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'IMEC will prove to be one of 'biggest game-changers'

ASSIGN HIGHEST PRIORITY TO GOVERNANCE: SHAKTIKANTA

VD's cameo in Kalki 2898 AD makes FANS GO GAGA

QUOTE OF THE DAY The pioneer KCR's intellectual bankruptcy is evident as he wants to topple a government elected by the people...

DON'T MISS...

Hyd housing sales decline by...

Housing sales in Hyderabad witnessed a significant decline of 23% in the second quarter of 2024...

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RS privileges panel holds 12...

The Privileges Committee of the Rajya Sabha on Thursday held 12 opposition MPs...

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Majority of Indian employers plans...

The Indian employment market is likely to see an incremental expansion of more than 6 per cent in the first half this fiscal...

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Bumrah is 1000 times better...

Iconic former India all-rounder Kapil Dev feels Jasprit Bumrah is a '1000 times better' bowler than what he was at his prime...

-SPORTS

KCR has no moral right to criticise defections: CM

Says BRS chief laid foundation for switching parties

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has no moral right to criticise 'defections'...

The CM said that KCR had engineered the defection of 61 MLAs, MLCs and MPs. Doesn't he remember that? he asked...

"KTR and Harish Rao have been saying again and again that the Congress government will fall within a month. The BJP repeated it. The BRS and the BJP exceeded limits by saying that they would topple the Congress government...



KCR ensured the BJP's victory to defeat the Congress. The BRS came third in Medak which they claimed was their fortress...

CM said. He said that KCR who did not allow MLAs to meet him has opened the gates of his farmhouse now. The government invited KCR to State Formation Day celebrations...

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CM gave utmost importance to Telangana's interests P2

UNDER CONG GOVERNMENT...

'Rythu Bharosa will be a model scheme'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Refuting former Agriculture Minister Singireddy Niranjan Reddy, Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwar Rao said that farmers know very well what the BRS government gave...



In a statement issued here on Thursday, Tummala said the BRS government gave Rythu Bandhu sops for 128 days in the Kharif season and 161 days in the Rabi season of 2018...

Rythu Bandhu for 84 days. In 2022-23, it gave for 148 days in Rabi. In 2023, it gave Rythu Bandhu for 108 days.

He said the BRS government wasted Rs 26,500 crore of public funds in 12 phases by giving Rythu Bandhu to hills, stones, mounds, real estate ventures, national highways and banjar lands...

Patancheru BRS MLA Gudem Mahipal Reddy may join BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Gudem Mahipal Reddy may join the BJP soon. It is learnt that the BJP has entrusted the responsibility of making Gudem Mahipal Reddy join the BJP to former MP BB Patil.

Gudem Mahipal Reddy and BB Patil worked together in the BRS. Both leaders are close friends and so the BJP handed over the responsibility of contacting Mahipal to BB Patil...

Meanwhile, M. Raghunandan Rao of the BJP who won in Medak, is also encouraging Gudem Mahipal Reddy to join the BJP as his constituency comes under the Medak LS constituency.

'Two of my life goals fulfilled in one go'

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that two of the goals in his life were fulfilled at the same time. They were keeping BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao away from power and becoming the Chief Minister...

Murmu: Emergency darkest chapter

Says poll results showed people's faith in govt



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday stressed the government's unwavering faith in the Constitution and efforts to make it a part of "public consciousness"...

In her first address to a joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha after Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his third term, she described the poll result as an endorsement of his government's policies while ruing attempts to hurt people's faith in electoral process...

Govt's script, full of lies: Oppn

Opposition leaders on Thursday dubbed the President's address to the joint sitting of both houses of Parliament as a 'script given by the government' that was 'full of lies' and castigated the government over the repeated mention of the 1975 Emergency...

Continued on Page 2

'Will storm back to power like NTR'

KCR conducting constituency-wise meetings

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) is conducting constituency-wise meetings. In a series of scheduled meetings, KCR will meet BRS leaders and activists from all constituencies to discuss the way forward.

On Thursday, hundreds of BRS supporters from Armoor and Huzurabad came to Erravelli to meet their leader. KCR warmly greeted them and posed for photos with them.

KCR assured his supporters that there is no need for any worry. "Our 25-year journey for Telangana is far from over. Just as the people once brought NTR back to power, they will support the BRS with even greater enthusiasm..."

they will support the BRS with even greater enthusiasm. "The day when we return is not far away," he declared amidst cheers.



SEEKING STAY ON NARASIMHA COMMISSION HC adjourns hearing on KCR's plea

The Telangana High Court adjourned to Friday the hearing on a petition filed by former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao seeking a stay on all proceedings of the Justice L. Narasimha Reddy Commission

constituted by the Congress government to inquire into the power purchase agreements made by the BRS government and the construction of two thermal power plants.

Continued on Page 2

NEET-UG CASE

SC issues notice to NTA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the National Testing Agency (NTA) to apprise it whether there is any time limit for raising grievances regarding the OMR sheets provided to the candidates who appeared in NEET-UG 2024.

A vacation bench of Justices Manoj Misra and SVN Bhatti, which issued notice to the NTA on a fresh plea filed by a private coaching centre and few NEET candidates, tagged the petition with the pending matters and listed it for hearing on July 8.

Oppn to raise NEET in Parliament today

Leaders of the INDIA opposition bloc have decided to raise the NEET issue in both houses of Parliament on Friday and members will give notices in this regard, sources have said. The decision was taken at a meeting of the INDIA bloc floor leaders on Thursday...

PHONE-TAPPING Court rejects bail pleas of accused

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a setback for those facing charges in the phone tapping case namely, Bhujang Rao, Praneeth Rao and Tirupatanna, the Nampally court rejected their bail petitions.

The court accepted the police argument that the charge sheet was filed within the stipulated 90-day period. The accused had filed a petition saying that no charge sheet had been filed when they had applied for bail.

Continued on Page 2

YASHASWINI SCHEME Sridhar seeks priority for TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On International Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Day, the Telangana IT and Industries Minister Sridhar Babu met Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi in New Delhi and called for greater priority for the state under the 'Yashaswini' scheme. This scheme aims to select and train one lakh women across tier II and tier III cities to improve their production capacities.

During the meeting, Sridhar also sought the Centre's support for state MSMEs. He requested additional funds for providing technical training to women entrepreneurs at the National Institute for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (NI-MSME) in Hyderabad and for modernising them to meet market needs.



He also called for the immediate release of pending incentives for the MSMEs of Telangana which currently employ 3.64 lakh people directly.

Continued on Page 2

Grouting, sheet piling done at Medigadda Barrage

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Grouting and sheet pile works have been completed at the Medigadda Barrage.

As per the NDSA's recommendations, grouting near the 20th and 22nd piers of the seventh block and sheet piling from the 12th pier to the 22nd pier have been successfully executed.

On Wednesday, the barrage received an inflow of 8,790 cusecs of water from the Pranahita River in Maharashtra which is being released downstream.

Of the barrage's 85 gates, 84 gates have been lifted to release water downstream. Work is going on to remove parts of the 20th gate after it was radially cut.



Officials said that the rearrangement of CC blocks is in its final stage and is expected to be completed within two days. Meanwhile, a team of Telangana government officials led by ENC G. Anil Kumar and ENC (O&M) B. Nagender Rao visited IIT Roorkee to study the Medigadda Barrage model.

ChatGPT answers went 'undetected'; secured better grades than students, finds study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exam graders could have trouble spotting answers generated by AI-based chatbots, researchers said after their study found that these answers not only went undetected but were also graded better than those written by students.

On behalf of 33 'fake students', the researchers at the University of Reading, UK, submitted answers generated by ChatGPT to the examinations system of the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences of the same university.

The team found that 94 per cent of the AI-written answers went undetected. Further, about 83 per cent of the chatbot's answers secured better scores than real students' submissions.



"We found that within this system, 100 per cent AI-written submissions were virtually undetectable and very consistently gained grades better than real student submissions..."

The researchers said their findings should be a "wake up call" for educators across the world and called for the global education sector to evolve in the face of artificial intelligence. "Many institutions have moved away from traditional exams to

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make assessment more inclusive. Our research shows it is of international importance to understand how AI will affect the integrity of educational assessments..."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Steady leadership

Om Birla's re-election as Speaker of Lok Sabha reveals his calibre and his faith in democracy

Om Birla has been re-elected as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. This marks a significant chapter in parliamentary history. Birla's leadership has been characterised by impartiality, a deep commitment to democratic principles, and a steady hand in navigating the complexities of parliamentary proceedings. "Parliament is the temple of democracy. It is our duty to ensure that it functions efficiently and reflects the aspirations of the people," Birla stated. "I am committed to working with all members to ensure that the Lok Sabha continues to be a vibrant and effective forum for democratic deliberation." Om Birla, a seasoned politician from Rajasthan and a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), first assumed the role of Lok Sabha Speaker in June 2019. His re-election signifies a continuity of leadership essential for maintaining the stability and decorum of the lower house. It was indeed heartening to observe that his election was met with widespread support, not only from his party but also from various opposition factions.



