

In Jajpur 2 brothers missing in Kharasrota river



PNS ■ JAJPUR
Two youths went missing in the Kharasrota river at Jokadia under the Jajpur Road police station in Jajpur district on Thursday while taking bath.

According to reports, the two brothers were identified as Saswat Ranjan Swain (24) and Swastik (21), sons of Sekhar Chandra Swain of Sivanna Nagar Colony under the Jajpur Road police station.

Separate incidents in K'pada Youth drowns, woman goes missing

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA
A youth drowned and a woman went missing while taking bath in two separate incidents in Kendrapada district on Thursday.

In the first incident, Sebak Rath (23) of Talakusuma village under the Kudanagari police station in the district, drowned in the Chitroptala river while he had gone with his friends to take bath on the 12th-day rituals of his grandmother.

Locals informed police about the incident. Later, an ODRAF team reached the spot

and began a search operation. Till latest reports, the duo was untraceable.

Keonjhar man gets lifer for raping minor girl

PNS ■ KEONJHAR
The Keonjhar Fast Track Court Judge Bijay Kumar Mishra on Thursday sentenced one Anshuman Mohapatra to life imprisonment till death for raping a 12-year-old minor girl.

Headquarters Hospital through the Sakhi-One Step Centre for treatment. During the medical examination, she was found to be pregnant. During the counselling there, the girl narrated her ordeal.

Indigenous Tech Cruise Missile flight-tested

PNS ■ BALESWAR
The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted a successful flight-test of the Indigenous Technology Cruise Missile (ITCM) from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the coast of Odisha on Thursday.

This flight test has also established the reliable performance of the indigenous propulsion system developed by Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE), Bengaluru.



In Bargarh Grain collection meeting for Rabi season held

PNS ■ BARGARH
A district-level grain collecting committee led by district Collector Aditya Goyal met to plan grain collection for the Rabi season of 2023 to 2024.

centres and a toll-free helpline at the district headquarters have been established for farmers' complaints.

BJD, BJP candidates begin campaign in Pallahara

PNS ■ BALESWAR
The Assembly seat has been with BJD since 2009

had secured 40,980 votes (37.96%), Pradhan who remained in second position had secured 35,513 (32.90%). In 2014 elections, Mahes Sahu who switched over from BJP to BJD had won from the seat by getting 44,264 votes (34.59%) against close contestant BJP's Ashok Mohanty who secured 38,970 votes (30.46%).

its nominee for the Dhenkanal Parliament seat by giving ticket to a new face, Dr Abinash Samal, who is completely new in Pallahara and whose performance will largely depend on BJD's old organisation and CM Naveen Patnaik's charisma.

gress joining the party. Similarly, BJP has repeated old warhorse Ashok Mohanty for the Pallahara seat. Mohanty has launched a massive campaign in the area by meeting the village leaders.

On Ram Navami in Boudh Youth held for opening fire at Namajagnya member

PNS ■ BOUDH
Police have arrested a youth on the charge of firing gunshots at a Namajagnya member during a kirtan on the occasion of Ram Navami in Boudh district on Wednesday.

rupted the celebrations by opening fire. The incident reportedly took place around 10 pm. Hearing gunshots, the crowd dispersed, but Jani, one of the organising members, suffered serious injuries from the gun shot and collapsed.

Joblessness continues unabated from Manmohan to Modi era

One of the paradoxes of India's growth story after economic liberalisation has been growth of joblessness. At its peak during 2004-2009 when average GDP growth rate was 8.7%, the growth in employment was .1% only.

When NSSO came up with data that the overall unemployment is 6.11% (7.8% in Urban areas and 5.3% in rural areas), it was not allowed to publish the details. The figures were the highest since 1972-73.

force participation rate which had plummeted from 38.9% in 2000 to 24.5% in 2019 has now gone up to 32.8%.

generation has been only 1.7%. In fact, manufacturing which contributes 16% to the GDP accounts for only 12-14% of total employment.

equal work for equal pay for both men and women as per Article 39(d) of our Constitution. Besides, 40% of regular workers and 52% of the casual workers did not receive daily minimum wage of Rs 480 per day as per the Report.

port only 7% of the graduates are properly employable. The Report brings out how creation of training capacity in poor regions is particularly low and there is very low levels of socioeconomic inclusion.

In Keonjhar Man held for killing friend for Rs 100

PNS ■ KEONJHAR
Police arrested a man, Kiran Munda (25) on Thursday for killing his friend over Rs 100 at Kashiipur Munda Sahi under the Town police station in Keonjhar.

from a hotel. When Akshay did not return for a long time, Kiran went to his house and called him. There was a brawl between the two. Suddenly, Kiran hit Akshay on his head with a big stone and fled from the spot. The latter died on the spot.

In Kandhamal UTP dies during treatment; kin allege torture

PNS ■ PHULBANI
An under-trial prisoner (UTP), Abhiram Dugal, who had surrendered in the District Judge Court in Phulbani, died allegedly in custody on Wednesday.

good health; so, it was surprising as to how he died. A proper investigation would unearth the truth and the guilty must be punished, he said.

In Kendrapada Mechanic stabbed to death; accused held

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA
One Akshaya Kumar Khatua (38) of Tala Saranga village under the Sadar police station was stabbed to death by a mentally unstable youth at Town Balarampur under the Town police station in Kendrapada on Thursday.

Suddenly, Aditya left the place and returned with a knife. He stabbed Akshaya several times. Hearing his screams, locals rushed to the spot and managed to overpower Aditya.



SATYA NARAYAN MISRA
unemployment that confronts the youth in India today.

Data on unemployment is a vexatious issue in India. This is understandable as close to 90% of the working population work in the informal sector, data of which is not captured by NSSO.

It has recovered to 55.2% by 2023, largely due to higher labour engagement in the agricultural sector. It also brings out how the female labour

The Report brings out the trends in education and profile of youth employment and brings up interesting evidence. It brings out how compared to 2000 when the illiteracy rate was 29.55%, the rate has gone down to 5.4% in 2022 and those with higher secondary education and graduates has gone up to 43.6% and 14.7% respectively.

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Official sources informed that the total number of voters registered in the 2019 elections was 9,04,099 which has now gone up to 9,55,710, registering an increase of 51,611 new voters.

Jagatsinghpur district spreads over four Assembly constituencies. The number of voters as per the final electoral roll in Paradip is 2,188,93, which is 2,48,241 in Tirtol, 2,69,214 in Balikuda-Erasama and 2,19,362 in Jagatsinghpur.

INDIA Bloc leaders resorting to politics of abuse, intimidation: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday charged that leaders of the Congress and other INDIA bloc constituents are resorting to politics of “abuse and intimidation,” and urged the Election Commission to take suo motu cognisance of their recent remarks and act against them. Shehzad Poonawalla, the party’s national spokesperson, said during a press conference at the BJP headquarters that Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Nazrul Islam recently “openly” threatened to “bury” Prime Minister Narendra Modi “400 feet below”.

“Nazrul Islam, a leader of the JMM and the ‘INDI Alliance’, has insulted the country’s ‘jana shakti (people’s power)’ by threatening to kill and bury the prime minister, who has been elected by the people of the country,” Poonawalla said. The JMM leader’s remark shows the “mindset” of the opposition’s INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) bloc, he charged. “The Election Commission should take suo motu cognisance of Nazrul Islam’s remarks and take action against him immediately,” the BJP leader said. “This politics of abuse, insult and intimidation is not a coin-



cidence but a well thought out plan (of the opposition). Two days ago, a Congress candidate had talked about killing Modi by saying that he would come (win the election) and Modi would die,” Poonawalla charged. Islam on Wednesday apologised for making a derogatory statement against Modi and said his remark was not intended to hurt anyone. “During a political speech, I was speaking against the prime minister’s claim of winning 400 seats. I intended to say that they (BJP-led NDA) would not get 400 seats and they would be out of power,” the JMM leader said in a video statement. The BJP’s Jharkhand unit on

Tuesday demanded a high-level probe and the arrest of Islam for his remarks against Modi. Taking on the Congress, Poonawalla alleged that Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar recently threatened residents of a housing society that they would not get water supply if they did not vote for his brother D K Suresh. Earlier, Karnataka Minister D Sudhakar had “threatened” that a special grant of Rs 25 crore would not be provided if the people did not vote for the Congress candidate, Poonawalla alleged. “Will people be threatened like this? DK Shivakumar gave an

open threat. It’s a clear violation of the model code of conduct, Representation of the People Act,” the BJP leader said and added, “The Election Commission should take suo motu cognisance of it and take the strictest action against DK Shivakumar and the other Karnataka minister.” The BJP’s Karnataka unit on Monday filed a complaint with the Election Commission against Sudhakar for alleged violation of the model code of conduct for his comment during a speech at the Nayakanahatti village of Chitradurga district, promising a special grant of Rs 25 crore from the chief minister.

