



FIRST COLUMN EU-CHINA RELATIONS AT A CROSSROADS

Xi embarks on a strategic journey across Europe, a move laden with symbolism



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Geo-political adjustments are getting done, bilaterally and plurilateral, even as the world's largest democracies are busy calming their domestic constituencies, where a key rallying agenda is China. The two largest democracies, India and the US, both of whom have their own set of issues with China, are in the middle of some of the most competitive election processes, ever seen across the globe. Meanwhile, the EU, or at least many of its member countries, not to mention US allies such as Australia are carefully recalibrating the entangled web of engagement with China.

It is by no coincidence that Chinese Premier Xi Jinping, was on a strategic three-nation tour of Europe, earlier this week. This tri-nation tour, during which the Chinese premier, also met the European Union president Ursula Von der Leyen, comes after a gap of almost 5 years and is also a time when many European nations have been blaming China for pushing highly subsidised electric vehicles into their markets, making several European auto factories redundant. The Europeans also wanted to focus on China playing a larger role in stabilising its "friends without limits" Russia, in the war against Ukraine, pushing up fuel-aided inflation across the region. The Europeans in the plain speak, they are known for, outlined clearly in the president's press statement, "the first topic where we exchanged views on was the geopolitical situation. We especially discussed Ukraine and the conflicts in the Middle East. We agree that Europe and China have a shared interest in peace and security. We count on China to use all its influence on Russia to end Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. President Xi has played an important role in de-escalating Russia's irresponsible nuclear threats, and I



am confident that President Xi will continue to do so against the backdrop of the ongoing nuclear threats by Russia. We have also discussed China's commitment not to provide any lethal equipment to Russia. More effort is needed to curtail the delivery of dual-use goods to Russia that find their way to the battlefield. And given the existential nature of the threats stemming from this war for both Ukraine and Europe, this does affect the EU-China relations. "The message from the EU to China was, don't help Russia in its unjust war on European soil, or else the bilateral relation would be in trouble. No surprises, Ukraine and the Middle East didn't feature, till the bottom three paragraphs of the press statement issued by the Chinese team, post the trilateral meeting.

Also no surprises with the language which read "On the Ukraine crisis, President Xi pointed out that China, France and the EU all wish to see an early ceasefire and return of peace in Europe, and support political settlement of the crisis. China has been working vigorously to facilitate talks for peace. China's objective and just position and its constructive role have been widely recognized by the international community. China is ready to stay in communication with relevant parties." The other significant element of these conversations was traded, as all parties involved are feeling the constraints of escalating fuel costs, the volatile geo-political environment and, the post-Covid, supply chain mismatch. The EU provided sharp pointers on Chinese subsidised products, free and fair access to each other's markets and supply chain resiliency in their conversations. A defensive China maintained that the two sides have extensive common interests and broad space for cooperation in green and digital transition. It is necessary that they properly address economic and trade frictions through dialogue and consultation, and accommodate each other's legitimate concerns." China has started making, the right moves to woo back some of its largest market partners, at a time when India and the US, the other key stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific theatre, are busy with their elections. India will get over elections in about a month, and an agile nimble China policy outlook awaits.

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

Economic progress in India: A reality check

Despite notable achievements, economic progress falters due to the neglect of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Public Sector Undertakings and agricultural reforms



ATUL SEHGAL



India has come a long way since 2014 in the matter of various indices and parameters of economic development. Consider this. India has increased her per capita income through this decade from USD 1560 to USD 2500, a 60 per cent increase. It has purportedly lifted 400 million persons out of poverty during the decade. Its foreign exchange kitty has increased from USD 322 billion to USD 640 billion during the same period. These are impressive figures. Large figures are always impressive, but they need to be checked, compared and corroborated to be sanctified.

Consider this now. The per capita income of India increased from USD 600 to USD 1560 for the period from 2004 to 2014 which is a bigger increase of 160 percent. Its foreign exchange reserves increased from USD 107 billion to USD 322 billion between 2004 and 2014. Whereas the surge from 2004 to 2014 was 200 per cent, it was only 100 per cent in the next decade.

The above comparative figures talk aloud about India's poor economic development in the last decade. This is not an overall performance report on the current NDA government. This government has many unprecedented achievements to its credit. But on the economic front, it doesn't seem to have delivered. Why has the NDA not been able to deliver on the economic front? There are several reasons.

Neglect of MSMEs: The micro, small and medium enterprises sector in the country did not receive the attention due to it. This sector is the main source of employment generation. Imports from China continued to swell and many manufacturers closed down their factories to become traders and distributors. Poor implementation of the Make in India programme: The Make in India was a well-conceived ambitious programme

to boost indigenous manufacturing. The scheme had its points of deficiency but regrettably, the major driving points of the grandiose scheme remained largely on paper and were never implemented properly. The result--share of manufacturing in the economy continues to stagnate at 14 percent.