This cross-party endorsement reflects Birla's ability to maintain neutrality and manage the house with a balanced approach, fostering an environment where diverse viewpoints can be expressed and debated constructively.

Om Birla's political journey began in the early 1990s, rooted in a commitment to public service and grassroots development. Representing the Kota-Bundi constituency in Rajasthan, Birla has held various significant roles in both state and central politics. As Speaker, Birla has championed initiatives to improve the transparency and efficiency of parliamentary procedures. He has been instrumental in modernising the Lok Sabha's functioning, introducing digital tools and processes to streamline legislative activities and enhance accessibility for the public. Birla's tenure as Speaker has not been without challenges. Birla has had his fair share of controversies. Om Birla has faced allegations of bias, with critics accusing him of partiality in parliamentary proceedings, favouring the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by selectively allowing or disallowing debates on critical issues. Controversies have also arisen from his suspension of opposition MPs for disruptions, which critics argue is a harsh and selectively enforced tactic to suppress dissent. Additionally, Birla has been accused of adopting a high-handed approach toward opposition leaders, often curtailing their speaking time and limiting their opportunities to present viewpoints. Birla has also encouraged greater participation of women and young MPs, fostering a more inclusive and representative parliamentary process. Birla's re-election as Speaker of the Lok Sabha is a reflection of the trust and confidence that the members of the house have in his leadership. His ability to maintain neutrality, coupled with his dedication to upholding the dignity and decorum of the house, has earned him respect across party lines.

PICTALK



Tourists enjoy during rains, at the Taj Mahal, in Agra

India's assertive foreign policy and global aspirations

From bolstering defence capabilities to fostering regional cooperation, India under Modi's leadership navigates a complex geopolitical landscape

Prime Minister Modi's foreign policy initiatives have consistently underscored India's assertiveness and strategic clarity from his first term in 2014 to his current third term in 2024. This period has seen India take decisive actions such as the Balakot Airstrike in 2019 and the banning of TikTok, aimed at countering China and safeguarding national interests. These measures have not been welcomed by neighboring states like China and Pakistan, particularly in light of incidents such as the Galwan clash in 2020, which resulted in the loss of Indian soldiers and prompted a bolstering of border security and a significant increase in the defense budget from approximately Rs 4,73,378 crores in 2020 to Rs 6,21,540 crores presently.



India has advanced from being the 10th largest economy to the 5th largest, showcasing potential for further growth. The Vikas Bharat agenda prioritizes boosting manufacturing industries, evidenced by substantial subsidies totaling \$28 billion across 14 sectors and an additional \$10 billion allocated to the semiconductor industry. This economic expansion surpasses historical parallels, outstripping even Britain's colonial economic hegemony. India's aspirations extend to securing a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, a move contested primarily by China. Despite these challenges, India is forging independent diplomatic pathways, exem-

plified by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) involving India, Japan, the United States, and Australia. While debates on the Quad's efficacy persist, its role in ensuring Indo-Pacific security and countering Chinese influence remains pivotal. Additionally, India is strengthening regional ties through initiatives like BIM-STEC and expanding BRICS to include UAE and Saudi Arabia, key oil suppliers, thereby enhancing its global stature and influence. Modi's third term inauguration signifies a continued assertiveness in foreign policy, aimed at securing India's strategic interests while fostering global partnerships. (The writer is a researcher; views are personal)



PUSHKAR PRIYADARSHI

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Will British Indians back Rishi Sunak?

With the July 4 general election approaching, the key question is whether British Indians will rally behind Sunak and the Conservative Party



VIVEK SHUKLA

Will Rishi Sunak, Britain's first Hindu Prime Minister, remain in office after the upcoming general election on July 4th? Will Sunak's Conservative Party receive the votes of British Indians? Will the Labour Party also receive votes from the Indian diaspora? These are important questions indeed. According to the 2011 British census, there are approximately 1.5 million people of Indian origin in Britain, representing 2.5% of the country's total population. Indians are the largest immigrant group in Britain. They are relatively well-educated compared to other immigrant groups and are considered to be among the wealthiest in Britain.

Hinduja, Lakshmi Mittal, and Swaraj Paul are some prominent Indian-origin individuals who feature in the list of Britain's richest people. Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murthy, daughter of Infosys founder N.R. Narayan Murthy, were ranked 245th in the Sunday Times list of Britain's wealthiest individuals released in May. Historically, Indian immigrants in Britain have leaned towards the Labour Party. It was during the Labour government that India gained independence from British rule. However, recent surveys suggest a growing inclination towards the Conservative Party, the main rival to the Labour Party. Vinod Chavan, a writer residing in London since the 1970s, believes that Hindu voters in Britain may vote en masse for the Conservative Party in the upcoming elections. This news could be a relief for Sunak and his Conservative Party. It's important to understand that when we talk about Indians in Britain, we also include those who have settled in the country from East Africa, the Caribbean Islands, and other places. Sunak's family settled in Britain from Kenya in the 1960s, although his ancestors originally hailed from Punjab. There is also a belief that a large number of Indian residents in Britain became supporters of the Conservative Party after



Narendra Modi became India's Prime Minister in 2014. Hindus comprise the majority of these supporters. The total Hindu population among Indians in Britain is over a million. Modi addressed over 60,000 people of Indian origin at a packed Wembley Stadium in London during his 2015 visit to Britain. Gujarati and Punjabi people were in the majority at that time. Boris Johnson, the then British Prime Minister, was known to proudly call himself 'India's son-in-law'. He was a unique son-in-law. His (second divorced) wife Marina Wheeler's mother, Deep Singh Kaur, was previously married to Sardar Daljit Singh, son of renowned contractor Sir Sobha Singh from New Delhi. Now, let's understand another subtle point. Not all Indian immigrants in Britain think alike politically or support any specific party. It is believed that most Indian Muslims and Sikhs may vote for the Labour Party. They are not fond of the close ties between the Conservative Party and Modi. From the 1960s to the 1980s, a significant number of Indian immigrants settled in Britain from Uganda, Kenya, and the Caribbean Islands. These communities viewed Labour as sympathetic to immigrants.



IN THE PAST 20-25 YEARS, A NEW WAVE OF IMMIGRANTS FROM INDIA HAS ARRIVED IN BRITAIN. THESE ARE DOCTORS, ENGINEERS, IT PROFESSIONALS, ETC. THEY ALL IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS CONSERVATIVE PARTY VOTERS

They were particularly attracted to Labour's commitment to immigrants' rights, especially following the introduction of the Race Relations Act in 1965 by Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Thousands of Indian immigrants came to Britain from Uganda after Uganda's cannibalistic president Idi Amin ordered the expulsion of all Indians from his country within 90 days in August 1972. A deeper analysis reveals that British Hindus have been leaning towards the Conservative Party since 2010. This trend includes wealthy and educated second and third-generation Hindus. In the past 20-25 years, a new wave of immigrants from India has arrived in Britain. These are doctors, engineers, IT professionals, etc. They all identify themselves as Conservative Party voters. The Indian diaspora's disaffection with the Labour Party did not happen overnight. It was triggered by Labour's 2019 resolution calling for "the right of self-determination" for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. This resolution led a large section of the Indian diaspora in Britain to distance themselves from the Labour Party. They saw it as direct interference in India's internal affairs. Meanwhile, Rishi Sunak

became Britain's first Hindu Prime Minister in 2022. This development deepened the bond between Hindus and the Conservative Party. It is still too early to say whether Hindus will vote en masse for the Conservative Party in the upcoming British general election. However, for the first time, British Hindus have released a manifesto outlining their aspirations and expectations from the next government. They say they will only support those who endorse their demands. Hindus are the third-largest religious group in Britain. 29 Hindu organizations have so far endorsed this manifesto. According to the manifesto, "Hindus are the backbone of the British economy. Our contribution to the country's economy is disproportionately high. We are one of the most law-abiding communities. Yet, anti-Hindu hate is on the rise in the country." One of their key demands is for their safety. Will the Hindu votes be split or go to the Conservative Party? Will the Labour and Conservative parties consider the manifesto of the Hindu organizations? (The writer is Columnist and ex-Information Officer, UAE Embassy, New Delhi; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OM BIRLA RE-ELECTED AS LS SPEAKER

Madam — The re-election of NDA nominee Om Birla as Lok Sabha Speaker, following a voice vote, comes as no surprise. Unlike his first term in 2019, where he was elected unopposed, this time, elections were necessary. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to retain familiar faces in key ministries during his third term underscores his administration's commitment to continuity. Om Birla's reappointment makes him the first leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party to be re-elected as Lok Sabha Speaker twice in over two decades. In a democracy, elections are essential and should be welcomed. The position of Lok Sabha Speaker traditionally requires broad support to ensure the smooth functioning of the House. When a Speaker is elected with bipartisan support, it significantly enhances the role's prestige. Opposition in an election does not necessarily indicate a lack of trust. As Om Birla embarks on his second term, he faces the challenge of surpassing his previous performance, which saw a record number of MP suspensions. While no single party can be blamed, it is evident that all parties will need to exhibit greater maturity and understanding this time.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

AFGHANISTAN REACH SEMIFINALS!