Mamata responsible for violence on Ram Navami in Bengal: Malviya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee should be held to account for failing to protect Bengali Hindus, the BJP said on Thursday, holding her responsible for the violence during Ram Navami celebrations in Murshidabad district. The BJP’s reaction comes after Banerjee, who heads the Trinamool Congress, claimed that the violence was “pre-planned” and accused the BJP of orchestrating it ahead of polling for the Lok Sabha elections. The seven-phase polls starts on Friday and West Bengal will vote in all the phases -- April 19, April 26, May 7, May 13, May 20, May 25 and June 1. Counting of votes will be taken up on June 4. “Bengal is falling apart and Mamata Banerjee is responsi-



widespread rioting in Murshidabad, now devotees of Shri Ram targeted in Egra, Medinipur.” “BJP karyakartas (workers) will gherao the Egra police station to protest the brutal attack on the Ramanavami Shobha Yatra,” he said. Chief Minister Banerjee on Thursday alleged that the BJP instigated violence during Ram Navami celebrations in the state. “Everything was pre-planned. The DIG (deputy inspector general of police) of Murshidabad was removed a day ahead of Ram Navami so that you (the BJP) can carry out violence,” she said at an election rally in Raiganj Lok Sabha constituency. The chief minister also claimed that goons associated with the BJP roughed up police personnel in the district. Malviya claimed that “after

Congress standing by Naxals for votes: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday alleged the Congress is advocating for Naxals for votes as it has sensed its defeat in the Lok Sabha elections. Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, party national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla alleged that Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete on Wednesday described Naxals killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh as “martyrs” and raised questions over the action against the extremists. Security personnel gunned down 29 Naxals in Kanker, Chhattisgarh on Tuesday, in the biggest encounter ever in the state which has been facing the Naxal menace for the

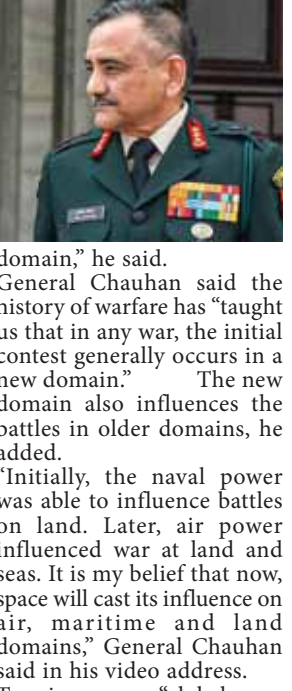


our security forces,” he charged. “Supriya Shrinete described the Naxals as martyrs and expressed sympathy for them. The Congress leader said that a thorough probe should be conducted into this (operation),” Poonawalla said as he played a video clip of Shrinete’s comments. The BJP leader said that Shrinete exposed the real face of the opposition INDIA bloc. “Congress leaders are advocating for Naxals as they are losing in the elections. They are not hesitant to stand by terrorists while opposing (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi,” Poonawalla said. The number of fatalities in Tuesday’s operation was the highest suffered by Naxals in a single encounter in the history of Chhattisgarh’s fight against Left Wing Extremism (LWE).

Space established domain of warfare, says CDS Chauhan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Underlining the growing importance of space, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan said here on Thursday he believes that space is already an established domain of warfare and it will “cast its influence” on air, maritime and land domains. Making this assertion in a recorded video address that was played at the inaugural session of the three-day Indian Defence Space Symposium. General Chauhan also said that “space diplomacy” will soon become a reality. Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Chairman Samir V Kamat and other senior officers of the armed forces attended the event held at the Manekshaw Centre here. In his address, General Chauhan underlined the role of space evolving in future warfare. “I will touch upon where we are and where we need to go,” he said. “Space is called the final frontier. Space is infinite in its expanse and is also expanding. Like all other frontiers, it is difficult to define its edges very clearly. Mankind has a long way to go to unravel the mystery of space. India wants to be part of that journey,” the CDS said. He also spoke about the four “cosmonauts under training” as part of India’s “Gaganyaan” programme. “Space is also referred to as an emerging domain of warfare. I believe that it is already an established domain of warfare. My belief is premised on the fast-paced development occurring in this particular



All women crew from tri services ends sailing expedition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A tri-services all-women crew has completed a nearly four-week rigorous sailing expedition under challenging circumstances in the Arabian Sea as a precursor to an arduous blue-water voyage around the world. The crew comprising 12 women officers from the Indian Army, Navy, and the Indian Air Force carried the voyage to prepare for the global circumnavigation competition scheduled to take place in September, officials said on Thursday. The crew embarked on the journey under the banner of the Army Adventure Wing and the Army Aqua Nodal

Centre of the College of Military Engineering, they said. The voyage, which is a precursor to a much more challenging global circumnavigation competition, spanned over 27 days and tested their endurance and skills in some of the most demanding maritime conditions, an Army official said. “The successful completion of this expedition by the all-women crew highlights the capabilities and potential of women officers in leading and executing complex and challenging missions,” he said. The training expedition is formally culminating on Friday with a voyage from Mumbai to Lakshadweep and back. The women sailors have



collectively logged more than 6000 nautical miles of training already. The crew is preparing themselves for ‘Around the World Sailing Competition’ that is

set to mark a significant milestone in India’s military history, the official said. During their expedition, the women sailors navigated through varying wind condi-

tions, sweltering heat, and choppy waters, showcasing not only their physical prowess but also their mental fortitude and teamwork, said another official. The journey was broken down into four legs, each presenting unique challenges and learning opportunities for the crew, strengthening their capabilities for the upcoming global circumnavigation challenge, he said. “This expedition is not just about marking geographical milestones but also breaking cultural and gender barriers. The initiative celebrates ‘Nari Shakti’ (women power) and emphasises the importance of inclusivity and diversity,” the official said. “As the team prepares for

their global journey in the coming months, their story is already inspiring many across the nation and the world, showing that with resilience and determination, barriers can be broken, and new paths can be forged,” he said. The official further adds: “This historic journey not only exemplifies the spirit of adventure but also underscores the significance of fostering inclusivity and diversity within maritime and military endeavours.” The flagging-in ceremony, to be held on Friday evening at Marve in Mumbai, will celebrate the achievements of the courageous women sailors, who have collectively logged more than 6,000 nautical miles of training, he said.

DRDO successfully conducts flight test of desi cruise missile

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a fillip to self-reliance in niche missile technology, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on Thursday conducted a successful flight-test of Indigenous Technology Cruise Missile (ITCM) from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the coast of Odisha. Giving details, defence ministry officials said here during the test, all subsystems performed as per expectation. The missile performance was monitored by several Range Sensors like Radar, Electro Optical Tracking System (EOTS) and Telemetry deployed by ITR at different locations to ensure complete coverage of the flight path. The flight of the missile was also monitored from the Su-30-Mk-1 aircraft of the Indian Air Force. The missile followed the desired path using way point navigation and demonstrated very low altitude sea-skimming flight. This successful flight test has also established the reliable performance of the indigenous propulsion system developed by Gas Turbine Research

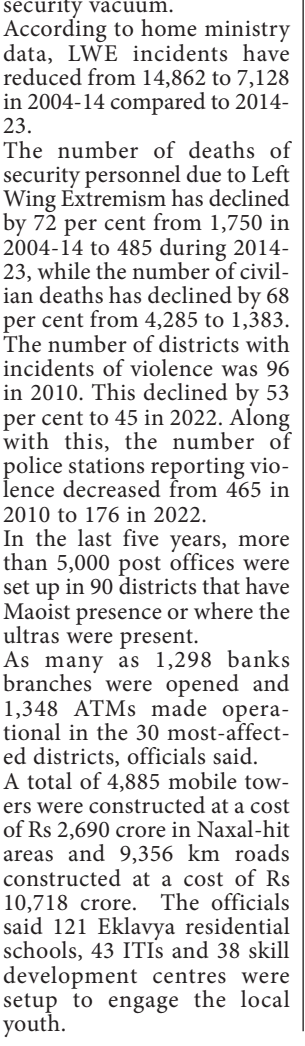


Establishment (GTRE), Bengaluru. The missile is also equipped with advanced avionics and software to ensure better and reliable performance. The missile is developed by Bengaluru-based DRDO laboratory Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) along with contribution from other laboratories and Indian industries. The test was witnessed by many senior scientists from various DRDO laboratories along with the representatives from the production partner. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the DRDO for the successful flight-test and stated that successful development of indigenous long range subsonic cruise missile powered by indigenous propulsion is a major milestone for Indian defence research and development.

At least 80 Naxals killed, 125 arrested, 150 surrendered since January in Chhattisgarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

At least 80 Naxals have been killed and more than 125 arrested while 150 have surrendered in this year so far in Chhattisgarh, where 29 ultras were gunned down two days ago in a fierce encounter with security forces, officials said on Thursday. Left Wing Extremism-related violence has declined in the country by 52 per cent and the number of deaths by 69 per cent from 6,035 to 1,868 in 2014-23 compared to 2004-14, according to Union home ministry data. Since the formation of the Vishnu Deo Sai government in Chhattisgarh in December 2023, pro-active operations have been carried out and, as a result, at least 80 Naxals have been eliminated and more than 125 arrested while 150 have surrendered since January, an official said. Late last year, following a detailed review of the security situation in Naxal-affected states, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had directed security forces to carry out operations against Maoists proactively. Shah’s direction led to the formation of a high-powered committee, the members of which included director generals of police, director gen-



erals of the Central Reserve Police Force, the Border Security Forces, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police and the Intelligence Bureau, and other officials of the anti-Maoist grid. The result of the pro-active action against Naxals is now visible on the ground, the official said. On Tuesday, security personnel gunned down 29 Naxalites, including some senior members, in Chhattisgarh’s Kanker district in the biggest ever encounter in the state. This was the highest number of fatalities suffered by Maoists in a single encounter in the history of the state’s fight against Left Wing Extremism (LWE). Three security personnel suffered injuries in the fierce gun-battle that also led to a large quantity of weapons being seized. Security forces started setting up camps in Maoist-dominated areas since 2014. More than 250 such camps were set