THE GOVERNMENT DID WELL TO BLUEPRINT REFORMS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR—THOSE RELATED TO MSP AND PROCUREMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE. BUT THE GOVERNMENT FAILED TO IMPLEMENT IT BY CAPITULATING IN FRONT OF FAKE PROTESTERS MASQUERADING AS FARMERS

Absence of bureaucratic reforms: Our obsolete, corruption-ridden colonial bureaucratic system had never delivered earlier and cried for reforms. But the reforms did not come. The result was a failure of key developmental programmes like the 100 Smart Cities Programme. The government did a remarkable job of establishing GST and promulgating the IBC. This enabled a clean-up of banks and a sharp decline in their NPAs. However, the failure of the government to increase the ease of doing business by cutting down on bureaucratic red tape is a big reason behind the continuing lack of a suitable ecosphere for business and big investment.

Failure to implement Agricultural Reforms: The government did well to blueprint reforms in the agricultural sector—those related to MSP and procurement of agricultural produce. But the government failed to implement the same by capitulating in front of fake protesters masquerading as farmers.

Neglect of PSUs: The government paid very little attention to the state and central PSUs which account for 15 per cent of the total economic activities in the country. It kept on harping on the absence of the need for the government to be in business. This

was an impractical approach to handling the Indian economy and failed to tap the big PSUs in which so much of public money had been invested.

Failure to bring about judicial reforms: Justice in this country continues to be delayed, denied and derailed. Despite big talks to the contrary, the government did nothing in the direction of judicial reforms. This was and remains a big dampener to FDI and even domestic investment in new business.

Notwithstanding the above, we must bear in mind that most of the previous governments had left deep pits in our economy that needed to be filled to prepare the ground for the rapid holistic development of the country. The UPA government, between 2004 and 2014 did produce better numbers for FE reserves and economic growth rate but the money generating that investment and growth was preponderantly from the huge proportion of parallel-black money economy out of the overall economy. Money was meagrely flowing for the critical sectors of defence and infrastructure and even for some important socialistic schemes. Modi 1.0 and Modi 2.0 changed this by bringing economic discipline and curbing corruption and economic malfeasance. It brought GST and IBC and did the clean-up of Banks by bringing down drastically the NPAs. It severely dented the black money economy.

These were the pits filled by the Modi government that have prepared fertile soil for the fast-track economic progress of the country now. Given the above, it is imper-

ative and is also expected that the Modi government, if returned to power, will take the undermentioned steps to boost real progress on the economic front. Economic progress is the foundation of the overall progress of a country. Progress on other fronts like defence, foreign affairs, etc. has been significant but sustainable multifaceted development can only be achieved on the foundation of a strong and healthy economic bottom line.

The country needs drastic institutional and bureaucratic reforms. It needs urgent implementation of the farming sector reforms which were shelved after so much drum beating. The education sector calls for a thorough overhaul to replace the colonial Macaulay established system with an indigenous system in tune with the nation's ethos and tradition.

Sloganeering and political gamesmanship need to be replaced by serious, earnest and committed steps for boosting investment, trade, manufacturing and exports. India has a huge potential for becoming an economic powerhouse in quick time but we need to go about building our economy with due seriousness and dedication, rising above narrow interests of caste, class, political affiliations and last but not least, political expediency. It is very much hoped that Modi 3.0, with a two-thirds majority, will usher in the much-needed administrative, bureaucratic and judicial reforms for the speedy economic progress of the country.

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

India and Armenia strengthen defence ties amidst regional instability

As the Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan axis looms, the growing Indo-Armenia partnership emerges as a vital defence against destabilising forces

In recent years, the strategic partnership between India and Armenia has undergone a remarkable transformation—fired by their shared commitment to fortify defence capabilities and confront regional security challenges head-on. Against the backdrop of Armenia's enduring struggle with Azerbaijan and Turkey's support for Azerbaijan's advantages, the precipitating connection between Armenia and India stands for recognition. Armenia's proximity to India and both agreeing to diversify their strategic alignment, deserves special attention on the global stage.

Military Cooperation: Armenia's imperative to diversify its security alliances and bolster its military capabilities,



PADMALOCHAN DASH

particularly amidst the enduring conflict with Azerbaijan, is evident through heightened defence spending and collaborations with nations such as India and France. India's involvement with Armenia's military not only strengthens its defensive capabilities but also serves to counterbalance external-internal influences like Turkey and Pakistan in the South Asian region. The expanding Indo-Armenian

partnership encompasses various facets, including the exchange of weaponry, joint military exercises, and strategic consultations, all aimed at enhancing defense readiness and security in their respective regions.

Advanced Weaponry and Joint Exercises: The acquisition of state-of-the-art weaponry highlights the growing defense cooperation between India and Armenia. Reports indicate ongoing provision of military hardware from India to Armenia, including multiple-launch rocket systems, anti-tank missiles, and radar systems. Additionally, joint military exercises and training programs are underway to enhance preparedness and interoperability between their

armed forces. These collaborative efforts facilitate the exchange of expertise and tactics, fostering effective coordination for potential future operations, from joint exercises to intelligence sharing, both nations are committed to showcasing their military capabilities and strengthening their strategic partnership.