Madam — Giant Australia is out of the T20 World Cup 2024 semifinals, while Afghanistan has secured a place, demonstrating the unpredictable nature of cricket and sports. No one can foresee the winner or loser; sometimes, luck plays a significant role. If Bangladesh had won, Australia might have advanced to the semifinals. We often hear quotes like 'well-coordinated team effort'; 'try and try again, you will win at last'; 'rise from the ashes like a phoenix' and 'focus on the issue and proceed in an organized and scientific manner.' Today, we witnessed these principles in action by Afghanistan's well-coordinated

Dynamic Opposition in Parliament



The swearing-in ceremony for Members of Parliament at the 18th Lok Sabha was noteworthy, with the opposition members prominently holding mini copies of the Constitution while taking their oaths. Leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, Dimple Yadav, Avadesh Prasad, and Rakibul Hussain were seen holding these mini constitutions as they swore in as elected MPs. This gesture underscores the opposition's commitment to active governance and to reminding the government of its constitutional responsibilities.

By swearing with the Constitution in hand, the opposition members are enhancing their personal commitment to the nation. Their duty is now twofold: to fulfill their roles as MPs and to safeguard constitutional values, reminding the government of its duties. Time will tell who upholds these values. Meanwhile, it is encouraging to see a dynamic opposition in the Indian Parliament to provide a robust counterbalance to those in power. Kirti Wadhawan, Kanpur

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

cricket team. Their success is a beacon of hope in a world often characterized by substandard and duplicitous behaviors such as wars, violence, and negative activities. The world can learn about peaceful coexistence from two sources: Mahatma Gandhi's India and friendly, cooperative sports teams like Afghanistan's. Yes, indeed!

PVS Sreelekha | Secundrabad

SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE

Madam — Almost 50 per cent of adults in India engaged in insufficient levels of physical activity in 2022, according to a study published in the Lancet Global Health journal. Far more women in India (57 per cent) were found to be insufficiently physically active, compared to men (42 per cent), in line with trends across the South Asian region, the study found. The insufficient levels of physical activity in women in the region were, on average, 14 per cent higher than those in men, it said. The South Asian region also ranked the second high-

est in terms of adults being insufficiently physically active after high-income Asia Pacific region, an international team of researchers, including those from the World Health Organization (WHO), said.

This was up by 5 per cent, from 26.4 per cent of adults worldwide insufficiently engaged in physical activity in 2010. In India, a little over 22 per cent of the adults engaged in insufficient physical activity in the year 2000, while in 2010, close to 34 per cent of the adults were insufficiently physically active, the researchers found. They projected that in 2030, 60 per cent of the adults could be insufficiently engaging in physical activity, should current trends continue. This is indeed a cause of concern. India had 101 million diabetics, 315 million people with hypertension, 254 million with obesity, and 185 million with high levels of LDL cholesterol.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN TOWARDS BETTER TIES WITH BANGLADESH

Sheikh Hasina's visit highlights Bangladesh's pivotal role as a strategic partner for India



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The new Indian Government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is back to its foreign policy agenda, which it has carefully curated in the past decade. Mr Modi was in Italy to attend the G7 meetings as a special invitee, within days of his swearing-in. His swearing-in ceremony was in itself a statement of the stated policy focus of Neighbourhood First.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by leaders from almost all Southeast Asian countries and, some from the Indian Ocean region. Significantly Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was back in India, within a month of her attending the swearing-in ceremony, to further strengthen the bilateral relations. The focus of the meeting as highlighted by Prime Minister Modi during the joint briefing with Sheikh Hasina was "Today we have prepared a futuristic vision for cooperation in new areas. Youth of both countries will benefit from the agreement reached on cooperation in a lot of areas such as Green Partnership, Digital Partnership, Blue Economy, Space, India Bangladesh "Maitri Satellite" will give new heights to our partnership. We have kept in our focus-Connectivity, Commerce and Collaboration." Bangladesh is an important strategic partner for India, not just due to the intimate geographical boundaries, and the shared culture and language, but also as an important corridor connecting India's Northeast to the Bay of Bengal. Prime Ministers of both countries Sheikh Hasina and Narendra Modi have been at the top job for more than a decade now.

They have developed a working relationship, that is hard to match, underscored by the ten meetings these leaders had in the last five years. Both Prime Ministers jointly inaugurated the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline on 18 March in a virtual format. PM Sheikh Hasina also participated in the Inaugural Session of the Voice of the Global South Summit on 11 January 2023 and the second Virtual Voice of the Global South Summit on 17 November 2023. Bangladesh and India share nearly 4000 km of the international border, security of which is an important pillar of the relationship for keeping a check on the drug trade, smuggling, fake currency, human trafficking, and movement of criminals or terrorists.



As an upgrade to the security partnership, India and Bangladesh have over the years worked on a defence cooperation framework. The recent visit of Bangladesh's PM saw both countries put a special focus on enhancing the defence partnership. In his statement PM Modi highlighted "...on further strengthening our defence cooperation, from defence production to modernisation of armed forces. In the Indian Ocean region, we have a common perspective. We welcome Bangladesh's decision to join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. We will continue our cooperation in other regional and international forums, including BIMSTEC."

The strongest pillar of the India-Bangladesh relationship is economics. Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia and India is the biggest trade partner for Bangladesh in Asia. The bilateral trade between the two countries is nearly \$16bn. Besides the much sought-after Ilish fish from Padma River, Bangladesh exports nearly \$2 billion in goods to India, which is the highest in Asia. In the past few years, an aggressive China has tried to take over some of the traditional space, reserved for India in bilateral relationships, through its opaque infrastructure projects. This has been resisted by India by upping the infrastructure partnership and bringing Bangladesh closer towards the Indo-Pacific geopolitical worldview, than a South East Asian outlook. It helps to align Bangladesh with India's multilateral partners such as Australia, Japan, South Korea and beyond in the Middle East. PM Sheikh Hasina's visit as the first state guest of India, under Modi 3.0 is an important reinforcement of the strong bonds between the two neighbours.

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

Macron's calls for snap polls to thwart ultra right



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

This strategic manoeuvre aims to disrupt the growing momentum of the far-right National Rally and prevent further erosion of his political standing

Macron's Election Gambitby Nilantha Ilangamuwa Emmanuel Macron, the youngest president in French history, is known for taking risks, as evidenced by his recent call for snap elections to avoid further humiliation after a significant defeat in the European Union Parliamentary Elections, where his main contender garnered over 50% of the votes. This move, the first since 1997, invokes Article 12 of the French Constitution, allowing the president to end the Assemblée Nationale's term early, thus advancing the end of the current five-year term from 2027 to 2024. The new parliamentary elections are set for June 30 and July 7, catching many of Macron's allies off guard. France is at a crossroads. As former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin once mentioned, "Politics is not about morality, it's about efficiency." Throughout French history, there have been five notable instances of snap elections.

In 1962 and 1968, Charles de Gaulle dissolved the Assemblée Nationale following a motion of no confidence and widespread protests, respectively, securing significant victories both times. François Mitterrand used snap elections in 1981 to secure a Socialist majority and again in 1988 to address political "cohabitation." Jacques Chirac's 1997 snap election gamble backfired, leading to a left-wing coalition victory. Currently, Macron faces low approval ratings and a paralyzed parliament, with the National Rally (Rassemblement National or RN) capitalizing on the situation. By calling for snap elections, Macron aims to confront the populist movement and disrupt their momentum, leveraging the more challenging two-round system of French national elections compared to the single-round European elections. Marine Le Pen and RN president Jordan Bardella, the party's candidate for PM, are gearing up for the snap elections, which will have higher stakes compared to the European elections. Macron, aiming to dramatize the choice facing the French, challenged voters in a televised address, asking if they truly want to be governed by the far right.

What exactly is the 'far right,' a term frequently echoed in European politics? Often, it's a convenient label used to obscure the significant failures of so-called neo-liberals. When individuals dare to address real societal issues on the ground, rather than fabricating crises to vilify "designated enemies" like Vladimir Putin, they are often hastily labelled as "far-right" or conservative. Instead of accurate representation, this knee-jerk reaction by warmongers, fueled by Western media, reflects bias. Recent events in France, where President Macron's centrist coalition faced electoral setbacks, highlight this skewed narrative. The term "far right" is wielded without nuance, disregarding the diverse ideological spectrum and legitimate concerns championed by these movements. The shifting landscape of French politics challenges outdated perceptions. Parties like Marine Le Pen's National Rally are not accurately depicted as "far-right"; instead, they signify a redefinition of mainstream conservatism. Their platforms, focusing on issues such as controlled migration and national defence, resonate with many voters disenchanted with traditional leadership. Understanding these complexities demands a departure from simplistic labels and a recognition of Europe's evolving political dynamics. While Marine Le Pen may not



mirror Trump's trajectory in France, it's crucial to acknowledge the significant support they garner from the public, despite mainstream media's continued misrepresentation. Blaming perceived evils is often easier than confronting one's own side's failures.