Before booking tourist vehicle, check it is not requisitioned by EC for polls

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

If you’ve eagerly planned your All-India trip through a tour operator during the upcoming Lok Sabha polls slated for Friday, it’s prudent to verify in advance whether the vehicle you’ve booked has been requisitioned by the Election Commission for polling officials. This precautionary step ensures that your travel plans remain uninterrupted amidst the electoral activities. In fact, the tour operators in the country particularly those catering inbound tourists ie foreign travelers are already in a jittery mode as polls kick off from Friday. They feel that deployment of their vehicles such as taxis or cars by the Election Commission (EC) at the centre and the States in the last moment to ferry polling officials to the booths and for ancillary tasks for voting days and consequent shortage causes disruption in the seamless services as they have to arrange alternate vehicles. On their behalf, the All India Tour Operators (IATO), the national body of the tourism industry has appealed to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar to exempt tourist vehicles with All India Tourism Permits for election-related deployment, emphasising the impact on tourism services and the risk of legal reper-

ussions. “We have written to Rajiv Kumar, Chief Election Commissioner for exemption of All India Tourism Permit Tourist vehicles from deployment of Lok Sabha / State Elections and guidelines to be issued and other suggestions,” said Ravi Gosain, Vice President of the IATO. During the election period, on the orders of Election Commissioner/District Collectors/District Magistrates or any other authorized Government officials, all tourist vehicles, having All India Tourist Permit are deployed for election duties across the country. This means that our members who have committed to providing services to the tourists are not able to provide them the services as per the contract, which causes a lot of problems and tarnishes the image of our country. This also may result in legal action against the tour operators by the foreign tourists for not providing the contracted services, Gosain, who also owns ERCO Travels Pvt. Ltd, told The Pioneer. “We understand that vehicles are required for election-related tasks but indiscriminate requisitioning of vehicles will cause inconvenience to many tourists. This does not bode well for the sector,” he added. “Many tourists have already booked accommodations and finalised their itineraries. If a large chunk of vehicles is withdrawn for election purposes, tourists will face inconveniences,” added Rajnish Kaistha, Senior Vice President of the IATO. As the tourism industry strives to rebound post-Covid-19, any shortage of vehicles during the peak travel season could pose significant challenges. “Many tourists are now booking and an inflow of tourists has started. If there is a shortage of vehicles for tourists during the forthcoming season, it would be another challenge for the industry. Of course the EC pays for the services,” said Kaistha, founder of the Paradise Holidays (I) Pvt. Ltd. Tour operators commonly utilize all kinds of vehicles including SUVs and sedans to ferry travelers to various destinations for sightseeing purposes. The IATO has also appealed to the Union Tourism Ministry to ensure that ASI/State monuments remain accessible to tourists during the election period, recognizing the significance of monument visits in tourist itineraries.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Time bomb

Currently at 1.44 billion, India's population may double in 77 years unless we curb the trend

India stands at a pivotal juncture in its demographic journey; its population already surpassing China's to reach a staggering 1.44 billion. The prospect of this number potentially doubling within 77 years presents a formidable challenge. True, India's burgeoning population holds the promise of a significant demographic dividend: A youthful workforce, if equipped with the right skills and opportunities, can be the driver for economic growth, innovation and productivity. With appropriate investments in education, healthcare and employment opportunities, India has the potential to emerge as an economic powerhouse. But this is easier said than done. Alongside the opportunities, India also grapples with formidable challenges stemming from its rapid population growth. The strain on resources and infrastructure is palpable, with sectors like healthcare, education, housing and transportation already stretched thin. Overpopulation exacerbates the demand for food, water, energy and housing, leading to environmental degradation and perpetuating socio-economic disparities.



Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach. First of all, there must be a concerted effort to invest in human capital. Education and healthcare must be prioritised to empower individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate meaningfully in economy. Mercifully, our population growth rate is showing a downward trend. To arrest the spiralling growth, a comprehensive population strategy is urgently needed, but the nation does not have any such plan. One reason could be that any attempt to control the population would be highly unpopular. Indira Gandhi, along with Sanjay Gandhi, tried it in the 1970s which eventually led to her downfall. All political parties also learnt their lesson. Of course, we are no China and no coercive measures should be taken but the Government can make concerted efforts to reward family planning and penalise large family sizes. Comprehensive programmes aimed at empowering individuals, especially women, about reproductive health and contraception can help stabilise population growth. Furthermore, investments in sectors such as healthcare, sanitation, transportation and housing are necessary to meet the needs of the growing population. Sustainable development practices must be embraced to mitigate environmental degradation. Job creation is also paramount for managing population growth effectively. Policies that promote entrepreneurship, attract investments and support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises can help generate employment opportunities. Gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives that enhance access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities are essential. Empowered women are more likely to make informed choices about family planning, leading to smaller family sizes and improved maternal and child health outcomes. There is no dearth of solutions but the big question is, who will bell the cat?

PICTALK



Foreign tourists during celebrations of World Heritage Day at the Agra Fort, in Agra. PTI

How justified is abusive language on OTT?

The impact of abusive language on societal norms is profound; content creators must deliver realistic but responsible content

The Over-the-Top (OTT) platform has revolutionised India's entertainment landscape and has created a niche for itself among audiences. It is considered to be progressive, realistic, has variety and also caters to the needs of all age groups. However, there has been a lot of noise about the proliferation of abusive language in many of the web series that have raised a lot of general and even legal objections. Recently the Supreme Court (March 2024) has given its verdict that the use of abusive language on OTT cannot be regarded as a criminal offence, as it would lead to an infringement of free speech and violate artistic creativity. This leaves us with an open debate about whether under the guise of freedom of speech, we can use foul language that may be affecting the cultural values of people.



The use of abusive language in OTT content shapes how audiences perceive the characters, themes and overall tenor of the content. It may add authenticity to certain narratives or characters. If nothing else, it has become a fashion statement and is more saleable. It can be categorised as a demerit good with a high order of negative externality. Undoubtedly, the onus of the use of such language in society does not lie on OTT, it reflects something already present, but it has certainly contributed to making it more prominent. Some viewers avoid using such foul language, as they consider it to be morally incorrect and undignified. After all, what is the use of good education, if it does not teach us to differentiate between decent and indecent?

With the explosion of cuss words on OTT, even this section of society is affected. The young generation, at tender ages, is exposed to such language and easily gets influ-

enced by it. It can become pervasive in everyday usage, hindering effective articulation of thoughts and ideas and challenging the professional and academic standards. It can be detrimental to social interactions and emotional well-being, hampering overall personality development. Simply providing a statutory warning of the content not suitable for a certain age, does not complete the responsibility of the makers. With the availability of the internet and its easy access via gadgets in every home, it is practically not possible to refrain kids from watching such content every time. With the nuclear family setups and working parents' culture gaining strength, it becomes even more difficult. We in India have reformed the education system with the introduction of the National Education Policy and Indian Knowledge System. It thrives on providing a high-quality education system rooted in Indian ethos contributing to transforming India into a value-based superpower. So, while at one place when we are trying to imbibe and revive our rich heritage, at the

same time, we are defending, if not promoting, the use of indecent language. We have a zero-tolerance policy against abuse in educational institutes, but a child tends to learn from the overall environment of which OTT is presently an unavoidable part. Besides, another aspect of the foul language on OTT incorporates gender-specific derogatory terms, predominantly objectifying women. Indian society has always given a special place to women and their role is spread across the cultural, economic and spiritual fabric of our society. The worship of goddesses reflects the deep-rooted respect and reverence for women in our culture. Undeniably, women are behind building the strong-rooted edifice of values and ethics, the society does not feel any responsibility to uphold their dignity. A good and progressive social environment is one where individuals feel respected, secure and valued.

(The author is an assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)



KAJLEEN KAUR

The enduring ties between India and Iran



BHOPINDER SINGH

Amid geopolitical complexities, India finds itself navigating a delicate balance between Iran, Israel and its domestic constituencies

Persians have had a civilisational connection with Hindustan (Persian for India) since antiquity. There is a powerful India connect, even for the most epochal person defining the politics of the post-Iran Revolution (1979) i.e., Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. His paternal grandfather, Seyed Ahmad Musavi 'Hindi', was born in Kintoor, near Lucknow. Musavi was to leave Awadh and settle in Khomein but was popularly known as 'Hindi' in Persia! Later, 'Hindi' was to be the pen name for Ruhollah Khomeini's poetry. In India itself, Shiite dynasties flourished as refugees escaping persecution from Arab-Sunni strains settled and thrived in Deccan, Rampur, Awadh, Bengal etc., with Lucknow emerging as the epicentre of Indian Shi'ism. Unlike the Middle East, the sectarian tensions were relatively less as the Gazetteer of Gilgit Agency noted, "Wherever Sunnis and Shias are found living together, they seem to practice a mutual tolerance rare in other Muhammadan communities. Except in Chilas and the Indus valley below or, there is, generally speaking, a complete absence of fanaticism". But, times changed and polemical writings of supremacist and sectarian assertions increased, causing bloody rift and polarisation. Soon, even in India the numerically lesser Shias were harassed by the substantially larger Sunni populace, leaving only pockets of Lucknow and Kargil area to have Shias in majority, as other enclaves were predominantly Sunni dominated. 'Shiaphobia' acquired even more sinister propulsion in neighbouring Pakistan and the air of the Sunni-Shia divide soon acquired political/sovereign overtones with Iran emerging as the transnational voice of Shiite sensibilities. The Ummah (Muslim world) got divided into two broad 'blobs' on sectarian lines and the shadows of Iran-versus-Arab Sheikdoms undercurrents played out violently in areas with mixed populations e.g., Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, Pakistan and even so in India, though the sectarian tensions were not so pronounced here. This unique phenomenon of the relative security, freedom



and thriving of Shias in India (where their percentage was in a similar minority to many other Islamic countries with the Sunni majority) did not go unnoticed in Tehran. India was a rare haven for Shias in modern times and Iran reciprocated the same by occasionally taking a pro-India stand on platforms like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). That the fate of minority Shias in Pakistan was particularly beleaguered, made Tehran adopt pro-Delhi postures as geopolitical quid pro quo. As the Arab Sheikdoms were particularly close to the Pakistanis during the Cold War, Iran acted on the rebound by deepening relations with India. But the inevitable consequences of the Iranian Revolution and the need for it to take more puritanical stances and aspire to take over Ummah leadership from Saudi-led Sheikdoms led to it occasionally striking contradictory postures on issues like Kashmir et al. But situational and sectarian angularity ensured that both Iran and India were on the same side in sensitive theatres like Afghanistan, opposing the Pakistan-led Taliban forces. However, at the same time, India was recalibrating its relations by cosyng up to both the United States of America and Israel, strategically. The cost of Delhi's engagement with Washington and Tel Aviv led