Geopolitical Determinations: Armenia's pivotal role in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) offers India diversified trade routes and enhanced access to Eurasian markets, bolstering strategic interests in economic resilience and geopolitical balancing. Conversely, India's military support for Armenia underscores its commitment to preserving regional peace and countering aggressive

manoeuvres by the Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan axis. Through the realisation of mutual interests, India and Armenia can reshape security dynamics in the South Caucasus region by challenging the dominance of larger geopolitical actors and their support for rogue powers.

Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan Axis: The Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan axis poses a substantial threat to regional stability, with Turkey's unwavering support for Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict then raising concerns about potential escalations. The longstanding military partnership between Turkey and Pakistan, characterised by defence production, joint training exercises, and high-level military dialogues, under-

scores their concerted efforts to advance mutual geopolitical goals and exert influence in the regions. This axis represents a significant challenge to the security and stability of the South Caucasus and South Asian regions, as that axis seeks to consolidate its power and undermine the influence of other regional stakeholders. Responses and Ongoing Efforts: In response to the burgeoning influence of the Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan axis, India's steadfast support for Armenia signifies a resolute stance against their aggressive manoeuvres in the region. Aimed at preserving a delicate balance of power, India and Armenia are all set to intensify their collaboration to address these threats.

While Turkey's stance on

Kashmir validates the burgeoning Indo-Armenia defence cooperation, the nexus between Turkey's involvement in the Kashmir issue and Pakistan's alignment with Azerbaijan's agenda cannot be seen as a mere happenstance, rather a meticulously orchestrated strategy with far-reaching intention. In this backdrop, the urgent need for a meticulously planned multilateral defence partnership underscored. This becomes essential to counter the unholy Turkey-Pakistan-Azerbaijan axis thereby ensuring stability in both the Caucasus and South Asian regions.

The Promising Prospects: The emerging strategic cooperation between India and Armenia holds immense promise for enhancing region-

al security and advancing shared interests. Both nations are poised to deepen their partnership and address prevailing challenges through concerted efforts in military collaboration and strategic alignments. India's steadfast support for Armenia underscores its dedication to maintaining peace and stability in the Caucasus region. With far-reaching implications for global geopolitical outcomes, the Indo-Armenia partnership has the potential to redefine the regional balance of power and contribute significantly to the stability and prosperity of both the Caucasus and South Asian regions.

(The writer is working with an Independent Think Tank, views are personal)

Putin accuses West of fueling global conflicts

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia on Thursday wrapped itself in patriotic pageantry for Victory Day...



Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Ground Forces Oleg Salyukov, left, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, centre, and Russian President Vladimir Putin leave Red Square...

Every family is honoring its heroes, looking at pictures with dear faces and remembering their relatives and how they fought...

As Putin tells it, his father, also named Vladimir, came home from a military hospital during the war to see workers trying to take away his wife, Maria...

Every family is honoring its heroes, looking at pictures with dear faces and remembering their relatives and how they fought...

Taliban sound warning to journalists, experts

AP ■ KABUL

The Taliban on Thursday warned journalists and experts against working with Afghanistan International TV...

day (Wednesday), it was decided that participating in discussions and facilitating the broadcast of this media outlet in public places is prohibited...

without Borders ranked the country 178 out of 180. It ranked 152 last year.

Japanese aircraft makes emergency landing after glitch

Tokyo (AP): A Japanese defence aircraft carrying eight people made an emergency landing at a commercial airport in central Japan...

Spanish court shelves tax probe against Shakira

AP ■ MADRID

Madrid (AP): A Spanish investigative magistrate on Thursday provisionally shelved the latest probe into an alleged case of tax fraud by pop star Shakira...

IS group claims bombing in Afghanistan

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for a bombing in Afghanistan's northeast that killed police officers who were part of an anti-poppo crop campaign.



out the country's drug cultivation industry and imposed a formal ban in April 2022, dealing a heavy blow to hundreds of thousands of farmers and day laborers who relied on proceeds from the crop to survive.

in Badakhshan last week in response to the poppy eradication campaign. It prompted a high-ranking delegation led by the chief of military staff Fasihudin Fitrat to visit the region and negotiate with protesters.

Pak leadership vows not to allow May 9 'executors' to get away

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/LAHORE

Pakistan's top civil and military leadership Thursday strongly condemned the unprecedented violence by the supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan...

Terming May 9 (Black Day) as one of the "darkest days in our national history", the Inter-Services Public Relations - the media wing of the army - said that the politically motivated and brainwashed miscreants in an act of rebellion deliberately resorted to violence against state institutions and vandalised sacred symbols...

property and military installations. Condemning the violence, he said that the incidents "severely tarnished" the country's image and thus only "served the interests of Pakistan's enemies".

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the accountability of the perpetrators and conspirators of the May 9 violence would be taken to its logical conclusion because the characters behind the violence were known to everybody.

Meanwhile, Imran Khan refused to apologise for the May 9 riots, a day after the military ruled out dialogue with his party unless they tendered a public apology over the unprecedented violence.

The government organised several events on the first anniversary of May 9 violence to honour victims whose monuments were defiled by the protestors.

Prez pins Sri Lanka's economic stability on IMF programme

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Thursday told lawmakers that there was no "alternative path" to economic recovery for the island nation other than the IMF-prescribed reform plans.