In this context, polarized politics in France are teaching a new lesson about the deceptive nature of labelling certain movements as "far right" to deflect attention from the failures of neoliberalism. Unlike the European elections with a 50% turnout, local watchdogs asserted that the national elections could see 70% voter participation, potentially mobilizing moderates and reviving the anti-populist front. Macron's team believes voters will scrutinize RN's policy proposals, particularly as the autumn session promised censure motions likely to collapse Prime Minister Gabriel Attal's government. As per the London Guardian, Macron's gamble may yield three outcomes. First, he might recover his majority, although this seems unlikely given his unpopularity and the normalization of the "far right" across Europe. Second, the National Rally could win a majority, leading to an unprecedented cohabitation with a populist right-wing parliament, which Macron might see as a chance to highlight their governance shortcomings. This scenario poses significant risks as an RN-controlled parliament would handle crucial domestic policies, potentially clashing with Macron on issues like immigration and national security, while creating tensions with Brussels due to RN's nation-first policies. The third scenario, considered most probable by analysts, is that RN increases its seats but fails to gain an absolute majority, resulting in a splintered parliament and potential deadlock. Macron may seek alliances with the mainstream centre-right or centre-left, but success is uncertain. This fragmented parliament could lead to increased political instability.

However, one cannot forget that it was Macron who stood firm against NATO's proposal to establish a liaison office in Japan, marking a significant division within the alliance on the eve of a crucial summit. Macron's decisive opposition reflects his insistence that NATO should not stray from its original North Atlantic focus, particularly amid escalating tensions with China. His resolute stance accentuates France's commitment to maintaining the alliance's core principles, despite pressure to expand its reach into Asia. Macron's leadership in this matter highlights his dedication to upholding NATO's foundational principles and preserving its strategic direction in the face of evolving global challenges. Macron's recent interview with Le Parisien sheds light on evolving European attitudes towards Ukraine, acknowledging the potential necessity for ground operations in the future. This represents a significant policy shift amidst rising tensions between NATO and Russia. Macron's acknowledgement of the need to prepare for all scenarios, including ground interventions, signals a departure from previous official denials and underscores the increasing seriousness of the situation in Ukraine. Additionally, France's plan to send Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets adds a tangible dimension to the discussion, indicating a more assertive stance from France and its European allies in response to the ongoing conflict. This regional tension exacerbated France's already unstable domestic political situation, leading to a humiliating defeat for Macron and bolstering Le Pen's populist narrative. According to local media outlets, the political parties in France held emergency talks to explore potential alliances at the beginning of this week following the announcement of a snap legislative election. The unexpected and risky decision to hold elections soon could potentially shift major political



MACRON'S LEADERSHIP IN THIS MATTER HIGHLIGHTS HIS DEDICATION TO UPHOLDING NATO'S FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND PRESERVING ITS STRATEGIC DIRECTION IN THE FACE OF EVOLVING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

India-Arab green strategic partnership: Pioneering sustainable development

This initiative highlights the shared commitment of the two countries to foster a greener and more resilient future

The India-Arab Green Strategic Partnership represents a collaborative initiative aimed at enhancing sustainable development and combating climate change. In today's world, where environmental concerns hold significant global importance, the Green Strategic Partnership between India and Arab countries stands out as a beacon of collaboration and innovation.

Historical and Cultural Context: India's historical ties with Arab countries stretch back centuries, rooted in cultural exchanges, ancient trade routes, and shared values. Today, this relationship goes beyond cultural affinity to encompass strategic economic partnerships and mutual geopolitical interests. The



PADMALOCHAN DASH

Green Strategic Partnership builds on this foundation by integrating environmental sustainability into the bilateral agenda, reflecting a modern approach to diplomacy in our changing world. **Objectives and Strategic Imperatives:** At its core, the partnership seeks to harness the strengths of both India and Arab countries in advancing green technologies, renewable energy solutions, water management practices, and climate resilience strategies. India, as a rising global player in renewable energy deployment and innovation, offers practical solutions to the challenges faced: **Renewable Energy Leadership:** India excels in renewable energy technologies like solar photovoltaic and wind power. This aligns well with Arab countries' goals to diversify their energy mix away from fossil fuels. For example, India's collaboration with the UAE has seen investments in solar parks and wind energy projects, demonstrating tangible outcomes of this partnership. **Water Security and Management:** Water scarcity poses a critical challenge for both regions, exacerbated by

climate change and rapid urbanisation. India contributes practical solutions through its expertise in sustainable water management practices. Initiatives like community-driven water conservation and wastewater treatment can be adapted and shared with Arab countries facing similar challenges. **Climate Change Mitigation:** The impacts of climate change require urgent mitigation efforts. India has committed to ambitious targets under the Paris Agreement, focusing on renewable energy deployment and emissions reduction. Collaborative projects with Arab countries aim to implement climate-resilient infrastructure. **Sustainable Urbanisation and Biodiversity Conservation:**

As urban populations grow, sustainable urban planning becomes crucial to reduce environmental footprints and improve quality of life. India promotes green building standards, urban green spaces, and effective waste management practices through initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission. Collaborative projects with the UAE in sustainable urban development integrate renewable energy solutions and eco-friendly infrastructure. **Energy Efficiency:** Improving energy efficiency is key to reducing carbon footprints and enhancing energy security. India's initiatives like the Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT) scheme for industrial energy efficiency offer practical models for collaboration.

Through knowledge exchange and technology transfer, India supports efforts to optimise energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. **Green Finance and Investment:** India's experience in issuing green bonds and establishing green funds, alongside initiatives like the National Clean Energy Fund (NCEF), provides pathways for financing renewable energy, energy storage, and sustainable infrastructure projects. **Technological Innovation:** Collaboration in research and development (R&D) is crucial for advancing green technologies. India's vibrant start-up ecosystem and research institutions contribute to innovations in areas such as green hydrogen production and bat-

tery storage technologies. Joint innovation hubs and technology parks facilitate technology transfer and accelerate the adoption of sustainable innovations. Despite its potential, the Green Strategic Partnership faces several challenges: **Geopolitical Dynamics:** Diverse geopolitical interests and regional conflicts among Arab countries and India may impact the partnership's cohesion and operational effectiveness. India's role as a neutral mediator and advocate for collaborative solutions helps navigate geopolitical complexities and build trust among partner countries. **Technological and Financial Barriers:** Scaling up renewable energy projects and adopting advanced environmental tech-

nologies demand substantial investments and technological advancements. **Policy Alignment:** Harmonising national policies, regulatory frameworks, and institutional capacities is crucial for seamless collaboration and effective implementation of joint initiatives across borders. India advocates for policy coherence through dialogue platforms such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and bilateral strategic dialogues, facilitating alignment on climate goals and regulatory standards. (The author is an ICSSR-Post Doctoral Fellow, School of National Security Studies, Central University of Gujarat. The views expressed are personal)

'I FELT UNEASY, DISTURBED AND VIOLATED ON SOLO TRAVEL'

SHRADDHA NEWARE

South Indian cinema actress Komica Anchal was seen sporting exotic looks in her recent social media posts, enjoying the picturesque beauty of Kenya. She got to explore all that nature had to offer and also spotted a wide array of wildlife roaming in their natural habitat. Her travels involved an immersive cultural experience, with unique dining and more. She found Kenyan people interesting; they were nice and friendly during her travels.

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, she speaks of the thrilling journey, "Kenya is an amazing destination for people who love to explore wildlife and the coastal area. It has stunning natural beauty, including Savannahs, snow-capped mountains, lush forests, golden beaches and massive wilderness areas."

Kenyan Savannah, she says, is a beautiful place to be; it is very calm and peaceful. "When I visited Kenya, unfortunately, it started raining after a while. But the occasional rains brought new life to the Savannah grassland. I got to see large families of wildlife grazing in the wild. There are no words to describe walking among the animals. I still can't get over the landscape of Kenya," says the *Hatya* fame.

The actress, who said she only ever saw wild animals on school trips to the Zoo, had a once-in-a-lifetime experience! "Kenya is one of the best safari destinations. Safari is an adventurous place where people in a caged vehicle are moving around the animals, and during the drive, you are not allowed to get out of the car. I have never experienced viewing massive groups of animals. I visited Nairobi's Giraffe Center as well. I loved the big, googly eyes of little giraffes and enjoyed feeding them too. That was a priceless moment of my life!"

As a model, Komica is also revered for elegant fashion. As she continues to make perfect fashion statements during her travels, she is more than thoughtful about her style. "I always dress respectfully wherever I go and respect the culture of that place. For me, being comfortable in any outfit is the most important thing, but I also

want to look classy at the same time. People who reside in tropical areas have brighter clothing styles. I wore vibrant coloured comfy and classy outfits with beaded jewellery. If it was a sunny day, I wore elegant hats."

Enriching herself in authentic Kenyan culture and tribal people, she shares, "Kenya has a rich cultural heritage. I loved interacting with local communities and experiencing traditional dances. I was staying in Nairobi, so I went for a village museum tour at Bomas, Kenya." The actress mentioned seeing a variety of tribal groups and also rocking while performing dances and singing along! The locals welcomed her and hosted her for an authentic meal of traditional staple food *Ugali* alongside greens and proteins.