INTERESTINGLY, BOTH ISRAEL AND IRAN HAVE STRONG CONSTITUENCIES WITHIN THEIR NARRATIVES THAT CAN CONVINC THEIR POWERS-THAT-BE OF INDIA'S 'LARGER COMPULSIONS'

to sticky situations like India stopping oil purchases from Iran owing to US-imposed sanctions, as well as stuttering on strategic projects like Chabahar Port. Yet all along there was always an unsaid understanding between Delhi and Tehran of the other's compulsions leading it to be forced into certain decisions — the bilateral trust and intent were rarely questioned. While India's drift towards 'majoritarian' politics led to natural concerns within the Ummah (even though Sheikdoms were officially bonding frenetically owing to India's emergence on the global highway), the local dynamism for Shias remained protected with the ruling political persuasion co-opting the Shias, actively. Both during the 2014 and 2019 General Elections, prominent Shia leaders in Lucknow actively supported the winning dispensation. Again, it didn't go unnoticed in Iran which remains hypersensitive to the fate of Shias across the world. India was an honourable exception in terms of its treatment of the minority Shias. This undeniable reality helped nuanze the parallel (and unprecedented) outreach of Delhi with the capitals of Sheikdoms and Tel Aviv. Today, when the Israel-Palestine war has metastasised into dragging Iran into the conflict, picking sides for Delhi becomes tricky. The

template of 'strategic independence' (used in the Russia-Ukraine conflict) could be afforded to this conflict which conjoins morality with practicality to take a deliberately mealy-mouthed position that offends none and yet genuinely beseeches peace. Delhi would know about the latent and conflated emotions of the Indian Muslims on the conflict, especially for the Shias when it comes to Iran. From the electoral lens, the dispensation recognises its investment in the Shias and Pasmenda (a backward caste) but the situation does get complex with Israel in the admixture, as that has a similar resonance in the 'majoritarian' calculus as a valorised counterweight to Pan-Islamism. Israel often gets lionised disproportionately and morality becomes increasingly irrelevant. Interestingly both Israel and Iran have strong constituencies within their narrative that can convince their powers-that-be of India's 'larger compulsions'. It is these powerful backdoor channels, civilisational bonhomie and calibrated diplomates that must be deployed as both countries are vital to India's future. India needs to prioritise peace over binary choices.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Chhattisgarh encounter aftermath



propos the news article, "Chhattisgarh encounter leaves 29 Naxals dead", published on April 17, this is my response. In the dense forests of Chhattisgarh, where at least 29 Naxals were neutralised, including the top leaders, Shankar Rao and Lalita, divisional committee members of the CPI (Maoist)'s North Bastar Division. This clash, occurring just days before the Lok Sabha polls in Bastar, signifies the ongoing battle against insurgency in the region. More than 60,000 security personnel have been deployed in the district to oversee the electoral

process. This is the highest casualty suffered by the Maoists in a single incident since 2018 when 37 of them were killed in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district. The Maoist rebels may have had reasons to hold a grudge against the government, but their romantic notion of revolution is misplaced because they'll never succeed in displacing the Government or creating their own Communist paradise in Bastar, or any other region of the country. So yes, they'll probably try to continue their usual attacks, but with the continued, concerted push by the security forces into their strongholds, those attacks will become fewer and far between. We have lacs of military and other security personnel but still, activity is not controlled. Adivasi have their livelihood in the jungle. Government cannot replace them in the name of development. However, I think Maoists' best bet would be to put down their arms and try to effect change through the ballot box.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

quences in the region and the world. West Asia is often termed as the energy basket of the globe due to its potential to produce oils. Many important sea trade routes connecting Asia to other parts of the world also go through this region. Any direct war between Tehran and Tel Aviv can pause oil supply and disrupt the sea routes. The war can also pull other regional powers into it. Global organisations and leaders should mediate between the countries and convince them to avoid future intensifications of conflict. The leaders of both Iran and Israel should also stop provoking each other. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza also needs to be stopped immediately as it is the root cause behind the conflict in the region.

Deba Prasad Nayak | Dhenkanal

TOO MUCH IS TOO BAD

Madam — Apropos the news article, "RCB Maxwell takes a mental and physical break from IPL 2024", published on April 17, this is my response. Many players from

the ongoing IPL have been playing all three game formats almost continuously throughout the year, so their endurance limit, patience and love for the game must be appreciated. The saying, "Eat cricket, talk cricket, sleep cricket" is highly suitable in their case. But too much of anything is too bad in many ways. It wrecks their physical and mental health, playing becomes mechanical & casual, keeps them away for longer periods from their family, spectators will be bored to see the same faces again and again etc. Further cricket became a profession and business, no more a gentleman's game played leisurely and IPL affected the way test cricket is played and reduced its popularity and the number of spectators in the stadiums watching it. No other game has reached such a situation as that of cricket. It is time to restrict the amount of cricket played for its good.

O Prasad Rao | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

A VISION FOR INDIA'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

The BJP manifesto focuses on strategy to make India a champion of Global South



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) unveiled its election manifesto earlier this week, opting for a departure from the conventional strategy of enticing voters with freebies and subsidies. Instead, the manifesto takes on the guise of a policy document, delineating the achievements of the PM Modi administration over the past decade and pledging to propel India into a developed economy within the next 25 years. Notably absent from the document is any significant mention of Pakistan, a focal point of India's foreign policy for years, in either the BJP manifesto or the Prime Minister's interviews.

The manifesto underscores the government's emphasis on foreign policy, echoing the strategic vision cultivated during India's G20 presidency. It celebrates India's emergence onto the global stage, exemplified by the unanimous consensus achieved for the New Delhi Declaration, a feat accomplished amidst doubts about US-Russia concordance. Prime Minister Modi elucidated his approach in an interview, emphasising the imperative of working towards global good without personal reservations, a principle that guided India's diplomatic endeavours.

In delineating the government's foreign policy outlook, Prime Minister Modi reiterated the cornerstone principles of "Neighbour First" and "Act East" since assuming office. The Act East policy has extended India's influence into the ASEAN region, fostering positive perceptions even among nations geographically distant. India's proactive assistance to neighbours during crises, such as earthquake relief in Nepal and aiding Sri Lanka during times of turmoil, exemplifies its commitment to regional solidarity.



The manifesto boasts of the safe repatriation of 1.5 crore distressed Indian citizens and positions India as a vocal advocate for the Global South, a central tenet of its foreign policy stance. Technological innovations like the Digital India stack, including UPI, have amplified India's presence on global platforms, albeit challenges persist in enhancing the acceptability of the Indian rupee in international trade. The document briefly touches upon India's burgeoning focus on the Indo-Pacific, a region of strategic interest for major global players and pledges to safeguard navigation rights and maritime security.

Under Modi's leadership, the manifesto pledges to bolster India's standing as a champion of the Global South, leveraging the Prime Minister's 5S approach of respect, dialogue, cooperation, peace and prosperity. It articulates aspirations for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and vows to enhance collaboration within the Indo-Pacific region to foster mutual growth and security.

Furthermore, the manifesto underscores the importance of securing critical minerals essential for the digital age, signalling intentions to forge partnerships with friendly nations to integrate India more deeply into global supply chains. In sum, the BJP's manifesto serves as a testament to continuity in India's foreign policy objectives, underlining a commitment to advancing the nation's interests on the global stage.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Sustainability through global collaboration



RAJDEEP PATHAK

President Dennis Francis, at the helm of the 78th UN General Assembly session, champions sustainability as pivotal to economic advancement

While the news of increasing temperatures in the Capital City of Delhi in the coming weeks and months hit the headlines, in a resounding affirmation of the symbiotic relationship between sustainability and economic progress, President Dennis Francis (heading the 78th session of the UN General Assembly), recently in an exclusive interview with PTI, unequivocally asserted that the pursuit of sustainability stands as the cornerstone of 21st-century development endeavours. He also emphasised the imperative of integrating sustainability into the fabric of global advancement. Dennis Francis is all set to inaugurate the "Sustainability Week" at the United Nations headquarters scheduled from April 15-19, 2024. Under the overarching theme of "Paving the Way for a Sustainable Future," this landmark event will spotlight pivotal sectors such as tourism, infrastructure connectivity, transportation, energy and debt, dedicating its discourse to the multifaceted dimensions of sustainability in each domain.

In this PTI exclusive, President Francis outlines a strategic focus on key economic sectors — tourism, transportation, infrastructure, energy and debt management — to drive transformative sustainability. He highlights challenges like climate change, energy security and debt entrapment, emphasising their nexus with poverty, education, housing and national security. Francis further underscores sustainability as both a moral imperative and a catalyst for equitable global progress, envisioning judicious decisions in these realms as key to profound shifts towards a sustainable future.

During the upcoming 'Sustainability Week', Dennis will host a series of high-level events including debates on 'debt sustainability' and 'socio-economic equality'; discussions on 'tourism and sustainable transport', an informal dialogue on 'global resilience through infrastructure connectivity' and a stocktaking session for the completion of the 'UN Decade of Sustainable Energy for All' - all aimed at advancing the implementation of SDG 7 for sustainable development.

Dennis (in the interview) fervently promotes the fusion of sustainability and economic advancement, underscoring their intrinsic interdependence for societal well-being. He advocates for a transformative approach toward sustainable lifestyles, condemning antiquated resource exploitation methods exacerbating climate instability. He envisions a future where profitability harmonises with environmental stewardship, fostering equity and resilience. 'Sustainability Week' precedes the 'Summit of the Future', to instil sustainability as a collective imperative for safeguarding resources for posterity. He further emphasised the pressing requirement to refocus endeavours on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which saw a setback in target achievement because of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts. 'Sustainability Week' aims to revive dedication to impactful measures, crucial for reorienting the SDGs towards their intended trajectory.

Through collective action, the aim should be to uplift communities, inspire hope and advance the global agenda for sustainability and equity. The need is to empower communities, foster optimism and promote sustainability and equity worldwide.