Yoon rejects S Korean opp calls for probe against wife, top officials

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's president on Thursday dismissed calls for independent investigations into allegations involving his wife and top officials, drawing quick, strong rebukes from his political rivals.

alleged involvement in a stock price manipulation scheme and the release of spy camera footage showing her receiving a luxury bag from a Korean American pastor.

had vetoed a bill calling for the appointment of an independent counsel to investigate his wife's stock price allegation.

House rejects Greene's effort to remove Speaker Johnson

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Hardline Rep Marjorie Taylor Greene tried and failed in sudden action Wednesday to oust Speaker Mike Johnson, her long-shot effort swiftly and resoundingly rejected by Democrats and Republicans tired of the political chaos.

to vacate the speaker from his office, the Republican Majority Leader Steve Scalise countered by calling first for a vote to table it. An overwhelming majority, 359-43, kept Johnson in his job, for now.

ward. "The country desperately needs a functioning Congress."

Advertisement for BABA FARID UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, FARIDKOT, including admission notice for PPNET Basic B.Sc. Nursing Course, session 2024.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar/Pioneer

THE ENCHANTING TAPESTRY OF INDIAN CULTURE

The Kendra Dance Festival mesmerised audiences with its captivating blend of dance and storytelling, showcasing India's rich heritage. From spiritual explorations to mythological tales, each performance left a lasting impression, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**



Step into a world where art transcends boundaries and narratives come alive through graceful movements. The Kendra Dance Festival 2024, hosted at the prestigious Kamani Auditorium in New Delhi, was a mesmerising journey through the rich tapestry of Indian culture. Over three enchanting evenings from May 3 to May 5, 2024, this festival promised and delivered an unforgettable exploration of Indian culture through the captivating art of dance drama.

Each night unfolded a unique dance drama, transporting audiences to a different realm. The festival opened with *Parikrama*, a production that transcended the boundaries of entertainment to delve deep into the human psyche. Through a harmonious blend of direction, choreography, lighting, costumes and production *Parikrama* entranced the audience. The choreography, a brilliant fusion of movements mainly derived from the Chhau dance form, drew a standing ovation, highlighting the dedication and skill of the performers. Principal performer artist Shivam Sahni, essaying the challenging role of Atma, spoke of the difficulty in portraying a non-being showcasing the depth and complexity of the production.

The visionary direction of Padmashri Shobha Deepak Singh transformed the

stage into a realm of spiritual exploration. The production beautifully depicted the cyclical nature of existence, from birth to liberation, drawing from the profound concepts of Indian philosophy. The audience was taken on a journey from the potentiality symbolised by *Hiranyagarbh* to the manifestation of the soul as *Atma*, exploring the soul's struggle against the senses and its quest for liberation, ultimately achieving *Moksha*. The innovative use of lighting and sound coupled with a thoughtful script added layers of depth to the performance making it a profound theatrical experience.

The second night brought the epic *Mahabharata* to life with *Karna*. This captivating dance drama delved into the complexities of human existence through the lens of the enigmatic Karna. We stood witness to his struggles and triumphs, his unwavering ideals, and the timeless questions of morality and righteousness that his life embodied. The choreography, expressive and evocative, brought Karna's life to vibrant life on stage, evoking both sympathy and admiration from the audience. The performance was a visual masterpiece, with every detail from the expressive dance to the exquisite costumes contributing to its exceptional excellence. The unwavering support from the audience filling every seat in the auditorium further solidified the importance of celebrating and preserving Indian culture.

The final evening culminated with *Meera*, in vibrant portrayal of renowned saint

poetess. This dance drama, titled after its central figure, delved into her life and legacy. Meera's poetry bursting with vibrancy and effervescence resonated with audiences carrying messages of liberation and inner awakening. The performance challenged societal norms and redefined Meera's image offering an introspective exploration of the struggles faced by women. Drawing inspiration from Rajasthani dance styles, the choreography beautifully captured Meera's enduring influence. The Kendra Dance Festival's success was solidified by the audience's profound engagement with the performances evident in the thunderous applause and heartfelt comments such as "heaven for the eyes" and "a soulful performance."

Throughout the festival, the commitment of the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra to preserve and promote India's rich cultural heritage was evident. Their tireless efforts in organising this exceptional dance festival have not only enriched our lives but also provided a platform for these alluring stories to be shared with the world. The choreography for all three performances by Shashidharan Nair, combined with Padmashri Shobha Deepak Singh's visionary direction, created an alluring experience that celebrated the timeless beauty of Indian culture.

As Padmashri Shobha Deepak Singh aptly stated, "The Kendra Dance Festival's productions are not just performances; they are reflections of our cultural essence and timeless wisdom." The Dance Festival was

a testament to the power of artistic expression and a celebration of the enduring relevance of Indian culture in today's world. It was an unforgettable journey that left a lasting impression on all who were fortunate enough to witness its magic. The deepest appreciation is reserved for Padmashri Shobha Deepak Singh for her visionary leadership and unparalleled artistic direction. Under her guidance, the Kendra Dance Festival has transcended mere entertainment to become a transformative and unforgettable experience showcasing the profound beauty and depth of Indian culture to audiences worldwide.