For her, it's always about staying in quality hotels. She says taking luxurious baths or even booking a relaxing spa session, chilling by the pool, and drinking cocktails is always good for the soul. While on vacation, she also keeps up with her fitness regime.

She danced her heart away in the middle of a Kenyan song to Bollywood song! However, "People around me were making my video without my consent and hooting! I felt uncomfortable because of all the eyes on me in an unfamiliar country. I stopped dancing, and could not enjoy the rest of my night. Later, when I put my selfie up, tagging the location, people started sending me unwelcome texts. There was no end to it!"

While flying back to India, a man approached her, saying, 'Oh! You are Komica Anchal, right? I saw you dancing in the pub. You were impressive!' Speaking of the horrifying experience, she shares, "After a couple of days, I wanted to watch TV and rest in flight. And this person was bothering me with unwanted attention. I felt uneasy, disturbed and violated, like I didn't deserve to travel alone. I was stalked, stared at and approached by people in an inappropriate way. I can handle such things, but I could see my courage slipping away that time."

Having studied in Mussoorie, she's always been a mountain lover too. She personally feels, "Mountains are prettier than beaches and lakes. They are calm and soothing. I have studied in Mussoorie, Dehradun. They are known for their alluring mountain views and greenery. So, mountains make me happy. I feel refreshed amidst the mountains."

Her go-to place for rejuvenation has always been Dubai. "If I am stressed, then planning a trip to Dubai with friends sounds like a fun idea. It has endless fun, the best shopping destinations, and the best nightlife!"

However, on the other hand, she feels, "Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the perfect destinations for sightseeing, water sports and various activities. It's a stunning land of white sand beaches, tropical rain forests, mangroves and exciting adventure activities. The island has delicious local cuisine and great shopping destinations. I can't wait to travel there again!"

As we head towards the end of the interview, she brings in an exclusive revelation: "I would like to go on vacation with Kartik Aaryan. I find him cute to be my travel buddy."



Komica Anchal, the South Indian beauty, was spotted taking in Kenya's breathtaking scenery. This week, *The Pioneer* will be collaborating with the actress for our Travelogue column, where she will share some special insights from her trip.

Celebrating working moms

The Inspire Beyond Motherhood Awards were started in 2019 to recognise mothers across different fields who had re-established their careers or completely changed tracks. Some of them went on to become entrepreneurs, bloggers, or chefs, as they found their passion after becoming mothers. Starting out in Mumbai in its first year, the awards are now being held across the nation. In a novel approach, Namrata Sadhvani partnered with Rohini Deepthi Natti to run a community, 'Oye Hyderabad', that is the community partner for the second year in a row for these awards. Speaking about what these awards are supposed to signify to these women, 'Oye Hyderabad's co-founder Namrata Sadhvani shares, "Beyond motherhood means your life doesn't have to come to a standstill once you become a mother. You can choose to excel in whichever field you want to and motherhood should not be a limiting factor for you."

The event was organised to create buzz around the actual awards, reportedly being held in September. Shezi M, radio presenter, Radio Mirchi, who earlier received this award shares, "After I won an award with them, I realised it's such an amazing platform for a bunch of women who are doing fabulous work! But in true mommy style, they go unnoticed and underappreciated."

According to sources, the award partners with a cause each year. This year's cause is the financial literacy of mothers. Aiming to educate mothers so that they too are able to

become financially literate and have a say in the financials of their household. Women with a variety of backgrounds and working sectors were seen actively participating in the event. Some are coming from a corporate background, some are content creators, some are wellness experts and a few are journalists and authors.

Under the guidance of the event's guest speaker, Deepika Choudhary, chartered accountant, participants learned the importance of being financially secured. "SIP is not just Systematic Investment Plan, but it is Save, Invest, Prosper!"

During the talk many participants had a few burning questions, answered promptly by the financial expert. Krishna Madhuri, content creator, shares her views on the events theme of financial literacy, "We usually speak about financial independence for women. Along with independence, we need to know more about being financially literate."

Announcement of nominations opening on July 1, was followed by a lively session discussing each other's field of work and motherhood. As the event neared its end, they emphasised participation and nomination. Rohini Deepthi Natti, another content creator and co-founder 'Oye Hyderabad', mentions wanting a lot more nominations for the award, "The awards are not dependent on how many followers you have on social media, just to be clear. It's purely based on work and the impact that women are creating in our world, irrespective of their presence on social media."



Review

Sharmajee Ki Beti: United by surnames, divided by challenges

TEJAL SINHA

Tahira Kashyap Khurrana makes her directorial debut with *Sharmajee Ki Beti*. In addition to directing, Tahira wrote the narrative for this endearing movie, contributing a new and perceptive viewpoint. The slice-of-life film is now streaming on Amazon Prime Video.

PLOT

Sharmajee Ki Beti captures middle-class life through three different stories of the Sharmas. Basically, the film is about the lives of the Sharmas—not one, but three Sharma families (Jyoti Sharma, Kiran Sharma and Tanvi Sharma).

STORY

The film begins with Swathi Sharma (played by Vanshika Taparia), who visits a gynaec with her mother, Jyoti Sharma (played by Sakshi Tanwar). Swathi, just like any other growing teen, is concerned about her body and feels insecure about not getting her period yet. She shares her concern with her best friend, Gurveen Sharma (played by Arista Mehta). Jyoti is a teacher at a coaching center who worries about her payment being cut due to the half-day she had to take just so she could take Swathi to the doctor. She instructs her husband, Sudhir Sharma (played by Sharib Hashmi), to get their daughter ready for school, while Swathi often feels she's always looking messy.

The story then unfolds around Kiran Sharma (played by Divya Dutta), a housewife who is often forced to settle for less. Hailing from Patiala, she desires to enjoy the poise but figures out how the city dwellers are perennially on the run. She asks her husband, Vinod Sharma (played by Parvin Dabas), to go to London for a trip. With no



THE HIGHLIGHTS

Sharmajee Ki Beti offers a stunning depiction of life's highs and lows from the multigenerational perspectives of its five female leads. Because it features universal themes of family dynamics, women's empowerment and personal growth, it will appeal to audiences of all ages. The important subjects covered in the movie include self-dis-

covery, women's empowerment and overcoming adversity with resilience. It offers a complex depiction of the challenges and victories faced by contemporary metropolitan women that is destined to stick with audiences long after the credits have rolled.

While Jyoti is constantly hurt by Swathi's tantrums about her not worrying about her daughter and questioning her for things like 'what do you even know about me?' This perfectly sums up the struggles of making things right and respecting the love between a mother and her daughter. The blend of humour and themes wins a cookie point. For instance, when Kiran's house help Chotu (played by Sushant Ghadge) humorously taunts her, saying, '5 minute main London se Byculla zoo'. The scene very well highlights how a middle-class housewife has to give up on her dreams, being dependent on her husband to take her out. And as the voiceover says, 'Udaan hai London waali, but land hoti hai balcony mai', that perfectly blends the emotions pretty well.

Tanvi being constantly confused about her relationship with her boyfriend sums up many current relationships, where one wants their partner to act according to them. Just like in one of the scenes, her boyfriend taunts Tanvi for behaving and dressing up like a girl, while she, on the other hand, is simply comfortable. Featuring powerhouse performances by Sakshi Tanwar, Divya Dutta and Saiyami Kher, the impressive talents of young actors Arista Mehta and Vanshika Taparia highlight how teens dealing with body image issues strive to be conventionally attractive, and so well!

Their authentic performances infuse depth into the narrative, making the film simply unmissable for a wide and diverse group of audiences. A special mention: Sushant Ghadge, who portrays Chotu, Kiran's housekeeper, has the best lines in the movie, without a doubt.

THE DRAWBACKS

While *Sharmajee Ki Beti* excels in its narrative depth, the growth of the actors and the situations, some viewers may get slightly bored mid-way.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Tahira's ability to blend satirical humour with heartfelt moments creates a balanced and engaging narrative that will appeal to viewers of all ages.

Written by Tahira, the movie is packed with humour that pops out of the most unexpected places; you'll be laughing before the punches are delivered. There are also charming moments that make you feel choked up. Not to give too much away, but be prepared for two very important scenes starring Divya and Sakshi, respectively, that will leave you feeling very overwhelmed. The movie presents a variety of viewpoints without disparaging anything or anyone, from appreciating one's body to having no regrets about personal decisions. Antara Lahiri's deft editing enhances the story, even though the film has a runtime of less than two hours. Rakesh Harida's cinematography makes sure that the entire movie has a fun vibe to it. The soundtrack wonderfully complements the story.

VERDICT

Sharmajee Ki Beti skillfully conveys the essence and principles of Indian middle-class households. It's a celebration of their goals and desires, as well as the little but important events that shape their lives. As a family, seeing it together can lead to insightful discussions and thoughtful insights. The twists and turns that the narrative brings out for the viewers make them hooked till the end, especially after the mid-way scenes.