Governments, communities and organisations per se are uniting to tackle environmental challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss and renewable energy promotion. For example, in Scandinavia, countries like Denmark have been leaders in wind energy production, investing heavily in offshore wind farms and renewable energy infrastructure. Denmark's commitment to sustainability has led to a significant reduction in carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels. Moreover, in Southeast Asia, Singapore pioneers innovative strategies to address river and ocean waste, utilising advanced wastewater treatment and strict plastic regulations, effectively curbing marine pollution. Meanwhile, Africa's 'Great Green Wall' initiative fights desertification in the bio-geographical Sahel region by planting trees and promoting sustainable land management, revitalising degraded landscapes and fostering biodiversity.

Across Latin America, Costa Rica exemplifies biodiversity conservation through national parks and eco-tourism, fostering sustainable development while preserving its rich natural heritage, resulting in both environmental protection and economic prosperity. Some of these diverse efforts demonstrate global commitment to environmental management, enhancing resilience and also safeguarding ecosystems for future generations. India's proactive stance towards achieving the SDGs is evident through multifaceted commitments across sectors. Initiatives like the 'National Solar Mission' and 'Jal Jeevan Mission', 'National Health Mission', etc., highlight the resolve to tackle environmental challenges. India further aims to generate great renewable energy capacity, emphasising reduced reliance on fossil fuels. Water conservation programs such as rainwater harvesting and the

'Jal Jeevan Mission' underscore India's dedication to ensuring water security, aiming to provide piped water supply to all households by 2024. This commitment is reinforced by experts like waterman, Rajendra Singh and CEO of Centre for Science and Environment, Sunita Narain, who stress the importance of renewable energy and community-driven water conservation efforts. Additionally, India's sustainability efforts extend to biodiversity conservation, rural development, healthcare, education, waste management and gender equality, exemplified by schemes like MGNREGA and Ayushman Bharat. Dr. Vandana Shiva emphasises that sustainability encompasses socio-economic factors, with India's inclusive policies striving to create a more equitable and resilient society through integrated policymaking. It may be noted that India initiated its climate action journey in 2009 by pledging to decrease emissions intensity by 20-25 per cent by 2020, achieving a commendable 24 per cent reduction. Subsequently aligning with the Paris Agreement, India outlined its 'Nationally Determined Contributions' in 2015, aiming for a 33-35 per cent emissions intensity reduction by 2030. Additional goals include enhancing non-fossil fuel energy generation, expanding carbon sinks and targeting 'NET ZERO' emissions by 2070. National efforts are reinforced by initiatives such as the 'National Action Plan on Climate Change' and the 'National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change', focusing on renewable energy, sustainable habitat and adaptation strategies. As per media reports, by April 2023, India had made substantial progress toward 14 of the 33 SDGs, with improvements in neonatal and under-five mortality; sanitation

and electricity access. Challenges like adolescent pregnancy, clean cooking fuel and water facilities persist. Legislative amendments promoting renewable energy and carbon credit trading, along with initiatives such as the 'Green Hydrogen Mission', highlight India's commitment to sustainability. "Business Today" report of August 25, 2023, suggests that these efforts, coupled with the implementation of the 'Sustainable Development Goals National Indicator Framework', positioned India as a global leader in sustainability, as reflected in its ranking in the 'Climate Change Performance Index', indicating promising future progress.

India has implemented various environmental conservation initiatives like the 'Swachh Bharat Mission' 'Namami Gange', etc., along with legislative measures such as the 'Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act' and so on. The introduction of the 'Sustainable Development Goals National Indicator Framework' by the National Statistics Office in 2023 signifies efforts to monitor progress. However, despite advancements in climate action, financing SDGs remains a challenge. Proactive measures, integrating sustainability into policymaking and engaging communities are essential for achieving the ambitious 2030 SDG targets globally, ensuring equity and resilience. The imperative for proactive engagement by dedicated and committed citizens, not only within India but globally, underscores the exigency of collective action. Such involvement is paramount in addressing contemporary challenges, necessitating concerted efforts on a global scale. The choice is ours — perish or preserve.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)



INDIA'S SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS EXTEND TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY, EXEMPLIFIED BY SCHEMES LIKE MGNREGA AND AYUSHMAN BHARAT

Corruption and political defections: A telltale sign of democratic decay

The electoral arithmetic, rather than the principles of righteousness, often dictates the trajectory of political decisions

Last week, while flitting through the contents of a leading daily newspaper in India, an interesting article caught hold of my attention and it made a compulsive reading throughout. The article was captioned — 'Since 2014, 25 Opposition leaders facing corruption probe crossed over to BJP, 23 of them got reprieve'. The article was, undoubtedly, a telltale commentary on the holes in the prevalent political system in our country. It was an embarrassing account of the glaringly apparent fact that political parties of all hues and shades are compelled to flow with the tides produced by the fault lines in our political system and that too sometimes for sheer political survival.



ATUL SEHGAL

It may not be worthwhile to go deep into the finer nuances of the above account and be brazenly judgemental of hallowed political parties and personalities. It appears to be proper to dwell on the deficiencies of the current system in Bharat and regretfully State that the electoral arithmetic is the biggest bane of our political system. To build up the numbers for gathering the elusive major-

ity, political parties, under a legal system that is speckled with loopholes, have to resort to such shenanigans to assemble numbers to make stable governments and even make strong governments that can govern smoothly. Our democracy has definite deficiencies. Rather it is anything but perfect. A multi-party democracy is better described as a non-ideal, diluted form of democracy, especially so in a culturally variegated society like ours. The purest form of democracy is outlined in our ancient scripture Manusmriti. While making a mention of Manusmriti, it needs to be clarified that this observation is not to be taken lightly even if there is controversy associated with this ancient scrip-

ture. That controversy sprang from its distorted version, due to historical extrapolations by unscrupulous persons. The original, uncorrupted version of Manusmriti is a divine blueprint of an ideal governance system. The scripture talks of democracy indicating the following three characteristic features of democracy (prajatantra)

1. Partyless system of elections and governance
2. Right to recall the elected representatives by the voters
3. Congruous with the principles of righteousness or Dharma

It would also be relevant to State here that the above primaeva, divine scripture also provides a structural frame for the democratic governance system. It talks of



three assemblies — Rajaryasabha (executive assembly), Vidyaryasabha (subject specialist assembly) and Dharmaryasabha (assembly of religious experts). The last-mentioned assembly or council is composed of persons of distinguished moral standing and impeccable character who

act collectively as some kind of moral authority on the functioning of the executive council. It is easy to see how far the existing polity and governance structure are away from the above-mentioned ideal polity and governance system in a democratic set-up. In a party less democratic polity, all problems of electoral arithmetic and the evils that they engender are bound to vanish. There are going to be no big election rallies, no stupendous spending on elections, no horse-trading, no party switching, no turn-coats, no go slow on prosecuting the corrupt and criminal politicians and no silly concepts of majoritarianism or minorityism. There is going to be no

minority-centred governance. It is also not difficult to understand how many secondary evils of the extant political system in our country will get eliminated if we were to incorporate the tenets of the sacred scripture Manusmriti in our polity and governance. It may be farfetched to expect that we can carve out from the present system something exactly conforming to the above utopian structure but even if we incorporate therein one or two important features like party less democratic system in our country, great benefit can accrue to our governance. In light of what is Stated above, we certainly need to reform our democratic system which does not deliver

too well. Accordingly, we look forward to the expectedly third term Modi Government bringing about wide constitutional, electoral and bureaucratic reforms to enable our nation to progress by kangaroo leaps, which it is capable of. Bharat is divinely destined to become the leading global nation-State of the world while maintaining its pristine stature as the moral and spiritual trailblazer of the world. This is so because Bharat is the land of saints, sages and seers who have been the beacons for humanity through the course of its long and chequered historical existence on this planet.

(The author is a management consultant; views are personal)

Markets extend downtrend

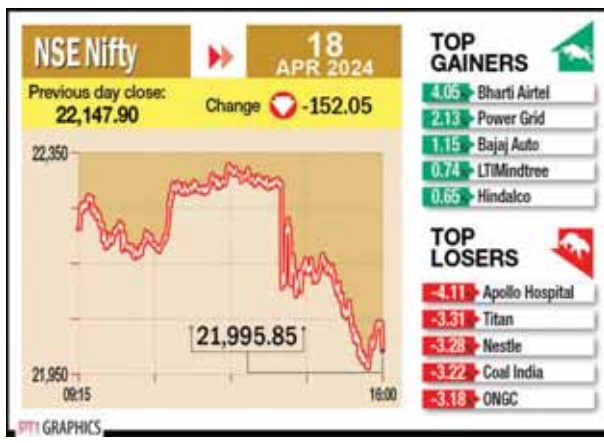
PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty faced heavy volatility on Thursday and ended lower...



The 30-share BSE Sensex declined abruptly post noon, reflecting heavy fluctuations...

less developed countries. Titan Company, Axis Bank, NTPC, Tata Motors, ITC...



sentiments, emerged from escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, and as hopes of US rate cuts waned...

Kong settled in the positive territory. European markets were trading mostly with gains...

Electronics industry sees surge in hiring: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The electronics industry in the country has experienced sharp growth in hiring and skilling initiatives...

Telangana, it added. The report by Quesq Corp is based on internal data as well as external data as well as opinions of industry experts...

NSE to launch derivatives on Nifty Next 50 index from April 24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Thursday said it will introduce derivative contracts on Nifty Next 50 index from April 24...

Nifty Midcap Select index comprising the top large & liquid mid-capitalised stocks," Sriram Krishnan, Chief Business Development Officer at NSE, said...

Infosys profit jumps 30 per cent to ₹7,969 crore in Q4

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IT company Infosys on Thursday said its consolidated profit jumped 30 per cent to ₹7,969 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2024...



financial year 2025. During the financial year ended March 2024, net profit

increased by 8.9 per cent to Rs 26,233 crore from Rs 24,095 crore recorded in FY23.

Just Dial shares zoom over 13 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Just Dial Ltd on Thursday zoomed over 13 per cent after the company reported a 38.44 per cent rise in consolidated net profit in the March quarter.



over 110.97 lakh shares at the NSE during the day. Just Dial Ltd on Wednesday reported a 38.44 per cent rise in consolidated net profit...

during the quarter under review stood at Rs 361.56 crore compared to Rs 306.69 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

Moneyboxx AUM crosses ₹720 crore in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Moneyboxx Finance, an NBFC providing small-ticket business loans to small enterprises, on Thursday said its asset under management more than doubled during fiscal 2023-24 crossing Rs 720 crore.



specialised providers in this field," Mayur Modi, Co-Founder of Moneyboxx, said.