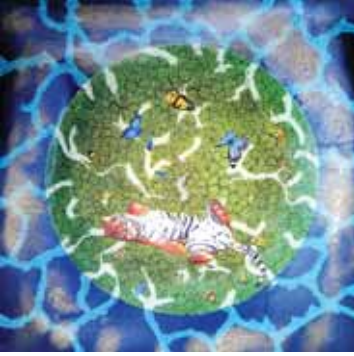
The three-day celebration of dance was an enduring and compelling experience where storytelling, acting, dance, drama, and music converged to create an unforgettable spectacle. The festival beautifully showcased the rich tapestry of Indian history and mythology weaving together narratives that resonated with audiences and left a lasting impression. The performances were a testament to the cultural heritage of India offering a glimpse into its vibrant traditions and timeless stories. This festival was a celebration of artistic excellence and a tribute to the depth and beauty of Indian culture. This festival wasn't just a celebration of dance; it was a celebration of heritage, a testament to the enduring power of storytelling and a glimpse into the soul of India.



A Journey through Creativity and Appreciation

SAKSHI PRIYA explores the world through the eyes of master artists and emerging talents whose works redefine the boundaries of creativity

Embark on an alluring journey into the vibrant world of art with *Detente: A Haven of Artistic Rhapsody*, an exhibition that celebrates the spirit of creativity and cultural diversity. This exhibition showcase of modern and contemporary Indian and international art invites spectators to explore a variety of artistic themes and narratives, each piece offering a unique perspective on evolution, culture, and society. Stepping into the gallery feels like entering an enchanted world where each painting tells a captivating story, inviting viewers on a journey of emotions and creativity. The exhibition, featuring works by renowned master artists such as MF Hussain, SH Raza, GR Santosh, Satish Gujral, Manu Parekh, B Prabha, Anjali Ela Menon, Ajay Samir, Anup Kumar Chand, Ashok Bhowmick, alongside contributions from contemporary and participating artists like M Narayan, Bahaar Dhawan Rohatgi, Sanuj Birla, Aditee Garg and more, is a testament to the richness and diversity of contemporary Indian and international art. The artwork demands to be seen and appreciated by all, showcasing the exquisite talent of each artist. Visitors stand before the paintings, interpreting and admiring the work in their unique way, captivated by the details, patterns,



and colours. This experience highlights the immense value and appreciation for art in today's world. The gallery itself feels like a journey through memory lane which continues to resonate even after they are no longer with us. Their art speaks volumes, as the saying goes, "an artist's work always stays with us." Artists like SH Raza, GR Santosh, MF Husain, B Prabha, and Satish Gujral demonstrate their mastery through their paintings, with each piece reflecting their profound skill and artistic vision. The walls of the gallery

exude a mesmerising aura, showcasing the true worth and beauty of these artworks. M. Narayan's artwork, with its focus on equestrian aesthetics, captures the power and speed of horses through expressionist strokes and dynamic lines. His paintings convey the thrilling energy and elegant beauty of horses and polo players, drawing viewers into a world of vivid colours and bold strokes. Satish Gujral's canvas delves into the depths of history, channelling an expressionist grandeur of gesture and space. Bahaar Dhawan Rohatgi's art invokes a sense of calmness with abstract explorations

that blend various mediums. Her pieces unlock the immensity within her artistic journey, revealing layers of emotion and dreams through intricate brushstrokes. Manu Parekh's work echoes the rich tradition of Indian folk art fused with modernist sensibilities. His paintings evoke a rousing provocation known for their vibrant and dynamic composition that captures the essence of painting. Aditee Garg's sculptures are praised for their cultural resonance and narrative depth with graceful curves that become

performative in nature. Her work invites viewers to join in transporting them to the realm of magnificent creatures through intricate narratives and expansive spaces. The artwork of Anup Kumar Chand is described as a tribute to the majesty of nature, particularly awe-inspiring tigers. His paintings create a world of fantasy shapes where colours seamlessly blend with the background resulting in a harmonious visual symphony. Sanuj Birla's exceptional painting is noted for its excellence in art, creating dreamy visions inspired by movies and comic books holding a special place in everyone's heart. Each artist's work is celebrated for its uniqueness and ability to evoke a range of emotions and interpretations making the exhibition a truly immersive and inspiring experience for all visitors. The exhibition is not just about showcasing art; it is about honouring the legacy of artists and the impact of their work. It is a celebration of power, grace, and beauty. As visitors immerse themselves in this artistic journey, they

are transported to a world where time slows down and the boundaries between reality and fantasy blur. The gallery becomes a testimony to the immersive experience that art can offer, where every piece evokes a beautiful sense of emotion and reality. Sumer Raj Chadha, the founder of Gallery West End reflects on his appreciation for art, nurtured over the years by his grandmother, Santosh Raj Chadha, a passionate art collector. He says, "This exhibit is a tribute to a true art aficionado and a fervent connoisseur of beauty, our vanguard, late Santosh Raj Chadha, my beloved grandmother. She sowed the seed of love for art and has been a custodian of creative curiosity in our family." Chadha's dedication has transformed this exhibition into a platform for artists to showcase their talent and connect with enthusiasts. His commitment to honoring artistic legacies and encouraging creativity shines in every aspect of this remarkable exhibition. 'Detente: A Haven of Artistic Rhapsody' is more than just an art exhibition; it is an incredible source of inspiration and an immersive journey into the artistic vision of modern and contemporary artists. It is a place where art speaks to everyone, inviting them to delve into realms of exploration, connection, and inspiration.

