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'I'M ENJOYING EXPLORING VARIOUS GENRES, CHARACTERS'

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POPE FRANCIS MEETS FATHER OF AYLAN KURDI, DROWNED SYRIAN TODDLER

Pope Francis on his last night in Iraq Sunday met the father of Aylan Kurdi, the drowned Syrian Kurdish toddler who became a symbol of the plight of migrants. The photos of Aylan's tiny body, washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015, shocked the world and brought renewed attention to the deadly sea route many migrants take to reach the West.



'HIGHEST RESPECT FOR WOMEN': CHIEF JUSTICE SAYS RAPE HEARING MISREPORTED

Chief Justice of India, Sharad A Bobde, today said the comments he made during a hearing of a rape case last week were completely misreported to imply disrespect for women. The Supreme Court, he said, had always accorded the 'highest respect to womanhood' and the judiciary's reputation was in the hands of its lawyers, the 'Bar'.



'INDIA WILL BE NAMED AFTER PM MODI ONE DAY': MAMATA

Praising PM Narendra Modi as a self-absorbed leader who renames stadiums after himself and has his photographs printed on coronavirus vaccination certificates, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said the day is not far when the country will be renamed after him.



MUTHOOT SHARES DROP AFTER CHAIRMAN FELL TO DEATH IN DELHI

Shares of Indian non-banking financial firm Muthoot Finance Ltd fell the most in two months on Monday, after group chairman MG George Muthoot died over the weekend, with reports saying he fell from his fourth floor house. The financier, grandson of the gold financing company's founding chairman, is credited with growing the company into a pan-India name and scaling its presence beyond Kerala.



Lotus will bloom fully in West Bengal

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K'taka govt gift: Six-month child care leave for women staff

5



Govt working on formulating standards for AYUSH products

8

FM confirms sale of Vizag Steel, no plan to revive it

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Despite protests raging in the state against the move to privatise Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday made it crystal clear that the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs (CCEA), in its meeting held on January 27 this year, has accorded in-principle approval for 100 per cent disinvestment of Government of India's shareholding in Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) along with RINL's stake in its subsidiaries/joint ventures through strategic disinvestment by way of privatisation.



capacity, infusion of technology and better management practices. This will result in higher production, productivity and expansion of direct and indirect employment opportunities.



Government does not have any equity in RINL. However, the State Government is consulted in specific matters as and when needed and their support is also solicited in the matters that require their intervention."

Where is Sab ka saath... Sab ka vikas? asks KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president and IT Minister KT Rama Rao has reiterated that there was no cooperation from the Centre, though the State has been showing wonderful growth for the last six years. He alleged that the Centre has kept the assurances mentioned in the State Re-organisation Act aside and besides, it was doing injustice to ITIR, Railway Coach Factory and Bayyaram Steel Plant.



others at the national level. Though the Centre was making many promises, none was realized. "Is it Sab Ka Saath... Sab Ka Vikas? And is it the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Team India spirit," he questioned.

Minister Sathyavathi Rathod tests corona positive

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Tribal, Women and Child Welfare Minister Sathyavathi Rathod tested Corona positive on Monday. She was admitted to Yashoda Hospital and doctors treating her in a special isolation ward. Minister Sathyavathi participated in the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal graduate MLC election campaign on Sunday on behalf of TRS candidate Palla Rajeshwar Reddy in the Mulugu constituency.

Shah calls Kishan, enquires about Bhainsa clashes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday spoke to his deputy G Kishan Reddy and enquired about the incident and the prevailing situation at Bhainsa town in Telangana where prohibitory

orders under Section 144 of CrPC were imposed following a clash between members of two communities.

Kishan Reddy, Union MoS (Home), tweeted. Reddy said he spoke to Telangana DGP Mahendar Reddy again who told him that the situation was under control.

Will renewed focus on sheep distribution help TRS?

Ruling TRS may field a BC candidate for Sagar

ML MELLY MAITREYI ■ HYDERABAD

Even as the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) seem to have stepped up its efforts to cajole and pacify with reasonable success the sections that have been cut up with it - namely the unemployed and government employees in the election to two MLC seats from the Graduate Constituency, it is also making moves to get maximum support for its candidate in the Nagarjuna Sagar by-election.



ting MLA Nomula Narsimhaiah, indications are that the party leadership is in favour of fielding a candidate hailing from the backward class community, particularly from

Woman leader's remarks shock TRS leaders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS woman leader Aruna made controversial remarks causing embarrassment in the party circles at the International Women's Day celebrations held at Telangana Bhavan on Monday. While addressing the celebrations, Aruna blamed the TRS party leadership saying that the leadership was giving three to four positions in a family neglecting other hardworking leaders who were striving for the party since 2001.

TRS young turks hopeful of KTR's coronation in May

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

Although Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) president and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao (KCR) has put his foot down on the chorus in party circles at various levels to make his son and TRS working president the next Chief Minister of the State, speculations over the imminent change of guard continue, especially among younger elements within the party. There is also pressure on KCR from family members, it is learnt from TRS sources.

There is a view in some of these circles that 'CM-in-waiting' KTR, who is also the IT Minister, might not wait any longer to become the Chief Minister of Telangana.

The results of Assembly polls in the five states would be announced on May 2, 2021. Depending on the results and BJP's performance, i.e. "hava (chadna or utharna)", the Chief Minister may take a call, according to TRS circles.

Hold 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' on a grand scale, orders CM KCR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Government will organise 'Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav' on a grand scale amidst festive and peaceful ambience across the State as part of nationwide celebrations to mark the completion of 75 years of independence soon.



Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao participates in a video conference organised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao said that the role played by the Telangana region during the days of India's freedom struggle was unique and at present, Telangana as a separate State was forging ahead on a progressive path and in the development of the nation, Telangana has a major partnership. Chandrasekhara Rao held a meeting with the officials on Monday after he attended the video conference addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and gave a road map to the officials on the celebration of 75 years of Independence.

He also sanctioned Rs. 25 crore for organising the 75-week celebrations beginning from March 12, 2021, to August 15, 2022. He constituted a festival organising committee headed by Government

Parties bank on caste meetings

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

Political parties are using all means at their disposal now to attract voters in the ongoing MLC Graduates' seat elections. Having conducted meetings with associations of lawyers, doctors, journalists as well as meetings with students, government employees and teachers, they are now conducting congregations of people belonging to particular castes to garner votes.

The ruling TRS party is the front-runner in organizing such meetings. The party has already conducted meetings with lawyers, doctors, journalists, students, employees and other sections of voters in various forums. As of now, TNGOs, Urdu Teachers Association, TUTF, CPS employees and several other unions have declared that they would be extending their support to TRS party candidates.



Humpy, Indian Sportswoman of the year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Koneru Humpy, the reigning world chess champion in the rapid format, was on Monday won the second edition of the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year award.