With cumulative disbursements of over Rs 1,200 crore as of March 2024, Moneyboxx has provided loans to over 1.5 lakh borrowers...



AI powered equity platform PineGap.Ai raises USD 2.5 million

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

PineGap.Ai, an AI-powered equity research platform, on Thursday said it has raised USD 2.5 million in a funding round led by US-based investors SVQuad and Inventus Capital.

BUSINESS BRIEF

SRM IST ALUMNI FETCH \$4,70,000 FUNDING. Eight years after graduating from the portals of SRM IST — India's pre-eminent destination for higher learning in technology, management, science, arts, and medicine — and four years after launching their independent venture...

KOREAN DELEGATION APPLAUDS COTTAGE COLLECTION

Zena Chung, Founder President, Indo-Korea Business Culture Centre (IKBCC) and Economic Trade policy advisor for Gyongsangbuk-do province of South Korea along with Heikki Ranta Chairman, Finncham Korea, visited the Cottage at Janpath and appreciated the efforts of the Cottage in showcasing diverse range of art and craft from different parts of India...

BHANU BRINGS GLORY TO LUCKNOW

Bhanu Pratap Singh, a resident of Vanipuram, Lucknow, has made his family, city and his educational institution proud by securing 727th rank in the Civil Services Examination 2023.

VITEEE TO TAKE PLACE IN 125 CITIES IN INDIA, 6 ABROAD

The VIT Engineering Entrance Exam (VITEEE), the entrance examination conducted by Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) for admission to B.Tech. programmes of VIT Group of Institutions-VIT-Vellore, VIT-Chennai, VIT-AP (Amaravati) and VIT-Bhopal, is scheduled from April 19th to 30th, 2024 as Proctored Computer Based Test at 125 cities in India and six cities abroad — Dubai, Muscat, Qatar, Kuwait, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

Nestle India mcap erodes by ₹8,137.49 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Nestle India on Thursday declined over 3 per cent amid reports that the global FMCG major sold infant milk products with more sugar content in less developed countries.

Rupee rises 6 paise to close at 83.55 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee rebounded from its all-time low levels and appreciated 6 paise to close at 83.55 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as the American currency and Brent crude oil prices retreated from their elevated levels.



Forex and money markets were closed on Wednesday on account of 'Ram Navami'. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six

NHAI identifies 33 highway stretches for monetisation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has identified 33 highway stretches cumulatively spanning 2,741 kilometres to monetise during the current financial year through toll operate transfer (TOT) and infrastructure investment trust (InvIT) modes.

Kanpur-Ayodhya-Gorakhpur, and Bareilly-Sitapur in Uttar Pradesh, Gurugram-Kotputli-Jaipur bypass and Jaipur-Kishangarh in Rajasthan, Panikoli-Rimuli in Odisha, Chennai bypass in Tamil Nadu, and Muzaffarpur-Darbhanga-Purnia highway in Bihar.



list and modes of monetization," the agency said. NHAI has raised Rs 40,314

crore through various modes of asset monetisation in 2023-24 against the target of Rs 28,868 crore. NHAI's asset monetisation has crossed Rs 1 lakh crore till date.

toll-operate-transfer (TOT) model. Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) and project-based financing to provide all categories of investors an opportunity to invest in assets pertaining to highways and associated infrastructure.

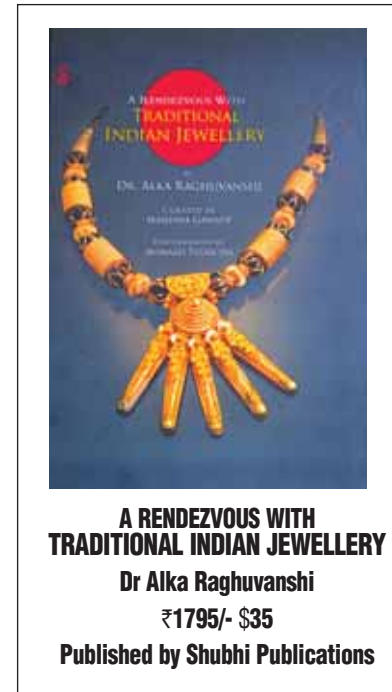
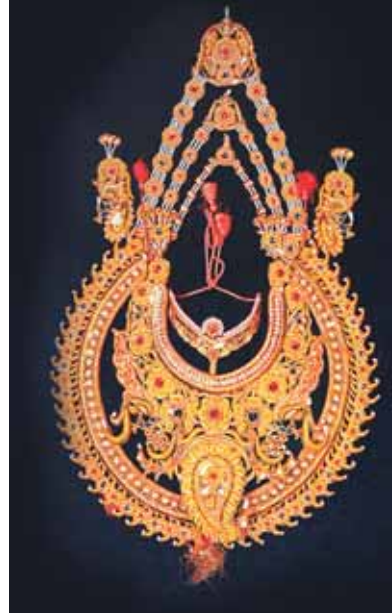


HERITAGE INDIAN JEWELLERY DAZZLES THE WORLD

DR ALKA RAGHUVANSHI'S passion for Indian jewelry shines through every page of her book, attracting not just jewelry enthusiasts and historians, but also the layman who simply admires beauty, writes SAKSHI PRIYA



Published posthumously, Dr Alka Raghuvanshi's *Rendezvous with Traditional Indian Jewellery* is a mesmerizing exploration of this exquisite Indian art form. This is not just another book. It is a soulful journey into the heart of India's rich cultural heritage, where intricate artistry meets profound symbolism. While it explores the intricate world of traditional Indian jewelry, the book is lavishly illustrated with pictures that provide a comprehensive overview of the history, craftsmanship, and significance of Indian jewelry, nudging its readers to appreciate this ancient and vibrant art form. Ehaaa and Shubhi Publications recently launched Dr Raghuvanshi's last written book on the occasion of her 63rd birth anniversary. The book is curated by Manisha Gawade and contains stunning photographs by Avinash Pasricha. One of the most striking aspects of the book is its meticulous attention to detail. Dr. Raghuvanshi delves into the origins of Indian jewelry, tracing its evolution from ancient times to the present day. She explores the diverse influences that have shaped



Indian jewelry, from the intricate designs of the Mughal era to the vibrant colours and motifs visible in South Indian jewelry. The book is divided into several thematic chapters, each focusing on a specific aspect. From the exquisite craftsmanship of the Nizam's word-acclaimed jewelry treasure trove to the intricate designs of silver accessories, each chapter offers a fascinating glimpse into the world of Indian jewelry. The photographs accompanying the text are stunning, showcasing the beauty and intricacy of each piece. One of the book's most captivating sections is its exploration of the symbolism behind this traditional Indian art form. Dr. Raghuvanshi explains how each piece of jewelry is imbued with deep meaning, reflecting the wearer's social status, religious



beliefs, and cultural identity. For example, the *mangaimala*, (necklace of mangoes), symbolises fertility and abundance, while the *vanki*, (upper arm ornament), is a symbol of protection and strength. The book also sheds light on the craftsmanship and techniques used in creating jewelry by gold and silversmiths way back in recorded history. The author describes the painstaking process of creating *Jadau* jewels from Avadh, highlighting the skill and artistry of the craftsmen involved in blending precious stones with gold. She also explains the painstaking process of reconditioning old jewelry, where creations from decades ago are transformed into modern works of art while retaining their traditional charm. In addition to, the book also examines the cultural and historical significance of jewelry in India. Dr Raghuvanshi discusses how jewelry has been used as a form of adornment, protection, and status symbol throughout India's history. This includes the role of these masterpieces played in rituals and ceremonies, where each article of adornment served as an expression of identity and spirituality. Furthermore, the book provides a comprehensive look at the different styles and techniques of jewelry making across the length



and breadth of India. The author delves into the varied materials used in jewelry making, from precious metals like gold and silver to gemstones like diamonds and emeralds. She also discusses the different techniques used in jewelry making, such as *Kundan* and *Meenakari* work, that Indian artisans proudly boast of. One of the most compelling features in the book is its focus on regional variations in Indian jewelry. This section, accompanied by stunning visuals, deals with how different regions of India have carved a niche for themselves through their individual, and therefore signature, styles and techniques of jewelry making, that reflect the diverse cultural heritage of the country. From the intricate designs of Rajasthan to the vibrant colors of Gujarat, each region has its distinct aesthetics that is beautifully brought out in the book. Arguably, *Rendezvous with Traditional Indian Jewellery* is a captivating exploration of one of India's most cherished art forms, their legacy and their evolution over the years. Dr. Alka Raghuvanshi's passion for Indian jewelry shines through in every page, making this book a must-have in the libraries of those genuinely interested in the art, culture, and heritage of India. From a jewelry enthusiast to a historian, or for the layman who simply admires beauty, this book is a delight and inspiration.