are transported to a world where time slows down and the boundaries between reality and fantasy blur. The gallery becomes a testimony to the immersive experience that art can offer, where every piece evokes a beautiful sense of emotion and reality. Sumer Raj Chadha, the founder of Gallery West End reflects on his appreciation for art, nurtured over the years by his grandmother, Santosh Raj Chadha, a passionate art collector. He says, "This exhibit is a tribute to a true art aficionado and a fervent connoisseur of beauty, our vanguard, late Santosh Raj Chadha, my beloved grandmother. She sowed the seed of love for art and has been a custodian of creative curiosity in our family." Chadha's dedication has transformed this exhibition into a platform for artists to showcase their talent and connect with enthusiasts. His commitment to honoring artistic legacies and encouraging creativity shines in every aspect of this remarkable exhibition. 'Detente: A Haven of Artistic Rhapsody' is more than just an art exhibition; it is an incredible source of inspiration and an immersive journey into the artistic vision of modern and contemporary artists. It is a place where art speaks to everyone, inviting them to delve into realms of exploration, connection, and inspiration.

Photos: Pankaj Kumar/Pioneer



CSK AIM TO CONTINUE ASCENT TO TOP THREE

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Despite being hit by the absence of key bowlers due to injuries as well as international commitments, Chennai Super Kings will still like to display their on-field ruthlessness while taking on wooden spooners Gujarat Titans in a 12th round IPL encounter here on Friday. Caught in a mid-table logjam with 12 points from 11 games, the away match against Gujarat will be very important for Rituraj Gaikwad's men as they are still not assured of a play-off berth and a defeat could really dent their chances. With Deepak Chahar and Matheesha Pathirana out of the tournament due to injuries and Mustafizur Rahman back on national duty, CSK's bowling attack sans Ravindra Jadeja and Tushar Deshpande can at best be termed second string. A lot will depend on how the three CSK spinners — Ravindra Jadeja, Mitchell Santner and Moeen Ali bowl on a two-paced track. Yet, the manner in which CSK defended a total of 167 in

Dharamsala against Punjab Kings will give their fans hope of upping the ante against Titans, who have already lost seven in the tournament so far. A win will take them to third place in the standings, ahead of Sunrisers Hyderabad by virtue of better net run-rate. Among the three teams stuck on 12 points, only CSK (+0.700) enjoys a positive net run-rate. On paper, bottom-placed Titans are still in the mix but with a maximum tally of 14 points, it would be very difficult for the Shubman Gill-led side to get into the top four. The side is low on confidence having managed just one win from their last five matches and has struggled in all departments of the game. Their bowling has lost firepower in absence of the injured Mohammed Shami, while the captaincy responsibility has weighed down heavily on the talented opener Gill, who has three single digit scores and a highest of 35 in his last five outings. Sai Sudharsan, Shahrukh Khan and David Miller have also been inconsistent.



The bowling unit needs to improve its performance as the likes of Mohit Sharma and Josh Little have been leaking runs in the Powerplay. While defending a paltry 147, their bowlers gave away 92 runs in the Powerplay against RCB, who chased down the target in just 13.4 overs. With no support from the new ball bowlers, the Afghan spin duo of Noor Ahmad and Rashid Khan also seemed less effective. CSK, on the other hand, have no such concerns with skipper Rituraj Gaikwad leading by example. He has been their top run-getter with 541 runs from 11 innings, just one run away from Virat Kohli in the race for the Orange Cap. Daryl Mitchell was also among runs in a 19-ball 30 against PBKS in their last match as they would just hope that Shivam Dube returns to form after capping successive golden ducks. Their biggest plus in the win over PBKS has been the addition of Simarjeet Singh. Making his debut for CSK as an impact player, Simarjeet

clocked 140-plus consistently and returned with 2/16 from his three overs.
TEAMS (FROM)
Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Matthew Wade, Wriddhiman Saha, Kane Williamson, Abhinav Manohar, B. Sai Sudharsan, Darshan Nalkande, Vijay Shankar, Jayant Yadav, Rahul Tewatia, Noor Ahmad, Sai Kishore, Rashid Khan, Joshua Little, Mohit Sharma, Azmatullah Omarzai, Umesh Yadav, Shahrukh Khan, Sushant Mishra, Kartik Tyagi, Manav Suthar, Spencer Johnson, Sandeep Warrier and BR Sharath.
Chennai Super Kings: Rituraj Gaikwad (c), MS Dhoni (wk), Aravely Avaneesh, Ajinkya Rahane, 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, Simarjeet Singh, Prashant Solanki, Shardul Thakur, Maheesh Theekshana and Sameer Rizvi.