Once the youngest ever chess Grandmaster at the age of 15, Humpy bagged the award after receiving the highest number of votes from the fans. A 40-member jury had nominated Humpy, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, sprinter Dutee Chand, shooter Manu Bhaker and hockey skipper Rani Rampal for this year's honour, last month.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Magha & Shukla Paksha Panchangam

Tithi: Bhadashi: 03:01 pm

Nakshatram: Uttara Ashadha: 08:41 pm

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 03:23 pm - 04:52 pm

Yamagandam: 09:29 am - 10:58 am

Varjyam: 12:45 am - 02:22 am

Gulika: 12:26 pm - 01:55 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Anritakalam: 02:17 pm - 03:53 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:03 pm - 12:50 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 34/18

Humidity: 31%

Sunrise: 06:29 am

Sunset: 06:24 pm

Current Weather Conditions Updated: march 8, 2021 5:00 PM



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Future perfect?

Is Tikait using the farmers' agitation to carve a place for himself in the Assembly or LS polls?

Riding the crest of farmers' protests, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait is putting in his best efforts to find a firm ground for his political future, if his latest utterances are anything to go by. By saying that the "Government has gone to Kolkata and we will meet it there only", he has made it clear that he will continue raking the farm laws issue to the BJP's discomfiture wherever and whenever an opportunity presents itself. This might irk the BJP a bit but it's certainly no reason for worry as Tikait most likely will not find any resonance in the West Bengal elections unless he gets to share the platform with the State's big guns or openly sides with the TMC or the Congress against the saffron party. Tikait is up in arms against the Centre and the BJP; however, many a time what is seen on the surface is nothing more than eyewash, especially in politics. An overambitious leader who has had no political career might be used as a "safety valve" by the Centre to defuse the farmers' anger. The nation witnessed how the Centre, despite all its might, failed to prevent the farmers from storming the Red Fort on the Republic Day. It was only after this incident that the protest's focus shifted from Punjab's growers to the cultivators of western Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Haryana, and Tikait acquired the centre stage while the more belligerent farm leaders from Punjab were gradually sidelined. Tikait then went through a gamut of



manoeuvres including breaking down during a speech, threatening to hang himself if the farm laws weren't repealed and of marching to Parliament with 40 lakh tractors, besides making many other inciting comments to keep the protest alive.

The political stint of Tikait — the son of legendary farmer leader Mahendra Singh Tikait who held sway over Jat farmers in western UP and founded the BKU and the Bahujan Kisan Dal — has been rather unsuccessful. He ended up at the sixth spot in the 2007 UP Assembly elections (though he was backed by the Congress) and lost his deposit in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls when he fought on the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) ticket from Amroha. Tikait is basically consolidating his position among Jat voters, the community he banks upon, in western UP. He is probably eyeing the 2022 UP Assembly or the next Lok Sabha elections. However, the jury is still out on whether he will float his own party or contest on another party's symbol. If he forms his own party, it would be a severe setback to the RLD and the Congress who also count on Jat votes. The BJP naturally would have an advantage as the votes against it would split. On the other hand, seat-sharing may not be easy if he decides to join hands with the RLD or the Congress as the traditional parties will not like him to be in the driver's seat. As of now, Tikait would like to use the farmers' protest to get a leg up in his political career. However, the NDA Government's "pro-corporate" and "anti-farmer" image is unlikely to help the BJP but its strategists would know what it means to win the Hindi heartland.

100 days of revolt, & still raring to go

As the farmers' protest against farm laws enters the summer season, they brave high temperatures and the paucity of basic necessities



As an orange sun hung over the Tikri border; Rakesh Tikait along with other leaders was addressing the gathering of farmers on the 99th evening of the farmers' revolution. To mark the 100th day, plans were to be made. Farmers were preparing to block the National Highway into Delhi for five hours; a task they did well and peacefully. Tikait gave a call again to farmers around the nation "to be prepared for the harvest" and to bolster the revolution simultaneously. Speeches ended and a selfie frenzy began. The young, the old, the media and the police, all wanted to be in this moment as it was special in the history of the world. Winter, spring and now summer, yet the farmers' revolution lives on.



But far from the maddening crowds, the revolution had got a new friend. Against public advice, he kept ramming into the yellow police barricades, trying to enter Delhi. I caught him red-handed. Shyly, he ducked and began to look at the carrot shavings. His mind was yet to understand why humans used barricades. The suspect was big, blackish and middle aged. His curved big black horns made him stand out; he was an Indian humped bull.

with foreign breeds, mainly Jersey and Holstein, that it's hard to tell what is indigenous anymore. Many farmers fear that the story of the Indian bull will be their story, too, if the three farm laws and a neo-company raj enter India. Only with minimal farmers and maximum fossil fuel-based machines will the fields be cultivated.

The advances in farm machinery and artificial insemination have made the indigenous bull redundant. Most farmers sell off the male calves at birth and the remaining ones roam the streets of cities and townships scavenging on garbage. The more lucky ones are sold to slaughterhouses to meet death quickly. There is also a special class of bulls that is part of the artificial insemination industry; they are bred and dishonoured by sophisticated instruments, robbing them of their spermatozoa. Today the Indian bull, far from being Shiv's 'Nandi', is a pariah and first victim of industrial agriculture. With less than one per cent bulls working the farms, India flaunts a large dairy and cattle-rearing sector. The Indian species are so intermixed

The more immediate challenge to the revolution is, of course, the increasing heat — political and physical. Temperature variations have already started affecting people's health. With hotter days ahead, the entire encampments are modifying their tents. Many farmers are now constructing high bamboo-and-canvas tents for better air circulation. The supply of drinking water and perishable items like milk is becoming slightly problematic. Food wastage may also increase due to insufficient refrigeration facility. Farmers have mobilised another round of fundraising for installing reverse osmosis (RO) plants within the encampments at Tikri border because the groundwater is highly contaminated with industrial effluents.



WHILE ALL EYES ARE ON BENGAL, THE FARMER LEADERS ARE EXPANDING THEIR BASE TO THE STATES OF RAJASTHAN, MADHYA PRADESH AND UTTAR PRADESH. THE MORALE ON THE GROUND AT THE REVOLUTION SITES HAS NEVER BEEN HIGHER

The Ghazipur border is also going for a summer makeover. Much of the encampment at this border is on the Asian Highway 2 (AH2). Surrounding it are Ghazipur's garbage mountain, posh apartments and an open sewage canal that flows underneath it. The summer will bring mosquitoes and diseases. Both the sites will have to be prepared to combat vector and water-borne diseases. As these fears grow, a farmer from Jind died by suicide at the Tikri border. An avoidable death!

The farmers' revolution has transformed from an agrarian movement into a united opposition to the totalitarian Government. The BJP has suffered electorally in Punjab and Haryana and a strict boycott of the BJP and its leaders is in place in these States. While all eyes are on Bengal, the farmer leaders are expanding their base to the States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The morale on the ground at the revolution sites has never been higher. Because the encampments have become a breeding ground for hope, camaraderie is the only cure for hate. Many of these farm-

ers have stepped out of their region for the first time, yet they quickly learnt to work and endure suffering together. The movement is more disciplined than earlier and the farmers are ready to continue resisting.