The flag of Sanatan Dharma flies high

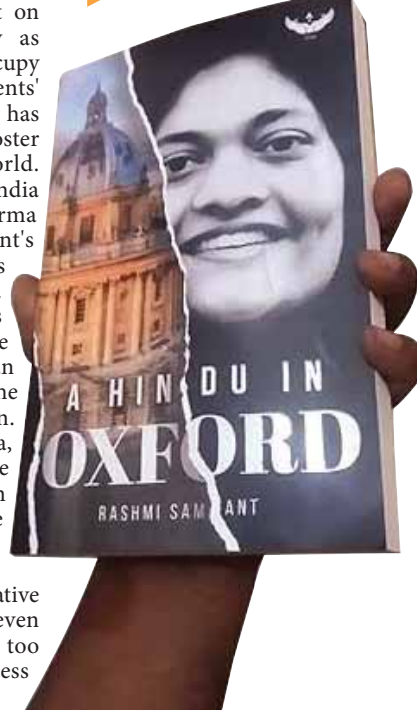
RASHMI SAMANT takes on her rivals head on through a scintillating narrative of a small town Indian girl fighting against all odds at Oxford to survive and expose the ugly face of self-styled secularists and their anti-India rants, says KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

The year 2016 saw US based Indologist Rajiv Malhotra come out with *Academic Hinduphobia*, a sequel to his celebrated work *Breaking India* (Co-authored with Aravindan Neelakantan). This was published in 2011 and observations made by the author in the book actually came true in 2015 when anti-India forces held demonstrations in New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University raising the infamous slogan "Bharat teri tukde honge." (India will be severed into pieces). Following this, there was no going back for anti-India forces to propagate their one-point agenda to balkanise India. However, this anti-India call exposed these forces, underlining the fact that despite their attempts to conceal their real intent, the truth would eventually be out. I remember a conversation I had with a US security expert at IIT Madras in 2009 wherein he pointed out that the 1992 demolition of the Babri Masjid was an act of terrorism. That abruptly ended our chat. Back then, the term Hinduphobia was yet to find space in the national narrative. In 2016, Malhotra, through his book, guided readers to the glaring realities of the times with his scholarly and erudite research, at a time when our own citizens promoted anti-Hindu

feelings across the world with writers of eminence, and self-styled historians and sociologists para-dropping into India. Gradually, a bunch of disgruntled and discontented judges as well as academics joined the chorus, churning out half truths and outright lies against Sanatan Dharma. Their interpretation of Sanatan Dharma was more lethal than the deadly Covid-19, widely spread by the DMK through a relentless campaign by a select group of so-called "intellectuals". It is at this juncture that a young graduate from Oxford University decided to chronicle her bitter experiences in the Holy Grail of modern education. Rashmi Samant, an Udupi-born engineering graduate, got admission for her a post-graduation programme at Oxford University purely based on merit. This young lady, through her book *A Hindu in Oxford*, decided to tell us about her trials and tribulations at the reputed University when she became the president of the Oxford Students Union. One must admire this young Oxford which, as I understand, today survives only on a historical past. The British excelled in marketing their educational institutions, giving

Indians an academic inferiority complex vis-a-vis their British counterparts that unfortunately pushed them to pursue their higher studies study in these very institutions. I do not include author Samant in this category. But for her intellectual honesty, she would not have penned this path-breaking book. Rashmi Samant, a young girl from the small time temple town of Udupi in Karnataka went on to create a tremendous impact on the international community as the first Hindu woman to occupy the post of Oxford's students' union as its president. This has served as a major morale booster for Hindus across the world. However, forces inimical to India in general and Sanatan Dharma in particular, found Sawant's views unpalatable and thus began the author's sufferings. As mentioned earlier, there is a media blitzkrieg across the globe tarnishing Sanatan Dharma and questioning the heritage of Indian tradition. Ramayana and Mahabharata, two great Indian epics are portrayed as myth and fiction by this section of people. The sustained campaign against Sanatan Dharma was successful in creating a negative impact in western countries even as Indians themselves were too diffident to fight the baseless charges and allegations.

A HINDU IN OXFORD
Rashmi Samant
₹399
Published by GARUD



To begin with, Samant too was a victim of Hinduphobia. Her troubles began when she decided to run for the presidency of Oxford Students Union. The list of Asians who have occupied the presidency of OSU include Lalith Athulathmudali, a former Sri Lankan minister for internal security, and Benazir Bhutto, the assassinated former Prime Minister of Pakistan, who was also the president of the Oxford Debating Union. The main weapon in the hands of anti-India forces operating primarily in Europe and the US are our very own citizens whose round-the-trip airfare and accommodation in deluxe hotels and hefty pay packets are bankrolled by the West in return for their tirade against India. Unfortunately, a news-starved western media is only too willing to report whatever anti-India statements come from these Indian quarters. Our *desi* (local) intellectuals label Sanatan Dharma as the embodiment of all that is evil and bad. The present generation of Europeans and Americans have grown up absorbing these lies unthinkingly. Several Indian so-called activists have been detained and arrested by the police in connection with charges of conspiracies; they continue to toil behind bars. This, not because of a weak

Indian judiciary that cannot grant them bail but the fact that the charges filed against them are grave and true. India is ridiculed and criticised for legislations enacted by the Central Government which are only measures to strengthen the country's internal security, not an attempt to discriminate against people based on their religion and community. When the Citizens Amendment Act (CAA) was passed by the Indian Parliament, opposition to the same by a particular religious community came down like an avalanche. Instead of reading and understanding the legislation, sectarian groups took to the streets, holding the citizenry to ransom. India perhaps is the only country which allows roads and public places for people to offer their Friday prayers. Any attempt or enactment of any law to restrict anti-nationals is therefore termed by the Government's critics as saffronisation. For this "intellectual" group it is almost a sin to learn Sanskrit. This group and even our modern generation are unaware of the fact that the world's greatest literary works have been penned in Sanskrit. So much so that learning Hindi and Sanskrit is a taboo in Dravida Nadu. The world needs to know about these ground realities, as also the fact that the protagonists of

Hinduphobia have amassed untold and undisclosed wealth in India and abroad. Even as I write this review, a social media message reports about Communist leader Binoy Viswam's opposition to allow foreign universities to open their campuses in India. His aversion is inexplicable considering his wife, daughter and son-in-law have all been educated in foreign universities. Viswam is the leader of a cynical political outfit which continues to deny that India's Chandrayaan mission was indeed a success. In this anarchist world peopled by the likes of Viswam, anything against Hinduism "will sell, sell well". Rashmi Samant has taken on her rivals head on through a scintillating narrative of how a small town Indian girl fought against all odds in the civilised world of Oxford, where there were countless people baying for her blood. For this grit and determination Samant deserves a salute for pouring out her heart in the public domain. *A Hindu in Oxford* is a wonderful work and a beacon of hope that truth alone shall prevail in the end. Udupi is well-known for its Lord Krishna Temple and the delicacies served by the master chefs from this coastal area. In a nutshell, Samant has immortalised Udupi and her personal journey in her book, making it an absolute must read.



LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS FACE STERN HOME TEST AGAINST QUALITY CSK BOWLING

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

As questionnaires await the Lucknow Super Giants on their home turf as Chennai Super Kings' cerebral bowling unit will look to use its variation to the fullest on a two-paced Ekana Stadium track during their IPL clash here on Friday.

The two teams endured contrasting fortunes in their previous couple of matches. While Rituraj Gaikwad's team, still 'marshalled' by the peerless Mahendra Singh Dhoni, is coming into the game with back-to-back victories, LSG under KL Rahul have endured a mini-slump with successive defeats.

With LSG's batting unit not exactly inspiring the highest level of confidence despite its firepower, it remains to be seen how it tackles an attack where each bowler brings something different to the table.

Matheesha Pathirana, with his yorkers, is literally unplayable at the death, while Mustafizur Rahman has at least three variations of cutters, including one with scrambled seam. Ravindra Jadeja, on tracks where the ball grips like it often happens at the Ekana, could be more than a handful. At Lucknow, it could be an option to play the extra spinner in Maheesh Theekshana to make full use of the conditions. The average first innings score in Lucknow this season has been 175, which is at least 15 sub-par compared to some of the other grounds, and this is exactly the kind of total where Dhoni, like the seasoned 'Concert Master' of an orchestra team, controls the 'pitch and tune'.

Lucknow, on the other hand, have had issues with injuries. Their young pace sensation Mayank Yadav had to sit out of the last two games after suffering lower abdominal

strain after playing just two and a quarter games. The 21-year-old has resumed training on Wednesday and his blistering pace could seriously have an impact on the match as most of the other bowlers playing this game are either medium-fast or fast medium. But there is still no clarity if Mayank will be playing on Friday.

In the spin department, Ravi Bishnoi has been bowling tight spells, but his one dimensional skill of bowling one googly after another has been found out as he got only four wickets in the six game so far. Bishnoi vs a rampaging Shivam Dube will be a mouth-watering contest and will add a spicy sub-plot to the main battle.

The batting is a bigger issue for LSG as one of their mainstays — Quinton de Kock, after consecutive half-tons, has hit a rough patch in the previous three games. The contentious 'Impact Player' rule has also



meant that Krunal Pandya, a more than capable left-hander, has been batting as low as No. 7 and faced 41 deliveries cumulatively in six games — an average seven balls per game. Krunal isn't exactly a finisher, and not using him at optimum level has also been a problem.

Even skipper KL Rahul (204 runs at 138 SR) hasn't been at his best and his safe starts have been more damaging than beneficial. Young Ayush Badoni too seems to be playing for his place in the side. Only Nicholas Pooran, with 19 sixes in six games, have looked dangerous.

While CSK will look to consolidate their place in the points table with what could be their fifth win, a defeat would further push LSG southwards.

Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Shivam Dube, RS Hangargekar, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Daryl Mitchell, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Nishant Sindhu, Deepak Chahar, Tushar Deshpande, Mukesh Choudhary, Mustafizur Rahman, Matheesha Pathirana, Simarjeet Singh, Prashant Solanki, Shardul Thakur, Maheesh Theekshana, Sameer Rizvi.

Lucknow Super Giants: KL Rahul (c), Quinton de Kock, Nicholas Pooran, Ayush Badoni, Kyle Mayers, Marcus Stoinis, Deepak Hooda, Devdutt Padikkal, Ravi Bishnoi, Naveen-ul-Haq, Krunal Pandya, Yuvraj Singh, Prerak Mankad, Yash Thakur, Amit Mishra, Shamar Joseph, Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan, K. Gowtham, Shivam Mavi, Arshin Kulkarni, M. Siddharth, Ashton Turner, Matt Henry, Mohd. Arshad Khan.

Started preparing for freight train called SRH: DC bowling coach James Hopes

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Delhi Capitals bowling coach James Hopes said his team is looking forward to beginning its home stretch against the "freight train" called Sunrisers Hyderabad as it aims for a resurgent run after some early setbacks in the ongoing IPL.

