofins, the MOU was signed within 15 days with the assistance of Fr Joy Rodrigues, Secretary and Treasurer of the Bangalore Jesuit Educational Society (BJES), he added.

Agrarian infra to combat poverty

Bibhash Kalita

Campus: The agriculture industry is one of the most significant industries in the world, and it can be a catalyst for economic advancements. Along with trade liberalisation, the upgrading of irrigation networks and rural infrastructure usher in sustainable economic development, said Dr Cao, the former minister of agriculture and rural development of Vietnam and a renowned agricultural scholar.

On March 29, Dr Cao delivered the fourth Foundation for Agrarian Studies (FAS) annual public lecture at the

SJU campus. The lecture, co-presented with the International Rice Research Institute, focused on agricultural sectoral management while emphasising policy development and its application in Vietnam.

In a bid to combat hunger, poverty, and malnutrition in underdeveloped nations, the FAS has been working tirelessly since its establishment in India. The organisation's annual public lecture series, which began in 2003, has provided a vital platform for discussions on agricultural studies, said Cao.