Penance has been the path to spiritual awakening — Jesus on the cross or Buddha starving under the Bodhi tree — and the farmers are also suffering for the sins of our world. A bullet may bring them death as a slaughter may begin any day but they hope their deaths will not be in vain and shall wake up a sleeping world. It will bring together farmers and citizens all over the world to rise against this evil. Despite the odds, the farmers are hopeful.

Our world and democracy is at a dangerous crossroads — Earth and millions of farmers on one side and Big Ag and corporate tyranny on the other. If Indian farmers win, democracy of the world lives; otherwise, Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World' awaits us all. (The author writes on agriculture and environment, and is the Director — Green India. The views expressed are personal.)

PICTALK



Himachal Pradesh Police's women officers celebrate International Women's Day, in Shimla

Institutionalised racism

What did Prince Harry Windsor and Meghan Markle's interview to Oprah Winfrey teach us?

Let us make no bones about it; the interview that Prince Harry Windsor and Meghan Markle, the now effectively excommunicated members of the British Royal Family, gave American television personality Oprah Winfrey was a way for them to remain in the limelight. It shone brightly at them and it also reminded many of us who either watched the entire interview or even snatches of it on social media that Miss Winfrey remains a master at her art. It is extremely difficult to feel sorry for the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. They are, and remain, extremely wealthy and privileged individuals, one by virtue of his birth and the other through the Hollywood hype machine. This interview is just a precursor to an upcoming series on streaming platform Netflix, which ironically also broadcasts a very lightly fictionalised story of Harry's grandmother's life, 'The Crown'. But it was difficult to not feel sorry when Meghan and Harry spoke about the racism that they faced when the potential skin tone of their then unborn child, a son now known as Archie, was brought up. Neither of them mentioned who it was that spoke



to them about this, whether it was a family member or a member of the royal household bureaucracy, but this again highlights that even an evolved family or institution can remain horribly rooted in a racist past.

The British Royal Family might reign over a realm that is uniquely multi-racial and multi-ethnic, but racist undertones still exist in Britain. Of course, this is not a problem unique to the country as the "Black Lives Matter" that followed the brutal murders of black individuals by white members of the American police force highlighted that even eight years of having a black President hadn't changed the racist mindsets of many Americans. And while racist undertones in India seem to be more subdued, make no mistake because they do exist. The attitude of the average Indian to African students or even those from the North-East is downright racist and, worse, casteism is still widespread. Many of us might have evolved with regards to our views on matters such as race and caste, but the institutionalisation of those views over centuries will take much longer to eradicate, not just in the British Royal Family but across the world.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WOMEN SHOULD RISE AGAINST TORMENTORS

Sir — Each year, March 8 is celebrated as International Women's Day. It goes without saying that women have proved their worth in all spheres and their progress is beyond any doubt. Indian women, too, have shown men that they are second to none. But we need to introspect that why we still have to talk about women empowerment and gender equality.

We have not achieved these things and the reality is very disappointing. Daughters are committing suicide daily in our country as they are forced by their husbands and in-laws to meet their demand for dowry. Many people in villages still hesitate to send their daughters to schools and marry them off at an early age. Even in big metros, women are faced with discrimination of various types at the workplaces and at their homes. They are sexually abused and harassed at the hands of their male colleagues, while at home they are subjected to domestic violence. The situation of women in politics is also not much better. There are very few women in politics as compared to men and they are not enough to pressure the Government to make laws more favourable for the women.

The fair sex is rather treated unfairly in our country and working women in traditional domains of men are looked down upon by their peers. When will this situation change? What are the responsibilities of NGOs, States, the Centre and civil society with respect to improving the condition of women? When will women rise against their tormentors?

Bal Govind | Noida

TAKE ALL SHOTS WITHIN STIPULATED TIME

Sir — As COVID-19 cases are again on the rise in India, it is time to accelerate our vaccination drive. The Government must involve more private hospitals and set up mobile clinics for vaccination. The States and Centre must deploy their ambulance services for getting people inoculated. The elderly should have the facility of calling ambulance home for taking them to the nearest centre for getting the jab. Further,

No cakewalk for Mamata



This refers to the editorial "Risky resolve" (March 8). Mamata choosing to contest from Nandigram shows her nervousness and the Trinamool Congress (TMC) not giving tickets to many sitting MLAs and Ministers shows that Didu no more has confidence over her old guards. Mamata banking on new faces might cost dear to the TMC in the Assembly elections. She is already distraught by a spate of defections when many of her close confidants left the party at such crucial juncture. Suvendu Adhikari has made the

matters worse for her and winning from Nandigram will not be a cakewalk for Mamata as the Adhikari clan holds significant influence in the area.

However, Mamata's chances of winning the battle of prestige at Nandigram are quite good but it will definitely affect the TMC's performance elsewhere. The TMC's rule has been riddled with corruption and its Ministers were neck-deep in malpractices and nepotism. She should have controlled her MLAs, party workers and Ministers before the elections. Tightening noose when elections are round the corner will not improve the party's image, rather it would prove counterproductive. Those who have been denied tickets may not campaign for the party wholeheartedly and may even go against it. The BJP, on the other hand, is putting all its weight behind campaigning and winning the elections. Top party leaders are holding rallies, *sabhas* and road shows on war footing.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

a door-to-door vaccination drive should be conducted not only in big cities but also in towns and villages.

Vaccination is a safe and effective way to prevent disease and save lives — now more than ever. Today there are vaccines available to protect against at least 20 diseases. Further, there should be no crowding at the vaccination centres and arrangements for potable water and toilet facilities should be made available to all, especially the elders.

We must also not forget that safety precautions are the key to keep Coronavirus at bay and wearing of masks and sanitising hands is essential.

Those who have taken the shot must take the subsequent doses within the stipulated time, else it might prove futile and defeat the very purpose.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

BJP LIKELY TO WIN BENGAL ELECTIONS

Sir — If the massive crowd at the Prime

Minister's rally at the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata is anything to go by, the indication is clear that the TMC is going and BJP is coming to power in West Bengal. Further, the schemes of the Centre will give BJP an edge; however, the recent rise in the prices of fuel and LPG cylinder will have a bearing on the BJP's vote bank.

The Centre should not have allowed the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG to touch the sky. The rise in LPG prices especially worries women a lot and, despite the Centre's Ujjwala Yojana, might affect the BJP's vote bank.

What will happen cannot be exactly predicted but it seems that the people of West Bengal are fed up with the rule of Mamata Banerjee and will most likely vote her out of power.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

Women in our country have always played a great role in nation-building and in upholding national integrity, peace and harmony. Women have always been an inspiration to society.



Andhra Pradesh Governor — Biswa Bhushan Harichandan

The Government has signed an advance purchase agreement for 8.5 million additional doses, enough to vaccinate 4.25 million people against COVID.

New Zealand PM — Jacinda Ardern

Women play multiple roles in their life: of a daughter, wife, mother, sister and so on. To make everyone around them happy, they sometimes compromise their real self.