Delhi defeated Gujarat Titans by six wickets after bowling them out for 89 runs in a clash on Wednesday. The team will now play three back-to-back home games, starting with the contest against SRH on Saturday. SRH have been flying high and have twice posted record-breaking IPL totals in this edition. They registered the highest ever in the tournament history — 287/3 — in their last game against Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

"We're running into the freight train next game, which is SRH. We've already started preparing for that. So we're hopeful if we have a good week and a half we would be top-four," Hopes said in a media interaction here on Wednesday night.

DC are currently placed sixth on the points table.

Hopes said DC skipper Rishabh Pant seems to be hitting his stride at just the right time, with his batting showing improvement and his leadership inspiring those around him.

"It's pretty good. Last year, we tried really hard to cover that gap. It's very hard to cover a world-class keeper, if not the best keeper but batsman in the world.

"Now he's back, you can just see everything about his game. His keeping, his captaincy is becoming very sharp. His batting has been pretty good from the start of the tournament actually," Hopes said.

"He's rounding in some pretty good form at back half of the tournament, and he's leading really well as well," Hopes said.

Hopes was confident that Wednesday's win would negate the 106-run defeat against Kolkata Knight Riders on April 3



that hurt the team's net run rate. "Hopefully that negates the 270 game and the net run rate. So, yeah, it's been a good night, but we've got a pretty quick turnaround to our next game," he said.

GILL NOT UNDER PRESSURE: MILLER: Gujarat Titans batter David Miller defended skipper Shubman Gill, who had a rare bad day. Gill got out for eight as four of GT's top-six failed to reach double-digit scores and the 2022 champions folded for their lowest IPL total of 89 in 17.3 overs.

"I don't think it affected the result. We have got seven-eight batters and everyone is capable of winning games," the veteran South African batter said at the post-match interaction.

Asked whether the burden of captaincy is weighing Gill down, the South African said: "No, not at all. He has scored 250-plus runs (267) from seven games, so he's batting superbly.

"It was just a bit sticky tonight, he played a bit early and got caught to cover another day he would hit it for four. He's batting

superbly. He's got a lot of runs so far and a lot still to come."

"A couple of wickets were really unlucky and strange dismissals. I thought the wicket was a bit sticky. But it was certainly not a 89 all out wicket... Definitely below par tonight. We can make all the excuses in the world but at the end of the day we didn't play good cricket."

He further backed their head coach Ashish Nehra who was widely credited for GT's historic triumph in their IPL debut season in 2022.

"No, there's nothing wrong with him at all. We really enjoy his enthusiasm, his passion for the game. Off the field, he's got a gift for really making a lot of time for every single player, getting around and making sure that guys are in a good space, whether they're not playing or if they're playing."

"He's so passionate. He really wants the guys to do well and very supportive at the same breath. So, there's nothing wrong with him at all, just a lot of passion," Miller said.

Pant mobility will give him and Team India management encouragement: Pietersen

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Former England captain Kevin Pietersen feels Rishabh Pant and the Indian team management should feel very encouraged by the comeback-man's mobility in the IPL game against Gujarat Titans here as the T20 World Cup draws closer.

Pant grabbed two catches, effected a stumping and then played a 16-run cameo in Delhi Capitals' six-wicket triumph over Gujarat Titans here on Wednesday. He was adjudged 'Player of the Match' based purely on his keeping skills, a first in IPL since Dinesh Karthik won one in



2009 edition in South Africa. Pant is the top contender for the wicketkeeper's slot in the Indian squad that will be chosen for the showpiece in June. "His mobility was

something that will give him great encouragement, which will also encourage Team India. Of course, he needs game time, as everyone does when coming back from an injury," Pietersen said on 'Star Sports Cricket Live'.

"He's returning from a horrific injury, so game time is crucial for him. To prepare for the T20 World Cup, he should play these 14-15 IPL games because it's significant leading into a T20 World Cup. If he plays that much cricket, he will be ready," he added referring to the life-threatening car crash in which Pant suffered multiple injuries in 2022.

Pietersen was also impressed by Pant's captaincy during the game, saying he used his resources quite tactfully. DC dismissed GT for 89 runs in 17.3 overs before overhauling the target in 8.5 overs.

Zhou will be a star regardless of who wins the Chinese Formula 1 race in Shanghai

AP ■ SHANGHAI

Formula 1 returns to China this weekend after a five-year absence. And, no matter who wins on Sunday, the star locally will be China-born driver Zhou Guanyu.

Despite his so-so results, Zhou is being promoted as a celebrity in China. He's the subject of a new film as the first Chinese driver to compete in F1. And he's, of course, a favourite of sponsors who want a Chinese connection.

Ahead of the first Grand Prix weekend in Shanghai since 2019, Zhou described it as more than a race for him, saying "with a Chinese driver on the grid, we will write history."

By the time he got to the driver's news conference on Thursday, where the questions to him ranged from China's economy and politics to its burgeoning auto industry's future potential in F1, Zhou had spent more than a week doing promotional work and meetings with sponsors, backers and fans.

"I've been extremely busy, you know - the busiest man, probably, in Shanghai over the last week and a half," he said. "A lot of activities done. It's great to see the support from the country already."

Zhou has never won a



Formula 1 race. In 48 races since 2022, he's yet to even reach the podium — meaning a finish in the first three places. In the last F1 race almost two weeks ago in Japan, his Sauber retired with a gearbox failure and he placed 18th out of 20.

In the season standings in 2023, he was also 18th with only six points from 22 races. But, the numbers don't matter much in the search for a hometown hero in F1.

"The pressure, of course, this race is a little bit higher, but I don't think it gets much more than for me than my debut in Formula 1," he said.

"Because by now everything feels a lot more familiar than back in the day. First day here is completely different... Now's third season. So, I'm just going to use that."

Zhou was born in Shanghai

and, though he's spent many of his formative years in England, Sunday's Chinese GP is a homecoming for him - and the race. The last F1 in China was run contested in 2019, and the next four were cancelled during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He noted that tickets sold out quicker than ever for the Chinese GP, with interest in the sport growing exponentially since he watched his first F1 race.

"For me, of course, it's been 20 years waiting until this Grand Prix," Zhou said. "Coming back here being an F1 driver... Yeah, I can't wait."

"A lot of mixed emotion, of course, but I want to treat it as much as the normal race weekend."

A film about Zhou's life will be released Friday by the Shanghai Media Group, a state-owned company and one of China's largest media conglomerates.

Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes — he's moving next season to Ferrari — won the 2019 race in China amid his era of dominance when he won four straight season titles between 2017 and 2020.

However, the race two weeks ago in Japan was the 49th straight that Hamilton has failed to win. His last victory was in 2021.



Juventus ordered to pay Ronaldo more than USD 10 million in salary dispute

AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)

Juventus has been ordered to pay Cristiano Ronaldo more than USD 10 million by an arbitration board following a salary dispute. The dispute regarded a move by Juventus players to defer part of their salaries during the coronavirus pandemic.

The 9.8 million euros (USD 10.5 million) that Juventus was ordered to pay Ronaldo is half the amount that the five-time Ballon d'Or winner had been seeking from the Turin club in back wages. Juventus said in a statement late Wednesday that "with the support of its

legal counsel" it's "reviewing the decision made by the arbitration board, reserving all assessments and initiatives to preserve its rights."

Ronaldo played for Juventus from 2018-21, helping the club to two Serie A titles.

Former Juventus president Andrea Agnelli and the entire club board resigned in 2023 amid an investigation into false accounting - which then resulted in a 10-point penalty for Juventus in Serie A and a ban by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) from Europe for this season.

Real Madrid beats Man City 4-3 on penalties to advance to the Champions League semifinals

AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)

Real Madrid weathered the storm, silenced the crowd and ultimately ended Manchester City's brief hold on the Champions League.

The all-time kings of Europe moved a step closer to a record-extending 15th title in the competition they have dominated after a 4-3 win Wednesday on penalties at Etihad Stadium. But not before being pushed to the limit by defending champion City.

"I was pretty much dead on my feet at the end," Madrid midfielder Jude Bellingham said. "It's so difficult. They are continuously probing with the ball and move you around. Most teams would fall apart when City get on top of you, but we stood up really well."

The game had gone to the uncertainty of a shootout after ending 1-1 on the night and 4-4 on aggregate.

City dominated the chances after going behind to Rodrygo's goal in the 12th minute, but only had Kevin de Bruyne's leveller in the 76th to show for its superiority, which included 64% of possession and 18 corners to Madrid's one through extra time.

That counted for little as Antonio Rudiger struck the decisive spot kick after Bernardo Silva and Mateo Kovacic both saw their



penalties saved. "In this competition, that's the way football happens," City manager Pep Guardiola said. "In other sports, for (these) statistics, we would have won." Guardiola had few complaints. He accepted his team had failed to capitalize against a Madrid team that was forced to defend deep against wave after wave of attack.

Erling Haaland hit the bar with one header in the first half De Bruyne sent an effort sailing over from inside the box in the second. Madrid dug deep, held on and now faces Bayern Munich in the semifinals after the Germans beat Arsenal 1-0 on Wednesday and 3-2 on aggregate.

"Today it came down to mentality," Bellingham said. The defeat ended City's bid to become the first English team to win back-to-back Champions League titles and its pursuit of successive trebles. It is still challenging for the Premier League title

and FA Cup. Victory for Madrid saw the Spanish giant advance to the semifinals for the fourth year in row — denying City the chance to emulate that feat.

"This was about survival," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "Madrid is a club based on always fighting to stay in situations where there seems to be no way out — but we always find a way. By the time the penalty shoot-out came, we were totally convinced we'd go through."

Ancelotti has already won the Champions League a record four times as a coach — one more than Guardiola — and could extend that record by lifting the trophy for a third time with Madrid.

For Guardiola it is back to the drawing board after watching his team to relinquish the trophy it won for the first time last year and ending his own 12-year wait to triumph again in European club soccer's most demanding competition.

OTHER SPORTS