Will KL Rahul step down from LSG captaincy for last two games?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All but out of contention for the IPL play-offs, KL Rahul's future as Lucknow Super Giants skipper is uncertain for the remaining two games after the team received a pasting at the hands of Sunrisers Hyderabad at home on Wednesday. It is a foregone conclusion that the LSG skipper, who was roped in before the auction in 2022 for a record Rs 17 crore, is unlikely to be retained before the mega auctions in 2025. However, there is speculation that the skipper might step down on his own and concentrate on batting during the next two games. "There is a five-day gap before the next game against DC. As of now, no decision has been taken but it is understood that if Rahul plans to just concentrate on his batting for the remaining two games, the management won't mind," an IPL source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Videos of LSG owner Sanjiv Goenka's agitated conversation with Rahul emerged on social media after Sunrisers Hyderabad openers Travis Head (89 not out off 30 balls) and Abhishek Sharma (75 off 28 balls) reached a target of 167 in less than 10 overs. This was after the home team batters struggled to get going on the same track. Worse, Rahul's (29 off 33 balls) batting in the Powerplay has been one of the biggest reasons for LSG's below-par show in the cash-rich league and it seems that Goenka has finally run



out of patience. The India star has scored 460 runs in 12 games and could again cross the 500-run mark for the season but it is his strike-rate of 136.09 which is the problem. LSG are still mathematically in contention as they can reach 16 points by winning their remaining two games — vs Delhi Capitals in New Delhi on May 14 and vs Mumbai Indians at Wankhede on May 17. However, it will be very difficult to massively improve upon the net run-rate (-0.760). In case, Rahul decides to step down, vice-captain Nicholas Pooran, easily the team's most impactful batter in the season, is likely to take over for the remaining two games.

Backing of captain Cummins, SRH support staff matters a lot: Abhishek Sharma

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

The unwavering support of skipper Pat Cummins and the entire think-tank played a big role in his success in the on-going IPL, reckoned Sunrisers Hyderabad opener Abhishek Sharma. The 23-year-old Punjab left-hander fired from all cylinders for Hyderabad this season, making 401 runs from 12 matches and those runs have come at an awesome strike-rate of 205. "Our support staff and Pat (Cummins), the way they think, I have never seen anyone else think like that," Abhishek said on JioCinema Match Centre Live after their record 10-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants here on Wednesday. "They're like, 'Go out there and express yourself. Play as aggressively as you can, we'll back you.' I think that matters a lot," said Abhishek, who has hit 35 sixes so far, highest by



any batter this season. The SRH openers Abhishek (75 not out off 28 balls) and Travis Head (89 not out off 30

balls) scaled down 166 in just 9.4 overs, rewriting the record for the quickest chase of 150-plus in T20 cricket. SRH's total of 167 was also the highest by any team by the end of the tenth over in men's T20s. "I think this approach was something I took on during the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy," said Abhishek who played a key role in Punjab winning the domestic T20 title last season. Abhishek (485 runs from 10 matches) was the second highest run-getter behind Riyan Parag (510) of Assam in last season's SMAT. "I feel when I play this way, look at the ball, and react, my shots come off better and the bowler comes under pressure. I always thought if I play in the IPL, I'll try to maintain this," he added. "BIG FAN OF HEAD": With Head at his explosive best, SRH have smashed many batting records this season including the highest ever IPL total of 287/3 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Abhishek hailed the way Head played spin. "I don't think anyone plays spin better than Travis. The

shots he hit off (Krishnappa) Gowtham, normally batters can't do that, that shows how special he is. "He's very clear, whenever I talk to him, the way he compliments me, I have always been a big fan of him over the last year that I have followed him. "When our understanding was established and our partnership improved, we became good friends off the pitch and have started spending more time," he added. Abhishek then touched upon his strategy against the LSG bowlers, especially pacers. "They were bowling cutters in the middle. I thought the cutters could slow down on their way, but Travis and I had planned to play it the way you would hit a spinner with the spin. "So, if it's an off-cutter, we look to hit towards long-off covers. If it's a leg cutter, obviously we look at mid-wicket or mid-on," he added.

OTHERS SPORTS

UWW suspends Bajrang; SAI approves his training stint abroad but wrestler cancels trip

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wrestling's world governing body UWW has suspended Bajrang Punia till the end of this year following NADA's decision to hand him a provisional suspension for refusing to undergo a dope test. However, in a rather surprising decision, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) sanctioned close to Rs nine lakh for his training abroad despite being well aware of NADA's order. Bajrang, one of the country's most successful wrestlers, was suspended by NADA on April 23 after being served a whereabouts failure notice on April 18. In his defence, the Tokyo Olympics bronze-medallist

said he never refused to give his sample for testing but merely asked the Dope Control Officer to explain the presence of expired kits which were brought to take his sample. Bajrang told PTI that he has not received any communication from the UWW about his suspension but the world governing body while updating its internal system clearly mentions that he stands suspended. "Suspended for the following reason until Dec 31, 2024," reads the update on Bajrang's profile. "Provisionally suspended by NADO IND for alleged ADRV (Anti-Doping Rule Violation)," was the reason mentioned. Interestingly, the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), in its