Actress — Sunny Leone

Nowadays everybody is looking for a big total; every game we want to score more than 250 but for that you need some time and matches.

Indian women's ODI vice-captain — Harmanpreet Kaur

The social organisations could also contribute to ensure comfortable commuting and convenient accomplishment of the vaccination process.



Union Minister — Jitendra Singh

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA MUST NOT LET CHINA WOO HASINA

Ties between New Delhi and Dhaka would benefit both countries and Modi's trip should take this forward



KALYANI SHANKAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's forthcoming visit to Dhaka on March 26 is quite significant as it will be his first foreign trip after the COVID-19 outbreak. It is expected to consolidate bilateral ties as Bangladesh is a gateway to southeast Asia and part of Modi's 'Act East' policy. In the last six years, the Prime Minister has established a rapport with his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina. There have also been frequent ministerial and official-level visits and continuous interaction between New Delhi and Dhaka. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Dhaka last week to pave the way for the Prime Minister's visit as part of Bangladesh's celebrations of 50 years of independence. It also marks a decisive victory of the Indian Army over Pakistan. Coincidentally, Modi's visit is just before the first phase of the Assembly polls in West Bengal and Assam, which share common borders with Bangladesh. The enormous improvement in bilateral ties in the recent years led Hasina to call it a "golden period."



Yet, the steps taken in the domestic sphere during Modi's second term are causing concern to Bangladesh, even though New Delhi contends that it is a domestic matter. These measures include the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), the passing of the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the creation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

During Modi's trip, the two leaders are expected to discuss bilateral issues, especially the matter of Teesta river water sharing. Despite achieving breakthroughs in several areas in India-Bangladesh ties, both countries are yet to resolve the issue and Teesta has emerged as an emotive matter in Bangladesh and West Bengal. Dhaka has been pushing New Delhi to settle it early as Teesta water is vital for irrigation during the dry season in the northern part of Bangladesh. The Modi Government had successfully persuaded West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on the tricky Land Boundary Agreement and the enclaves' resolution, but Didi has stuck to her guns on Teesta. Jaishankar, during his recent Dhaka visit, said, "The position of the Government of India has not changed." However, it is a political necessity for both sides to find a solution soon. A deal would help New Delhi get more political leverage over China's growing influence, particularly in the Bay of Bengal region. It will also help Hasina politically. Meanwhile, a desperate Dhaka has turned to Beijing and a massive project funded by China has been adopted to manage the Teesta river.

On the domestic side, illegal immigration has been a political and electoral issue for the BJP since 1996 when its national executive in Bhopal passed a resolution on it. Even the 2019 manifesto said, "We will continue to undertake effective steps to prevent illegal immigration in the north eastern States." The other issue is that of Rohingya refugees. Millions of Muslims from the Rakhine province of Myanmar, following the Tatmadaw's crackdown in 2017, fled to Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries, including India. New Delhi is caught in a dilemma between two close strategic neighbours, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Connectivity is another important area where both the countries are focusing, and many new projects are on the way and New Delhi has come to Dhaka's rescue by exporting nine million vaccines as part of its COVID diplomacy. On its part, Bangladesh is all set to graduate out of the Least Developing Countries with its GDP growth of eight per cent. New Delhi must keep up the partnership that allows for economic growth, defence cooperation, connectivity and improved developmental parameters for both nations. A collaboration between India and Bangladesh would benefit both countries. New Delhi must not lose the moment to take the ties forward.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal)

Gender inequality in Indian labour market

It is not only participation in higher education that will provide a broad solution but skills training relevant to the market demand is also necessary



BALWANT SINGH MEHTA

Every year on International Women's Day the world celebrates the achievements of women in social, economic, cultural and political spheres. Not many are aware that this special day for women began as a labour movement in 1908, when 15,000 women marched through New York City demanding shorter working hours, better pay and the right to vote. March 8 was taken up as the official International Women's Day in 1975 by the United Nations. This year's theme was centred around celebrating the tremendous efforts of women/girls in shaping a more equal future and also in aiding recovery from the pandemic. However, it is imperative to highlight the gaps that remain and the way forward to address them successfully.

Gender inequality in the labour market, particularly in the context of developing nations, is one area of concern that still poses a great challenge, particularly in a country like India. Historically, women have been denied many opportunities due to deep-rooted biases in the social system. These eventually lead to labour market inequality as such discrimination is not limited to the domestic arena only but extends beyond the household. The underlying factors that cause such discrimination in India are the sex ratio at birth, life expectancy at birth, the infant mortality rate, the under-five mortality rate, the maternal mortality rate, nutritional deprivation, inequality in literacy rates and the gender gap at the highest level of political decision-making. These inequalities have direct implications for labour market outcomes in terms of women's participation in economic activities. Even with similar educational attainments and skill sets as men, women are denied opportunities, which leads to significant differences in status of work, income and occupations. Despite the introduction of many affirmative policy actions, such exclusionary approaches remain.

Inequality in the labour market: While some studies have noted an improvement in employment conditions for women, with rising salaries and more participation in quality or decent jobs, other studies have highlighted jobless growth and declining participation in the labour market in the past decades. The pandemic severely hit economic activities of those who were at the lower rung of the occupation hierarchy, particularly women working in the informal economy. They were out of jobs for a significant period of the outbreak and those who managed to hold on to one had to face wage cuts. This has further precipitated the vulnerability of women.

Employment and education/skill level: Globalisation has led to an increase in women's participation in the labour market in India. But there is still a huge gender gap, with only 18 per cent of women employed as compared to 47 per cent men. It is often argued that women are engaged in mostly low-skilled, low-paid work under precarious work conditions. Education and skill level play a key role in access to the labour market and in the quality of work one gets.

Almost half of the working women (42 per cent) are illiterate compared to 19 per cent men, and around 77 per cent are educated up to the upper primary level as compared to 62 per cent men. There is a significant difference between the higher education level of working women and men, i.e. 23 per cent of women as compared to 38 per cent of men are educated above the secondary level.



GLOBALISATION HAS LED TO AN INCREASE IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET IN INDIA. BUT THERE IS STILL A HUGE GENDER GAP, WITH ONLY 18 PER CENT OF WOMEN EMPLOYED AS COMPARED TO 47 PER CENT MEN

The writer is senior faculty at Institute for Human Development, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.



Job quality and occupations: More than half of working women (53 per cent) are engaged in self-employment, whereas one-fourth take up some form of casual work (25 per cent) and only 22 per cent are in regular salaried jobs. The share of men engaged in regular work (24 per cent) is relatively higher, while their share in casual employment (24 per cent) is slightly lower. Further, differences are also observed in terms of occupational segregation in the labour market i.e. the difference in the share of men versus women within an occupation. Such segmentation is widespread within occupational groups.

The occupational distribution by gender shows that women (28 per cent) are relatively more involved than men (22 per cent) in low-paid and unskilled jobs, such as elementary occupations (domestic helpers, cleaners, street vendors and garbage collectors), services (personal care, housekeeping and salespersons) and as office and customer service clerks. Women (10 per cent) are also under-represented in high-skill and well paid jobs, such as those of professionals, technicians and associate professionals, as compared to men (13 per cent). Additionally, the percentage of women (92 per cent) engaged in informal employment in the country is higher than men (88 per cent).