● Vasuki Anand



● Dr. Preeti Adusumilli



● Navneeta Mandhana



● Rajani Marda



● Namrata Baldwa



● Anju Baldwa



● Shoba





● Abhilasha Nagori

At the Taj Deccan, Tollywood actress Vasuki Anand and Preeti Adusumilli, made an appearance at the Samanvay Women's Club's 13th installation. The newly formed committee is led by President Rajani Marda, Vice President Namrata Baldwa, Secretary Abhilasha Nagori, Treasurer Anju Baldwa and Joint Secretary Navneeta Mandhana.




The first premium café in Hyderabad, Coimbatore Filter Coffee (CFC) opened at Vasavi MPM Grand, next to Ameerpet metro. Actress Ananya Nagalla opened this café, which aims to provide coffee lovers with an upscale experience.




Sowgandhi, an aviation scientist, congratulated Dr. Hypno Kamalakar's daughter Saroja Roy on her successful completion of a PhD program in human factors psychology in Bengaluru.





During an event conducted at Taj Krishna, Udaya Bhaskar, the Director General of Pharmexcil, shared views with the media on Indian Pharma Exports: Futuristic Opportunities and Challenges. He further mentioned that a recent EY FICCI analysis indicated that the Indian pharmaceutical business is expected to reach a valuation of \$ 130 billion by the end of 2030 due to the rising consensus around the provision of new and innovative medications to patients.



The first-ever 100% free Primary/Bridge school has been established by the Helping Hand Foundation, primarily for children from first-generation families who work in the severely vulnerable slum of Errakunta, which is located inside the municipal limits of Jalpally.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



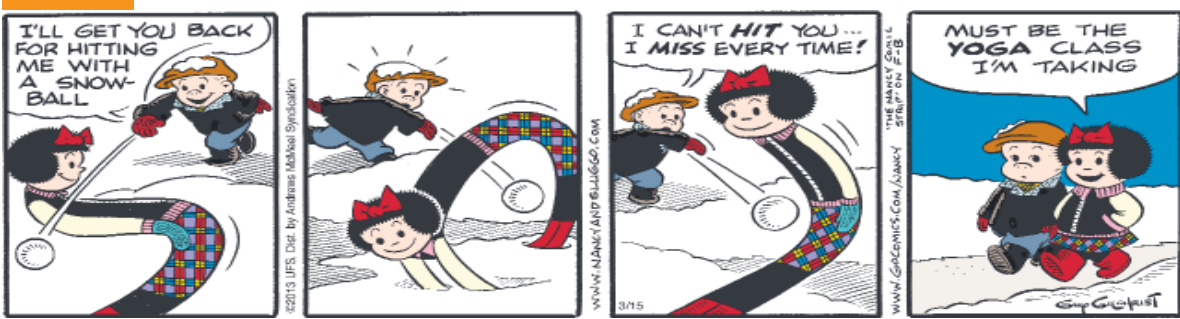
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6		7	8	
9		10		
12	13		14	15
17			16	
19				

NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

DIFFICULTY RATINGS: ★★★★★

ACROSS

- A pain in your mouth
- Smash
- A huge person
- One quarter of thirty-six
- Boil water in this
- Scared
- Lost blood
- Cut into two equal parts
- Sooner than expected
- Completely tired out

DOWN

- Sea
- Carry away
- Quarrelled
- This beats rhythmically inside your chest

SOLUTION

A	M	S	E	A					
T	L	O	N	A	C				
G	H	I	L	L	V	E	R	S	E
S	L	O	G	E	D				
T	H	I	S						
T	R	A	N	B	A	L	L	O	N
C	H	Z	I	E					
A	L	O	N	E	L	O	V	E	D
L	V	E	R	S	E				
R	E	P	O	R	T	E	R		





Siva Karthikeyan to collab with Cibi Chakaravarthi for his next

Currently, Siva Karthikeyan is busy working on a huge action thriller helmed by director A.R. Murugadoss. The main female character is portrayed by Rukmini Vasanth. The antagonist in the movie is portrayed by Bollywood actor Vidyut Jammal. According to the most recent rumours, Siva Karthikeyan would probably collaborate with the young director Cibi Chakaravarthi after finishing the movie with A.R. Murugadoss. They have previously worked together on the critically acclaimed box office hit *Don* film. There are talks for Rashmika Mandanna to fill the major female role. It's possible that well-known actor SJ Suryah may play a big part in the movie. The team's official confirmation is keenly anticipated by fans. In the meantime, September is when Sivakarthekeyan's movie *Anaran* is supposed to be released. He's portraying a formidable army officer in this film. The audience's reaction to the teaser has been amazing. The leading lady is played by the stunning Sai Pallavi.

Kalki 2898 AD on par with H'wood superhero franchises

SHRADDHA NEWARE

Under Nag Ashwin's direction, this massive project, *Kalki 2898 AD*, takes place in a post-apocalyptic world where the city of 'Kashi' is the lone bastion of hope. It is unlike any other Indian film because of its distinctive fusion of science fiction and mythology.

PLOT: Based on the epic of Hindu mythology *Mahabharata*, *Kalki 2898 AD* takes place in a dystopian future known as *Kalyug*. The story revolves around Kalki's expected birth, which is meant to restore God's presence and put an end to the world's suffering.

HIGHLIGHTS: *Kalki 2898 AD* has a lot of intricate action scenes and is extremely stunning. It is on par with Hollywood superhero franchises thanks to its superior visual effects. The employment of several ethnic groups in a post-apocalyptic world, rather than only Indians, was one of the intricate aspects that helped to keep the viewers

interested in the story. It will appeal to those who prefer epics and action-packed films because of its U/A rating. Actors and filmmakers make noticeable cameos that add their unique flair to the narrative. It's fun to see Bhairava and Bujji joke around with each other.

DRAWBACKS: Despite the story's attempt to depict each character's development concurrently, there were moments when it was challenging to follow up. Prolonged and drawn-out action scenes tried their hardest to elicit oohs and aahs from the audience, but they couldn't hold their attention for very long. Although the addition of the AI droid/vehicle was performed fairly successfully, it did not explain to the audience why or how Bhairava even possessed this technology.

PERFORMANCES: Above all, *Kalki 2898 AD* is the tale of Ashwatthama's self-redemption following his effort to break the Pandava dynasty by sending his Brahmastra in the direction of Uttara's (Malvika Nair) womb. Krishna grants him a second opportunity at

salvation even as he curses him to spend all of eternity realising his foolishness. And as Ashwatthama, Amitabh steals the show.

TECHNICALITIES: The fight scenes in *Kalki 2898 AD* are a little strangely staged, especially the ones that call for a lot of visual effects or occur in close quarters. The impression that everything is taking place on a sound stage is unavoidable. That being said, the battle scenes in Ashwatthama are not in the same league. Even while he is cutting the adversary to shreds, his entire eight feet move in what appears to be a synchronised dance. Even though he is hurling concrete at Bhairava's head, he exudes grace. He and Bhairava-Bujji engaged in a specific combat scenario that highlights the fabled figure's level of fighting proficiency.

VERDICT: Overall, it's a great experience that is visually spectacular, entertaining and occasionally musically agreeable. It maintained the promise of action in a typical Tollywood manner.



DIRECTOR AND WRITER: Nag Ashwin
PRODUCED BY: Ellipsis Entertainment production
DIALOGUES BY: Nag Ashwin, Sai Madhav Burra
CINEMATOGRAPHY: Djordje Stojiljkovic
CAST: Prabhas, Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Deepika Padukone, Disha Patani, and Keerthy Suresh (Voice-over)
MUSIC BY: Santosh Narayanan
EDITED BY: Kotagiri Venkateshwara Rao
RATING: 3.5



VD's cameo in KALKI 2898 AD makes fans go gaga

Vijay Deverakonda is a heartthrob who has always captured hearts with his charming appearance. Whenever this handsome hunk appears on screen, he captivates the audience. A similar phenomenon was witnessed

when he made a 2-minute cameo in *Kalki 2898 AD* and fans couldn't help but talk about it endlessly. It has indeed come as a big surprise for everyone. Vijay Deverakonda's cameo in *Kalki 2898 AD* is truly causing a stir among fans.

Everyone is going gaga in the cinema halls and on social media as well. With the film having just been released, fans are raving about Vijay's cameo. Well, this is indeed an example of Vijay Deverakonda's massive fan

following. Being called the lover boy of the industry, Vijay never leaves a chance to surprise his fans and steal the hearts of the people. He is not only the lover boy on screen, but he has also captured the hearts of millions of fans nationally and globally.

ADAH SHARMA TO PLAY 'BADASS' IN RAPCHICK REETA

Actress Adah Sharma is all set to play a "badass, witty" titular character in the upcoming show titled *Rapchick Reeta*. A source close to the development shared, "Many actresses were considered, but the team unanimously zeroed in on Adah. She has excellent comic timing and a huge youth fan following. She is also very versatile, so she's perfect for the part of Reeta. Reeta is badass, witty, kind and a lot of fun. After *Sunflower*, *The Kerala Story* and *Bastar: The Naxal Story*, she has proved that she is one of the best among the young actresses." When contacted, Adah was tight-lipped and said: "Yes, I'm doing something exciting, but the team will make an announcement soon." The show will air on Disney+ Hotstar. Adah will also be making her singing debut next month with her first single, which is a rendition of the *Shiv Tandav Stotram*. The actress has also starred in South Indian films, including the Telugu movies *Heart Attack*, *S/O Satyamurthy*, *Kshanam*, *Subramanyam for Sale*, *Kalki* and *Question Mark*. Adah has also appeared in the Kannada movie *Rana Vikrama*. Tamil films like *Idhu Namma Aalu* and *Charlie Chaplin 2* and had a special appearance in the song *Maaman Waiting* from the movie *Idhu Namma Aalu*. The actress next has *The Game of Girgit* in the pipeline.