April 25 meeting, was informed that Bajrang has been sanctioned Rs 8,82,000 plus air fare (actual) for his proposal to train at Dagestan, Russia from May 28. Bajrang's initial proposal was for a 35-day training trip from April 24 but, as per the minutes of MOC meeting, due to "conflicting travel dates due to

his whereabouts failure, he chose to defer the travel plans from 24th April, 2024 to 28th May, 2024." The proposal also included training of his strength and conditioning coach Kaazi Kiron Mustafa Hasan and his sparring partner Jitender. Neither Sandip Pradhan, the SAI Director General, nor Col. Rakesh Yadav, joint CEO TOPS, responded to calls or messages, when PTI reached out for an explanation for the decision to sanction his training. Bajrang confirmed that he had given a proposal for approval to SAI. "I am also surprised that SAI cleared it. I have actually cancelled my plan, I am not going anywhere for training

now," Bajrang said, adding that his lawyer has filed the reply to NADA. In the same MOC meeting Sarita Mor, who competes in the women's 57kg category, was sanctioned Rs 5,96,000 for her training stint in the USA along with her husband and coach Rahul Mann from May 5. Anshu Malik had locked the women's 57kg category Paris Olympics quota during the Asian Qualifiers in Bishkek. Anshu's training stint in Japan, along with her father and coach Dharamveer Malik, was also approved at a cost of Rs 14,67,000. If WFI decides to hold one final selection event, Sarita will have to emerge winner in the trials to challenge quota-winner Anshu.

Diksha set for landmark 100th start on LET



PTI ■ SEOUL

Diksha Dagar will become the first Indian woman golfer to play 100 events on the Ladies European Tour when she tees up at the Aramco Team Series Korea, her first appearance in the series. Diksha, who turned pro in 2019 and won on LET in her first full season, has been a regular on LET since then. Currently ninth on the LET Order of Merit, Diksha turned 23 in December. She is one of the three Indians to tee off at the New Korea Country Club. The other two Indians in the field are Pranavi Urs and Vani Kapoor. Diksha will also lead the team of Czech Tereza Melecka and Korean Do Yeon Park, while Pranavi and Vani are in the team led by Singaporean Shannon Tan, who has already

won once in her rookie season. Diksha was part of the winning team in the Aramco Team Series in London in 2021. That was the year when the series was played across five countries. Diksha has finished in the Top-10 of the individual section only once. That first Top-10 came this year in Tampa Florida, where she was tied sixth. Diksha, a lock-in for the Olympic Games in Paris, is ranked 147th in the world and the second best Indian after Aditi Ashok (53rd). A gold medallist at the 2021 Deaflympics, Diksha is also a recipient of the Arjuna Award in 2023. "Representing India is the biggest honour one can have so I am looking forward to my second Olympic appearance," said Diksha, who is the only

golfer to have played at both the Summer Olympics (2021 Tokyo) and the Deaflympics (2017 and 2021). Diksha is one of only two Indian women to have won on the LET and she has done it twice — once in Investec South African Women's Open in 2019 and in Czech Ladies Open in 2023. "For the present my focus is the LET, where I have won twice and I want to do better," said Diksha, who is also aiming to get to the LPGA Tour in the United States. Diksha, who won once in the Tipsport Czech Ladies Open and was T-3 at the Amundi German Masters and Hero Indian Open last year, was also third in the Order of Merit. She had nine individual Top-10 finishes and one more in the team event in Hong Kong. This season she has had Top-10 finishes in Lalla Meryem Cup in Morocco (9th) and in Tampa Florida (T-6). The busy part of the season is still ahead of her. Vani has been around for some years but is still looking for her first win on the LET, as is Pranavi Urs, who is playing her first full season on the Tour. Meanwhile, the French star Pauline Roussin-Bouchard, who produced a fine winning effort at the Aramco Series event in Singapore last year, is all set to take on winners Danielle Kang and Lydia Ko.

Real Madrid rallies late to beat Bayern 2-1 and reach another Champions League final

AP ■ MADRID

After yet another magical night at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, Real Madrid is back in the Champions League final. The 14-time European champion pulled off another thrilling comeback on Wednesday, rallying to defeat Bayern Munich 2-1 and reach the final for the second time in three seasons.



Like it happened so many times in 2022, Madrid needed some late drama to advance. Joselu scored in the 88th minute and then in stoppage time as Madrid advanced 4-3 on aggregate to set up a final against Borussia Dortmund on June 1 in London. "Well, it has happened again what has happened so many times before," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "It's inexplicable. Fans who push us on, a

fantastic stadium, players who never stop believing - it's simply something magical." Bayern had taken the lead on an Alphonso Davies goal in the 68th - and then deep in stoppage time thought it had equalized but hadn't because of an offside call that Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel described as "disastrous" and "against the rules." Joselu's first goal was a tap in after Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer spilled an easy save. The second was initially called off for offside but was eventually allowed after video review. "You always dream of being part of moments like this," the 34-year-old Joselu said. "Not even my best dreams were as good as this."