Unemployment, NEET and inactive people: The overall employment level among women (five per cent) is less than their male (six per cent) counterparts. The unemployment rate among young (15-29 years)

women is not only significantly high (18 per cent) but also greater than men (17 per cent). The trend also shows a sizable increase in youth who are not in employment, education and training (NEET), among whom a large proportion is that of women. More than half of young women (55 per cent) are in the NEET category with only 13 per cent of young men featuring in it. Additionally, 84 per cent of young women are inactive as compared to 41 per cent of men. The inactive youth include those who face employment difficulties and may drop out of the labour force when jobs are hard to find, whether for study, leisure, illicit activities or due to inertia. Women face many social and economic hurdles which limit their participation in the labour market and this may lead to labour market inactivity.

Factors aiding inequality: There are many factors that contribute to labour market inequality. Mehta and Awasthi (2019) analysed various factors through an econometric decomposition exercise. Their study revealed four important factors: Educational qualification or skill level is one of the most important factors contributing to inequality, as individuals with high education or skill level can access better jobs or have higher chances of getting a decent job; access to a decent quality job or a regular formal salaried job, which provides better and secure income, while casual work is irregular and low paid; gender, as various socio-economic con-

ditions and other restrictions cause women to have a lower labour force participation rate and lastly work experience, as people with experience are more likely to get better access to the labour market. There are other factors such as social groups, income level or poverty and rural and urban location which play a key role in gender inequality in the labour market.

The way forward: Rising inequality in the labour market is a reality, with the differences between the male and female population growing wider. Though, over the years, female presence in regular or high-skilled and better-paid jobs has improved but still a large number of them are engaged in low-paid and unskilled jobs. In recent years, the growing enrollment of young women in secondary and tertiary-level education has resulted in them being better-skilled employees and their proliferation in decent employment. This trend is seen particularly in the services sector, especially in financial services and information technology. Hence, apart from a gender-friendly environment, it is necessary to make education up to the secondary level universal and free.

However, the growing number of women in the NEET category and the higher unemployment level among educated or skilled women is negating the advances made through such measures. Therefore, it is not only participation in higher education that will provide a comprehensive solution but skills training relevant to the market demand is also necessary.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

BENGAL TRUSTED DIDI FOR 'PORIBORTON'. SHE BROKE THE TRUST. I HAVE COME HERE TO MAKE YOU BELIEVE IN 'ASOL PORIBORTON'. —PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



HE SAYS THERE IS NO 'PORIBORTON' IN BENGAL. BEFORE POLLS IT IS 'UJJWALA' AND POST POLLS IT TURNS INTO 'JUMLA.' THIS CANNOT CONTINUE. —WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE



Govt land monetisation will boost infrastructure development

The proposed SPV meant to carry out the monetisation should take essential steps for making land assets of PSUs free of any hindrances

Urban development in India is largely obstructed by the lack of availability of land at affordable prices, a key prerequisite for infrastructure development and housing. According to the Numbao database for 2021, Mumbai is among the top 10 cities with the highest price-to-income ratios. The reason for the high price of land available for infrastructure development or residential stock in India is directly linked to the complexities of the land acquisition process.

With a number of loopholes in its current design, it has been largely debated by various researchers and policymakers. Making matters worse, the lack of clear land titles and the need for obtaining approvals and clearances from civic authorities impedes the progress of a project.

As it has been a long-



PRERNA PRABHAKAR

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standing problem, it is imperative to seek solutions and adopt appropriate policy models to address it. Taking cue from China's journey can prove helpful. The improved infrastructure quality has been a fundamental source of China's economic growth, which currently stands on a par with the advanced economies.

As per the World Bank's Infrastructure Index for 2018, Beijing appeared in the top 20 ranks alongside other advanced economies with a score of 3.75. India, in contrast, was one of the low-scoring countries on the index at 2.91. This fast-paced development of the Chinese economy forces one to think about its model of infrastructure development.

Of the many steps taken by the Chinese Government, a significant effort relates to monetisation of public land to develop infrastructure. According to

an estimate by Chinese researchers, the Government allocated 1,38,267 hectare of land in 2010 for infrastructure, which was around 20 per cent of the total State-owned land.

Financial support in the form of this land allocation can be gauged by the fact that had State Governments purchased the same at market rates, they would have ended up paying 1,292.8 billion yuan, amounting to 31.8 per cent of their total revenue in 2010. This model can be replicated and adopted by India by making unutilised land with Government departments and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) available to private players for infrastructure development or housing construction, thereby filling the existing gap.

The Union Budget 2021-22 has proposed monetisation of land belonging to the



Government-owned companies and PSUs by way of direct sale, concessions or other suitable means. The plan is to launch a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) in this pursuit. The decision is likely to free up a large extent of land for building infrastructure and affordable housing projects. According to various estimates available in public domain, the

land held by various Government agencies is over 5,00,000 HA, of which, over 1,60,000 HA is held across various airports, seaports and by the railways. Approximately 11.8 lakh acres is owned by the Railway Ministry, out of which about 1.26 lakh acres is not in any kind of use. For the proposed land monetisation, it is pertinent to ensure preparation on various fronts. First, record of lands with plot ownership and boundaries should be available in an updated form, without any disputes or any other encumbrances like lease terms of the PSUs. Though States are making substantial progress in digitising land records, there is still a long road ahead for improving its quality, as has been exhibited by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) Land Records and

Services Index (N-LRSI) in its 2020 and 2021 editions. The proposed SPV meant to carry out the monetisation process should take the essential steps for making land assets of PSUs free of any hindrances.

Canada's experience can offer some useful lessons in designing an SPV — Canada Lands Company — identifies and purchases surplus properties (including Government-owned land) at market prices. It further manages the purchased properties and finally sells it to private entities.

Since 1995, it has developed 2,000 affordable housing projects. Second, land prices valuation, which has proved to be a major roadblock for loan acquisition procedures, should be determined through a detailed analysis of market rates and potential gains from the proposed project.

Lastly, Central and State Governments should take the necessary steps to limit the requirement of multiple approvals required to kick off an infrastructure or real estate project. This comes across as the biggest bottleneck as observed from heaps of land parcels lying unutilised in the States' land banks as private companies avoid the tedious approval and clearance processes that are necessary to secure access.

With increasing requirements of infrastructure resources and housing stock in Indian cities, there is an urgent need to optimise land resources. If adopted with adequate measures, Government land monetisation can be an efficient policy step that captures real estate value of unutilised public land, augments revenues of local, Central and State Governments and also mitigates problems posed by escalating land prices.

Here's an interesting peek into the investing choices of women investors from Hyderabad and Telangana

WHAT WOMEN WANT

A recent survey conducted to understand the investing habits of Indian women investors found that even after 70 years of our independence, women's participation in the decision making regarding investing is very low.