Shankar to complete Game Changer's production works after Indian 2 release

Fans have been eagerly awaiting the announcement of the release date for Ram Charan and Shankar's political action drama *Game Changer*, which has been in development for some time. With *Indian 2*'s release the next month, Shankar is occupied with its promotion right now. Shankar was asked to discuss *Game Changer* in an interview. "The movie is almost done. There are ten more days left to shoot. I will complete the production portion following the release of *Indian 2*. After that, I'll lock the finished video and focus on the post-production

tasks. We'll make a choice after all the work is finished," he revealed. The film will be released as soon as it can. The film stars Kiara Advani as the lead role; other actors include SJ Surya, Srikanth, Anjali, Jayaram and others in vital roles. The film is being bankrolled by Dil Raju under the banner of Sri Venkateshwara Creations. SS Thaman is composing the tunes.



Vyjayanthi Movies' next with Pavan Sadineni

Chalasanani Ashwini Dutt's Tollywood production company, Vyjayanthi Movies, is presently preoccupied with the release of *Kalki 2898 AD*, the much awaited film that stars Prabhas and Deepika Padukone in the key parts. The newest rumour has it that Vyjayanthi Movies has given the go-ahead for a new story told by the gifted and driven director Pavan Sadineni, whose web series *Paruvu* on ZEE5 has been an enormous hit lately. It is anticipated that an official announcement would follow the release of *Kalki 2898 AD*. There are rumours that Dulquer Salmaan will be the star of this upcoming, highly anticipated film.



Double Ismart title track shoot underway in Hyd

Ustaad Ram Pothineni and director Puri Jagannadh are back with *Double Ismart*, which marks another thrilling collaboration between them after the blockbuster *iSmart Shankar*. This new venture promises to elevate the excitement and entertainment quotient to a new level

with a gripping storyline and high-octane action sequences. The addition of Sanjay Dutt as the antagonist to the cast adds a significant layer of intrigue and star power, making this project one of the most eagerly awaited films in Indian cinema. The film has Kavya Thapar as the female lead. This mass action entertainer is announced for release on August 15th for Independence Day Eve. The title song shoot is currently underway in Hyderabad, with the entire team putting their best foot forward to ensure it becomes a visual and auditory treat for the audience. The song, which is expected to be a chartbuster, features Ram Pothineni in his signature energetic style, promising electrifying dance moves and captivating visuals. Jani Master is choreographing this song with some terrific mass moves for the energetic mass tune composed by Mani Sharma and the official announcement about the song release will be made soon. Produced by Puri Jagannadh and Charmme Kaur. Sam K Naidu and Gianni Giannelli are the cinematographers.



Arjun Ambati, Aishwarya Pisse in Agnisakshi



Disney+ Hotstar announced the launch of its first long-format show in Telugu, *Agnisakshi*, which will premiere on July 12. Starring the popular television couple Arjun Ambati and Aishwarya Pisse, this riveting drama promises to captivate audiences with its intense storyline and powerful performances. *Agnisakshi* delves into the emotional journey of Shankar, a dedicated police officer haunted by the untimely loss of a beloved family member. His life takes an unexpected

turn when he encounters Gowri, a young woman grappling with her own grief. Gowri dreams of becoming a police officer like her father but faces the crushing disappointment of failing her exam. As fate intertwines their lives, Shankar and Gowri find themselves connected by a mysterious murder, setting the stage for a gripping narrative. *Agnisakshi* is filled with suspense, emotion and unexpected twists that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

SDT's next tentatively titled Sambarala Yeti Gattu

Sai Dharam Tej carefully chooses his projects and is certainly not in a rush to work on consecutive movies. He is currently working on a movie that Rohit KP, a rookie director, is directing. According to the latest updates, *Sambarala Yeti Gattu* is the intended title for the movie. For the film's filming, an enormous set is being constructed for the historical drama action movie.

The film's produc-

er, Niranjan Reddy, is paired with Aishwarya Lekshmi in the major role. According to reports, Sai Dharam Tej will be seen in a fresh appearance when the film's production gets underway.



Nikhita Gandhi is all set to strike a chord with Naadu Vittu

The extremely talented Nikhita Gandhi after delivering massive chartbusters like *Gore Gore Mukhde Pe* and *Ishq Vishk* rebound title track is all geared up to enchant her audiences with a tamil track titled *Naadu Vittu*. The energetic electronic pop song is the perfect party number and Nikhita adds her extra glam to the track making it special for her fans. Kickstarting her journey as a musician with Tamil track *Kalyana Samayal Saadhnam*, Nikhita has sung many popular Tamil songs and has a massive fan base there. With *Naadu Vittu*, Nikhita is all set to yet again surprise her audiences and we are convinced even

this track is going to be a blast. Talking about the track Nikhita shares, "Naadu Vittu is a track where I have worked with Manoj Krishna for the very first time and it was such a bliss. I have started my journey with Tamil movies and hence this song is extremely special to me. I can't wait for the audience to hear it and I'm sure they would love it as much as I do."



SOUTH AFRICA BANISH AFGHANISTAN, ENTER MAIDEN T20 WC FINAL

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

South Africa exorcised their agonising semifinal jinx through an exceptional spell of pace bowling as they walloped an emotionally drained Afghanistan by nine wickets to enter their first-ever T20 World Cup final here. They will face the winners of the second semifinal between India and England in the title clash, but the Afghans will go home with their heads held high after a stirring run in the tournament. Marco Jansen (3/16) Kagiso Rabada (2/14) and Anrich Nortje (2/7) ripped the soul out of the Afghanistan top-order while bundling them out for a paltry 56 in just 11.5 overs after being invited to bowl. Despite the early departure of Quinton de Kock, bowled through the gate by impressive pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi, the Proteas had little trouble in reaching 60 for one in 8.5 overs. Reeza Hendricks (29 not out), who put up his highest score in this event, and skipper Aiden Markram (23 not out) navigated them safely to the shores of victory as they have finally freed themselves from the painful tag of chokers in global events. Afghanistan have given their

everything to reach the World Cup semifinal, and in the crucial clash they were left with no energy, and produced a nothing effort that belied their doughtiness until now. It affected their batting as they looked unusually edgy against the South African pacers, who summoned a spell from hell. They reduced the Afghans to 28 for five inside the Powerplay and there was no coming back from that depth as they crashed to their lowest total in a T20 International. Their 56 was also the lowest total in a T20 World Cup semifinal clash. Once reduced to 28 for six, Afghanistan could not even offer a smidgeon of fight as their dream of reaching a maiden World Cup final was squashed even before it began. While the South Africa pacers were on the money, the Afghan batters too should cope some blame for being edgy on a pitch that hid no evils apart from those deliveries that kicked up from a length. Opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz was the first to perish, chasing Jansen's delivery outside the off-stump to give Reeza Hendricks an easy catch at slip. The dismissal of in-form Gurbaz seemed to inject doses of panic in the Afghanistan line-up, and Gulbadin Naib was consumed by a lovely in-



coming delivery by Jansen. But the next two dismissals were a combination of bowler's brilliance and batters' irrationality. Ibrahim Zadran, on whom a lot was riding for the Afghans, did not move his feet at all against a Rabada delivery that came back a bit. There was enough room for the ball to sneak past the bat and pad to rattle Zadran's leg-stump. Three balls later in the fourth over, Mohammad Nabi's dismissal was along similar lines and the only difference was that Rabada disturbed the off-stump this time. Nortje joined the party with the scalp of Azmatullah Omarzai, whose slash found Tristan Stubbs in the deep. Gurbaz, Zadran and Omarzai have been the leading run-makers for Afghanistan in this ICC showpiece, but on the crucial day all they could manage was a paltry 12 runs between them. Skipper Rashid Khan, who could have made some valuable runs, chose to expose all his stumps to Nortje to see the one close to his legs getting cartwheeled across the field. Leg-spinner Tbraiz Shamsi (3/6) applied the coupe de grace on Afghanistan batting line with two wickets in one over, jettisoning Karim Jannat and Noor Ahmad.



Laura calls for more red-ball cricket in women's cricket calendar

PTI ■ CHENNAI

South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt has called for more Tests in women's cricket calendar and inclusion of red-ball tournaments in the rainbow nation's domestic structure, ahead of their one-off Test against India starting here on Friday. India and South Africa will face off here at Chepauk for only their third Test in history and first in nearly 10 years, a contest for which Wolvaardt conceded her side is not fully prepared for. While a multi-day red-ball women's competition was resumed in India last season, South Africa have no such tournaments.