In the run-up to International Women's Day on March 8, 2021, the survey by Groww, an investment platform, was sent to more than 2.5 lakh women and fetched more than 28,000 responses over three days. Of the total respondents, 4.7% were from Telangana, and 4% were from Hyderabad alone. The study's objective was to understand the qualitative aspects of women's investing habits, their goals, and how they view the process of wealth creation in general.

On the results, Lalit Keshre, CEO, Groww said that while the results weren't satisfactory, there is hope. "The encouraging insight from the survey is that among the women who are investing, a majority of them take their own decisions. Even though many of them discuss their financial choices with their families or partners, the final decisions are their own. It's a remarkable shift from pre-conceived notions that men were the primary decision-makers even when it comes to managing women's wealth."

He hopes to reflect the shift in investment preferences, goals, mindsets, and roadblocks for women investors with this survey. The survey also captured how age, income, geography impact these differences.

He added, "What's even more encouraging is that women in the 18-25 age group have emerged as our most independent cohort, where



almost 60% of women in this age group say that they make the ultimate decision on their investments. To encourage more women to invest, on the occasion of International Women's Day, we are introducing Groww Women's Week wherein we'll charge zero brokerage for women investors from March 8 to March 15."

Here's a snapshot of the investment behaviour of women investors from Telangana.

Preferred investment choices

Amongst all other states, the most number of women mutual fund investors were from Telangana, with almost 88% choosing it as one of their preferred investment options. Stocks was chosen by 52.99% women. While the preference for equity-related investments

is evident, a sizable percentage also invested in traditional asset classes like FD (32%) and gold (24%). Women investors hailing from Telangana gave the highest preference to investments in small saving schemes (12.7%) compared to women from other states. Around 4.48% of women from Telangana are also investing in cryptocurrencies.

Investing to support personal goals

The survey found that investors from Telangana placed the highest importance on personal goals, with as high as 49% investing to achieve them. The second popular goal that women are investing towards, is to support their family (43%). Telangana's women investors are also making early retirement and travelling a priority with 23% and 21

% investing towards these goals respectively.

Independent decision-makers

Compared to all other states, the women of Telangana emerged as the most independent when it comes to making financial decisions. While 44.78% stated that they consult their friends and families, the ultimate decision making power when it comes to investing lies with them. Around 23.88% said that they are the sole decision-makers on matters related to investing.

The insights reveal that not only are women investing with a vision but are also approaching their investments with a balanced and goal-oriented mindset. They are more independent in their decision making and are aware of the risk-return tradeoffs to achieve their

financial goals. This shows that not only are women investing with a vision but are also approaching their investments with a balanced and goal-oriented mindset. They are more independent in their decision making and are aware of the risk-return tradeoffs to achieve their financial goals.

What's holding women back?

On the national level, the survey also captured insights from about 2000 women who do not invest. Of these, 49% stated that lack of knowledge is their main reason for not investing. Further, 32% said that they don't have enough savings to invest. 13% of women also felt apprehensive about losing their money in the market. It indeed calls for further awareness and education of women on the importance of investing in building long term wealth.

Owing to the awareness around financial products and the availability of apps that allow people to invest with ease, there has been increased participation from all genders and income groups. In this survey, 25% of women stated that consuming financial content online made them take the first step towards investing, and 22% said investment apps like Groww drove them to begin their investment journey.

Women are increasingly considering investments in equities as an opportunity to build wealth in the long term to meet their personal and financial goals. Investing apps like Groww that offer hassle-free investing and educational resources have been among the most prominent allies in increasing women's participation in investing.

Celebrating the strength of women

On International Women's Day, Amazon Prime Video celebrated the strength of women by unveiling the first look of their untitled upcoming original series starring Sonakshi Sinha in the lead.

The first look features the actor playing a tough cop in what will be her digital debut. The series also features Vijay Varma, Gulshan Devaiah and

Sohum Shah. The series is produced by Executive producers Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar along with Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti.

Speaking of the series, director Reema Kagti reveals, "Sonakshi is an actor with the ability to seamlessly fit into every character she plays. She plays a tough cop in the series, and it is a delight to see her sink her teeth into the skin of the character."



Audio has never gone out of vogue as citizens today are able to learn on the move. With the utility of audio going beyond radio services and entering into the digital realm, people are provided new learning opportunities. Be it news, entertainment or educational information, audio is converting anytime into learning time, considering that accessibility has become ubiquitous and affordable. Since radio, the subsequent advancements in technology moved the audience towards television and personal computers for their everyday needs. More importantly, education and learning through the internet began to take shape in the early 2000s, laying the foundations for an EdTech industry. Due to the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, students, schools, training institutions, and colleges now view learning outcomes through a different lens. Within a span of a year, e-learning platforms have disrupted the ecosystem.

However, as a developing nation, there are several challenges that we need to cope with. For instance, all the major e-learning platforms require high-quality video streaming and internet connectivity so that users are able to avail the resources they have to offer. Unfortunately, several corners of India are yet to see the infrastructure that can present high-bandwidth content for all. Beyond this, people across generations are suffering from various health effects on account of

excessive screen times as school lectures and live interactions are primarily in the video format.

In fact, recent reports suggest that the current average screen time every week is around 6.9 hours, on account of the ample time available during the pandemic. Indians access their internet mostly through their smartphones, and within a year, it has increased by 25 per cent, from 4.9 hours to 6.9 hours from April 2020 onwards. Such trends do not indicate a healthy precedent, and audio could prove to a suitable hands-free alternative. Even for education, video creation and development are arduous processes that require time and effort to achieve quality. We often forget that a majority of competitive exam aspirants hail from tier III, IV cities, and rural areas that lack the resources to afford video-based services. With price constraints and limited access to the latest technologies, the chances of aspirants who wish to crack examinations are hindered. On the bright side, the gap is now being addressed by audio services, through podcasts, audio lectures, and bite-sized audio clips on course concepts due to easy production processes and low costs.

Diversity in course offerings and exam prep

In the last couple of years, we have seen the proliferation of several EdTech apps, delivering different levels of education across all age



Whether you are preparing for government jobs or upskilling to reach greater heights in career, the audio format will continue to influence learning, shares Dushyant Kohli

groups. Similarly, several audio-based learning apps are offering multiple courses on their platforms, making it ideal for candidates

THE FUTURE IS SOUND

preparing for government exams to be on top in the highly competitive space. Be it courses like current affairs, static GK, History or English. They are delivered by subject matter experts in the audio format, which helps in sequencing audio content for exam preparation and cracking government jobs.

Moreover, some of these apps also have versions that cater to feature phone users, which function on low bandwidths and affordable data packs. It makes it easier for users to download or stream content while consuming far lesser data as compared to video services. In fact, exclusive exam preparation content is avail-

able in vernacular languages like Hindi, Bengali, and others as well, reaching a wider audience beyond the big cities.

In addition to this, career coaches and teachers realise the quality, reach and potential of audio-based learning. The students are increasingly expressing a desire to learn from the best, and

short audio content and clips from experts is the preferred format, and it is redefining their approach towards job seeking.

Effectiveness of audio-based learning

Quality learning programmes are often unaffordable even in the realm of digital. Here is where audio is playing a transformative role as it is bringing inexpensive services into the deep corners of the country by merely utilising existing infrastructure. In fact, several players in the podcasting and audio-based educational space are serving millions of students every day, making it an effective medium for consuming good quality exam preparation content.

The critics often question the efficacy of audio as a medium of learning. They argue that providing both text and audio material for preparation could overwhelm aspirants. However, there is enough evidence from the scientific world that points towards audio's role in improving the cognitive abilities of listeners. The argument is that repetitive listening can lead to better retention of concepts. Analytical reasoning too can be understood through audio, which is contrary to popular notions that audio's role in imparting education is inadequate for attaining reasoning abilities.

Going by examples from the real world, we can understand how customer care services, doctors and medics, and musicians develop an ear for sound, structure, and form.

Similarly, even in audio-based learning, it becomes easier by replaying audio files and practising concepts by visualisation. This trend is identifiable in India as more and more users are consuming audio content in their native languages, ensuring better retention.

Reasons for audio's resurgence and how the future looks

One of the most impressive aspects of audio that has only been rediscovered during the pandemic is the positive effect of passive listening. Since the lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions were imposed, a majority of citizens remained indoors, relying on all the tools at their disposal to bring their lives back to normal. Audio-streaming services and apps underwent astounding growth, thanks to the increase in content consumption by users while staying home.

It further justifies the fact that people feel comfortable carrying out their daily chores and listen passively to educational content, thereby, saving precious time.

Further to this, it is enabling the conversion of non-study time into learning time, due to hands-free devices that play audio files through voice commands. Therefore, whether a person is preparing for government jobs or upskilling to reach greater heights in their career, the audio will continue to influence learning, and impact even future generations.

(The writer is the COO of Khabri.)

what's brewing?



● Shradha Das



● Divi



● Priya



● Zoya Mirza



● Lalitha



● Nikitha and Sravanthi



● Lakshmi



● Anusha



● Vinali Bhatnagar

RAMP REVAMPED

Fifth Avenue's lifestyle and bridal fashion show was an enthralling affair at the HITEX Exhibition centre. Actresses Shradha Das, Zoya Mirza and Vinali Bhatnagar, Miss India - East-2017 walked the ramps along with top models in the latest fashion wears put together by the 9 excellent designers from the city.

Photos by SV Chary

PARTY

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



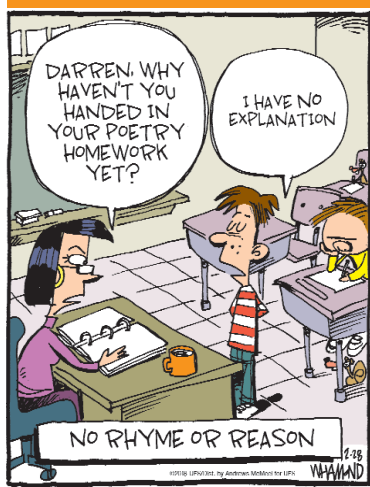
NANCY



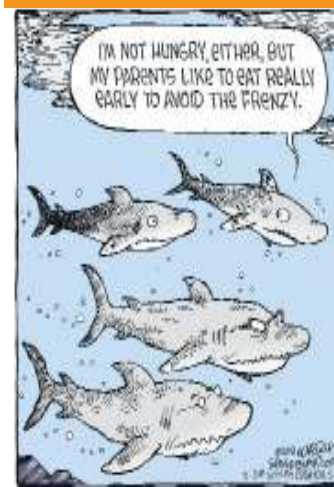
GINGER MEGGS



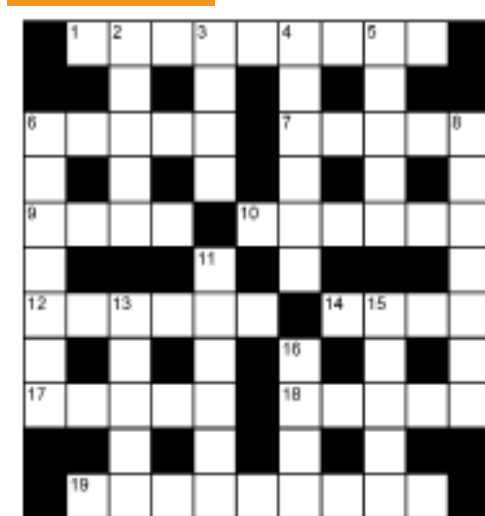
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 People in jail
- 2 Answer
- 3 A fine glossy fabric
- 4 Almost
- 5 Correct
- 6 Mugs and other things made of baked clay
- 7 The least difficult
- 8 Author
- 9 Things to play with
- 10 Flat dishes
- 11 Mistakes
- 12 The part along the side or end of something
- 13 A boat with sails
- 14 Flour is made from this
- 15 Scientific study of the sun, moon, planets and stars
- 16 A brother or sister the same age as you

DOWN

- 1 People in jail
- 2 Answer
- 3 A fine glossy fabric
- 4 Almost
- 5 Correct



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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.

BIGG BOSS FAME HARIKA APPOINTED TELANGANA TOURISM AMBASSADOR



In some great news for fans of *Bigg Boss Telugu 4* contestant and YouTuber Alekhya Harika, the Telangana State

Tourism Development Corporation (TSTDC) appointed her as its brand ambassador. The appointment was made by TSTDC Chairman Uppala Srinivas Gupta on the occasion of International Women's Day Celebrations.

The official Twitter handle of the TSTDC announced the development and said, "Uppal Srinivas Gupta,

Chairman of Telangana State Tourism Development corporation appointed Alekhya Harika as the new brand ambassador for TSTDC." Uppala Srinivas said, "Appointed our Telangana Mahila, *Bigg Boss* fame, Dethadi Alekhya Harika garu as Telangana State Tourism 'Brand Ambassador' (sic)." He added, "All the very best Harika. I am sure that

you will do the justice to the role." Uppala Srinivas, following International Women's Day celebrations at the TSTDC office, said that from now onwards, Telangana Tourism staff would wear handloom clothes to promote and support handloom weavers in the state. The YouTuber's services would be used by TSTDC to promote tourism in Telangana on different platforms.

Alekhya Harika was one of the top five contestants in season four of *Bigg Boss Telugu* and the first one to be eliminated from the race in the top five. Harika entered the *Bigg Boss* house from the fame that she attained through her YouTube channel 'Dethadi', backed by Tamada media.

She has about 1.6 million subscribers. Alekya garnered fans on social media for her use of the Telangana dialect.



SEKHAR KAMMULA GRATEFUL FOR FEMALE COLLEAGUES



Director Sekhar Kammula revealed thanked the women who worked for Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi-starrer *Love Story*. He penned a long message that reads, "My hearty wishes to all the women colleagues, actresses, and choreographers, who worked in our film 'Love Story'. I wish them all a very happy working women's day." (sic) He added, "I specially thank all those women who were part of our Jumba group. They were home makers, mothers and working women. They made lot of sacrifices, gave us time and energy even though film was not their career. They never missed a day even during the corona times. Thanku one and all for your incredible support." (sic) He also said that among the women who worked with him, some are going be directors.