"Most of us don't have any preparation in the format, since we don't play domestic four-day cricket. It's difficult, since I have to leave the balls that I have been cover-driving my whole life, and I still tend to play it by instinct," Wolvaardt said during a press conference here on Thursday. Citing the lack of preparation for red-ball cricket fixtures which are few and far between, the star batter even suggested scrapping the format. "We either need to play more Tests and incorporate it into the domestic level, or we can just leave it because playing one or three Tests is very hard to adapt to," she said. "But I want to have more of it," Wolvaardt added.



South Africa's last outing in the format was earlier this year in February when they were trounced by Australia by an innings and 284 runs in Perth. After this fixture against India, South Africa's next Test assignment will be against England in December. "Getting the opportunity to

play more red-ball cricket is awesome. Having three scheduled in a calendar year is pretty cool," she added. "I personally really enjoy the format. So, this Test will be a huge challenge for us, and hopefully, we will adapt to the conditions well." "Women's Tests, in general, is a bit unknown as neither teams have too much experience in it. India does have a good home advantage and winning here will be a tough challenge, but we are up for it," she added. "The pitch is expected to be spin-friendly while there is also forecast of rain. "Preparation-wise, we have been facing a lot of spin in the nets lately since it will be the biggest threat here. The balls

were staying low at the nets yesterday," Wolvaardt said. "Batting-wise, it's going to be a big challenge. But thankfully, we have a few top spinners in our squad who are licking their lips and getting ready for the game tomorrow. Hopefully, they are going to put on a great show," she added. With the South African men's team making it to the final of the T20 World Cup, Wolvaardt said her side would also be keeping an eye on Saturday's final. "Most of us woke up early to watch the game, but only to watch them chase 57. It was absolutely amazing to watch and felt incredible. We will definitely watch the final and cheer them on," she said.

Sri Lanka head coach Chris Silverwood steps down

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's head coach Chris Silverwood on Thursday stepped down from the role following the team's dismal outing in the ongoing T20 World Cup, the SLC announced. Former captain Mahela Jayawardene had resigned from the post of the consultant coach on Wednesday. "Being an international coach means long periods away from loved ones. After lengthy conversations with my family and with a heavy heart, I feel it is now time for me to return home (England) and spend some quality time together," Silverwood, who played six Tests and seven ODIs for England as a pacer, said in his statement. "It has been a real honour for me to be part of Sri Lanka Cricket and I will be taking away many fond memories,"

added Silverwood. Sri Lanka crashed out of the T20 WC in the group stages itself with two losses, a no result and a solitary win, and it was the former champions' worst performance in the ICC showpiece. During Silverwood's tenure, Lanka won the T20 Asia Cup in 2022 and also reached the final of the 50-over Asia Cup last year where they lost to India. They also secured a slew of bilateral series wins both at home and overseas, including one against Australia in the 50-over format and two away Test series wins over Bangladesh. The SLC has already started the process of finding a new head coach ahead of the team's next international outing against India in a white ball series next month. The Lankans will then head to England for a two-match Test series.

Rahane joins Leicestershire, to play County Championship and One Day Cup

PTI ■ LEICESTER

Former India skipper Ajinkya Rahane has signed with English county side Leicestershire for the second half of the ongoing season, the club announced on Thursday. As per the deal, he will be featuring in the team's final five games of the ongoing County Championship, besides playing in the One Day Cup, where the Foxes are the defending champions. The 36-year-old joins Leicestershire in place of Wiaan Mulder, who is expected to travel to the West Indies with South Africa in August. Rahane has accumulated over 26,000 runs across formats (First-Class, List-A and T20), having struck 51 hundreds with a top score of an unbeaten 265. Playing for the 'Men in Blue', he has collected more than 8,000 runs, including 15 centuries, along with a best knock of 188 in the New



Zealand Test in 2016. "I'm really excited to have another opportunity to come to Leicestershire. I've built a strong rapport with Claude (Henderson) and Alfonso (Thomas), and I'm looking forward to playing for the Club this summer," Rahane said in a club statement.

"I followed the team's results last year and was very impressed with what I saw. I'm hoping to enjoy my cricket and contribute to more success for the Club this season." Rahane is expected to arrive in mid-July, with his first contest being away to Notts Outlaws in the One Day Cup on July 24. "We are thrilled to welcome someone of Ajinkya's quality to Leicestershire. It was unfortunate that Ajinkya's schedule didn't quite work with ours last year. But, it's a massive boost to have secured his services for the business end of this season," commented Leicestershire's Director of Cricket, Claude Henderson. "He holds immense experience and vital leadership qualities, which will be hugely beneficial to the team alongside his run-scoring ability. Ajinkya's arrival also presents a fantastic opportunity for our batters to learn from one of the game's best."



Bumrah is 1000 times better than me: Kapil Dev

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Iconic former India all-rounder Kapil Dev feels Jasprit Bumrah is a "1000 times better" bowler than what he was at his prime. Bumrah, who has been doing exceptionally well in the ongoing T20 World Cup, snaring 11 wickets at an outstanding economy of 4.08 in the 23 overs he has bowled so far. "Bumrah is 1000 times better than me. These young boys are far better than us. We had more experience. They are better," Kapil told PTI Videos. Bumrah, who is widely regarded as the best pacer in international cricket now,

has played 26 Tests for India, picking up 159 wickets and an economy of under three. His 89 ODI appearances have yielded 149 wickets while his T20I wicket count stands at 85 from 68 matches. Kapil ended his career with a then world record 434 Test wickets and is considered one of the best all-rounders of all time who also claimed 253 ODI scalps. The 65-year-old, who led India to their maiden World Cup title in 1983, also lauded the overall fitness levels of the current national team. "They are very good. Outstanding. They are fitter. They are much more hardworking. They are fantastic," he said.

Debutantes in focus as India Women take on South Africa in one-off Test

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The focus will be on young talent, especially the debutantes, when the Indian women's cricket team squares off against South Africa in a one-off Test starting here on Friday, a decade after the two teams last clashed in a five-day game. With Test cricket not being a regular affair for women, as many as five in the Indian squad could get a debut in the longest format, after having established themselves and proved their mettle in the limited-overs circuit. Also, with India coming off a 3-0 clean sweep in the preceding ODI series against the same side, the momentum is surely with the hosts although this will be a different format altogether. The likes of Uma Chetry, Priya Punia, Saika Ishaque, Arundhati Reddy and Shabnam Shakil will be the ones to watch as they prepare for their Test debut. The last time India competed in a red-ball match was December 2023, which was their first Test outing in two years. Playing back-to-back home Tests

against England and Australia (one each), the hosts were successful in both instances. The Indians last played South Africa in a Test back in 2014 in Mysore, winning it by a comprehensive innings and 34-run margin. Although the focus has generally been on white-ball cricket for the Indian women, head coach Amol Muzumdar has mentioned that there will be more red-ball cricket going forward. He has said that having a Women's Test Championship will add more value to the bilateral Tests. "It's not a bad idea to have a (Women's) Test Championship, something we can look forward to. But that is for the Board (BCCI and ICC) to decide. If it happens, it's indeed better for the game," he had said on Wednesday. While Harmanpreet Kaur will lead the side with five Tests under her belt, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana is the most experienced of the lot, having played a Test more than her skipper. Both Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues were in good form against England and Australia.



They would once again back themselves to come up with a solid show with the bat against the South Africans here. The likes of Shafali Verma and Deepti Sharma will also be expected to come good as they are currently the team's second and third-highest run-scorers respectively in the format. As for bowling, Deepti Sharma and Pooja Vastrakar were lethal forces that gave the England and Australia a hard time in December. Also, Sneha Rana's off-breaks could be a nightmare for the Proteas, especially on the Chennai track, which is traditionally known to assist spinners. As for South Africa, the women have played just one Test in two years, against Australia in Perth this February, which the latter won comprehensively. Even the South African side has five names in line for Test debuts. However, the team led by Laura Wolvaardt will continue to rely heavily on all-rounders Sune Luus and Delhi Tucker along with Tazmin Brits. With the ball, Masabata Klaas and

Anneke Bosch are their top wicket-takers, while spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba can be tricky to face on this track. Chepauk has hosted only one women's Test to date, back in 1976 when India drew against the West Indies. However, Muzumdar asserted that the team is aware of the demands here and will play accordingly. **SQUADS:** **India:** Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Jemimah Rodrigues, Priya Punia, Shafali Verma, Shubha Satheesh, Deepti Sharma, Pooja Vastrakar, Meghna Singh, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Sneha Rana, Saika Ishaque, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Arundhati Reddy and Renuka Thakur Singh. **South Africa:** Laura Wolvaardt (c), Anneke Bosch, Tazmin Brits, Nadine de Klerk, Annerie Dercksen, Mieke de Ridder (wk), Sinalo Jafta (wk), Marizanne Kapp, Masabata Klaas, Suné Luus, Elz-Mari Marz, Nonkululeko Mlaba, Tumi Sekhukune, Nondumiso Shange and Delhi Tucker.