'I'M ENJOYING EXPLORING VARIOUS GENRES, CHARACTERS'

SHREYA SRIKONDA

Actor Naveen Chandra is making news all over for his intense character in *Mosagallu*, set to release on March 19. He opens up to share details about the experience of such a big role, saying "I've always wanted to be part of a good story. After struggling for so many years, I've finally gotten to act in scripts written for me and it's a good feeling." Speaking about the movie *Mosagallu*, he exclaims that he was shocked when he heard about the level of the huge scam. "I had an idea about the scam when the news was out, but I hadn't really paid attention to it. When I heard the script I learnt about the scam that involved 2,500-2,800 crores of money, all carried out by two siblings and a cousin. I play the role of the cousin in the siblings played by Kajol and Vishnu. The cousin character can do anything — he solves the siblings' problems with the systems, police and anything else." He mentions that the character he plays is wild and unexpected, as a man addicted to drugs and is a petty thief.

After being approached by the siblings about the scam, he takes it to the next level by assuring them that he would take care of the police, loopholes and everything. In his own words, Naveen calls his role a "toxic masculine" character. He mentions how he prepared for the role of a drug addict, saying "His vice is a part of his life, he partakes daily and that becomes normal for him. This nature of his creates a lot of drama in the movie."

He mentions that this could be the loudest role he's done so far. "Only Vishnu's character can control mine, and many times Kajal was taken aback. Director Jeff didn't monitor me so as to get natural reactions to my character, so Kajal and other actors would get scared at the aggressive scenes." He mentions he didn't try to do any method acting and would go with the flow. The actor talks about how kids would turn to easy ways of making money when they aren't provided with viable employment opportunities. He says the siblings in the movie are affected by their past, and hence turn to crime to lead an amazing, luxu-

rious rest of their life. The American and Indian government's confusion and how the police deal with the scammers is highly interesting, he notes. He says that he teases Sunil Shetty a lot, "It's like a catch-me-if-you-can relationship, where I tease the cop a lot every time we come across each other."

Naveen says he got into the industry to become an actor. "Sometimes I got big roles, sometimes I got small roles. As an actor, I get to experience many things that I can't in real life. Roles like being a druggie, a racer or anything like are only possible for me on screen. I want to explore all kinds of roles, and all kinds of films." He mentions that on the sets, he is regarded to be a good actor. "People appreciated my acting as it stood out somewhere between all the big roles, and I'm happy with what is given to me."

Naveen is doing a lot of interesting, concept-driven films, and mentions that the audience will soon see a new kind of actor. He has a few movies lined up in Tamil, is in a web series by Arka media, and recently finished a movie with Avika Gor. His 2021 seems to be very busy, as he mentions he's been working 6-11 every day. He says, "The success rate of the Telugu film industry in India is big, and there's more competition with all the actors and filmmakers doing a great job. The healthy competition is great!"

He is looking to make a name for himself as a good actor and says his dream role



Only Vishnu's character can control mine, and many a time, Kajal was taken aback. Director Jeff didn't monitor me so as to get natural reactions to my character, so Kajal and other actors would get scared at the aggressive scenes.

The Sree Vishnu — Rajendra Prasad starer *Gaali Sampath* has garnered a lot of curiosity. The film, which has actress Lovely Singh playing the female lead, is set to be an out and out entertainer with hilarious comedy as it features two actors with great comic timing in the lead roles.

With none other than writer-director Anil Ravipudi presenting the film, supervising the direction, and providing screenplay, the expectations have shot up. Anil is known for making commercial entertainers with loads of comedy. But the trailer of *Gaali Sampath* has an equal dose of comedy and drama. Anil Ravipudi himself stated that the film is about a mute person falling into a fit and the film is all about his survival. Survival thrillers have been tried in other languages, but

this will be the first time the genre makes its way into Telugu cinema.

Directed by Aneesh Krishna and bankrolled by Sahu Garapati under Shine Screens and S Krishna, *Gaali Sampath* is hitting the screens on March 11 on the eve of Maha Shivratri. At a recent preview of the film, noted producers and directors heaped praises on the team.

Producer Dil Raju said he knew the film would turn out to be interesting right when he heard the story. "The entire story revolves around Rajendra Prasad garu, and his skills need no introduction. Actor Sree Vishnu too, comes with a bag of talent. All his films are proof of him being a great performer. I wish Aneesh all the best, this is a beautiful team, expectations are high."

Anil Ravipudi, who's given his all to the film said, "Sai is my best friend who stood by me through thick and thin.

Gaali Sampath, a mix of comedy and drama: Makers

He played a big role in my success today. I always told him I'll back whatever he ventures into and what better way to turn producer than through a film penned by him? I hope Aneesh will continue to do films like these, and I hope the same with the technicians. When we decided on casting Rajendra Prasad garu as the father, we could see no further than Sree Vishnu to play his son. All of the cast has done a great job. Just like how every film of mine has been loved to bits, I hope the audience will do the same with this."

Talking about how the film is all about the fun and emotional journey of a father and son, director Aneesh Krishna said, "This film is a

beautiful take on the relationship between a father and son. I'm eternally grateful to Anil garu for bestowing me with this opportunity and trusting me with the film. Rajendra Prasad garu has always kept the set lively with his jokes, I cherish every moment I spent with him. You will see Sree Vishnu in a different light this time. We thank everyone that has come here to support and cheer us."

Calling the film a milestone in his life, veteran actor Dr Rajendra Prasad said that this specific role is one of his most memorable ones that people will remember all his life. "My first opportunity, first film led me this far and I'm thankful for all those. Sai has written a beauti-

ful story for the audience. I had a blast shooting with Vishnu and Lovely. This film is a special gem in my life."

The producer S.Krishna said that Rajendra Prasad was the inspiration for him to write and direct this small story. He spoke about Anil Ravipudi's contribution to the film-making process, saying he was present throughout the journey. He relayed his thanks to Harish Peddi and Saahu Garipati. "Anish is my friend, he gave extraordinary music for the film. Tammiraju's editing is crisp and Vishnu gave a fantastic performance," he gushed about his team. He spoke about the different concept of the movie, saying certain elements are sure

to leave the audience teary-eyed. He asked for everyone's blessings to make the film a success.

Speaking about the film and his role, actor Vishnu said, "Remember, in your time of waiting, people say the best is on its way? For me, this film is that. I was excited to share screen space with Rajendra Prasad garu. Despite COVID, he shot the film, following all protocols. I took no formal training in acting, but through this film, I trained under the best and it'll show in my work. People will worship him for his acting during the climax scene, that's how amazing a job he's done."

Energetic star Ram Pothineni was the special guest at the preview. He congratulated and praised the team of *Gaali Sampath*. He went to the extent of saying the film, including actor Rajendra Prasad, deserve awards.



