KRMB allots 5.4 TMC to Telangana, 4.5 TMC to Andhra Pradesh

Hyderabad: Responding to the fresh indents placed by Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to meet their emergency water needs till the end of August, the Krishna River Management Board has issued release orders allotting them 5.4 TMC and 4.5 TMC respectively.Since the availability of water in Nagarjuna Sagar was much less than the total requirement of 9.914 TMC to be met, the KRMB had decided to draw water from the Srisailam project to meet the indent. The water available in the NSP, above the critical off take point of 500 feet (10 feet below the MDDL of 510 ft) was put at a mere 4.78 TMC.

The Board decided to draw 5.705 TMC from the Srisailam project. This was the net availability above the critical offtake level of 800 ft (the MDDL 834 ft). Considering the 10 per cent evaporation loss, the net realisation of the water (released from Srisailam) at Nagarajuna Sagar dam will be 5.134 TMC, officials said. The water to be released from Srisailam would be on the condition that it would be routed through the power houses so as to derive power generation benefits also. Considering the acute shortage being faced in the basin, the water drawn should be utilised judiciously.The Engineer-in-chief of Telangana placed the fresh indent to meet the demand under the Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation scheme, for which the drawl should be made directly from Srisailam project,

besides the drinking water needs under Palair and Udayasamudram reservoirs along with that of the needs of the HMWSSB. AP wanted the water to meet the drinking water needs in Guntur, Palnadu, Bapatla and Prakasam districts.

UoH constitutes flying squads to carry out eviction of unauthorised boarders

Hyderabad: The University of Hyderabad (UoH) constituted three flying squads to carry out eviction drives for removing unauthorised boarders in the university hostels.As per the notification recently issued by the administration, the fly-ing squads headed by deputy chief warden have been asked to conduct thorough inspections or surprise checks in all hostels as and when required on a regular basis.Apart from identifying and evicting unauthorized boarders in the hostels, the squads have been asked to impose a penalty on bonafide boarders who are found to accommodate unauthorized persons in their rooms.The squads were instructed to handover the unauthorized boarders in the hostels to police for necessary legal action. They were also instructed to take action against the bonafide boarders who were found to engage in any banned/illegal activities in the hostels during the hostels inspections.

The notification forming the flying squads did not go down well with the ABVP HCU, which condemned 'moral policing' by the university administration. "We completely abide by the rules and regulations of the university. However, the university administration should not indulge in moral policing via the flying squads that have been permitted to barge into hostels even in the night in name of inspections," said Bala Krishna, president ABV-HCU.

OGH doctors successfully conduct liver transplant on three-year-old child

Hyderabad: A team of doctors at the Osmania General Hospital (OGH) have recently successfully conducted liver transplant on a three year old child.Modugu Chohan Aditya , a resident of Khammam district, was suffering with congenital biliary atresia and liver failure. Using advanced liver donor transplant procedure, OGH Dr. Madhusudan and his team of surgical gastroenterologists and liver transplantation successfully operated on the child and transplanted a part of liver donated by his mother Amla.Both mother and child were recovering well, and discharged on July 16, a statement said on Wednesday.

On reducing tariffs for smartphone components | Explained

The story so far: The India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA), an industry body representing mobile and other electronics assembly and manufacturing units, has called for a reduction of tariffs on certain components for smartphones. The demand appears, at first blush, to be at odds with the goal of the government — and domestic players — to expand the domestic industrial base for components. However, the ICEA, whose members have included Apple and Foxconn, has argued that it opposes tariff cuts for components that are widely manufactured in India, such as open cells and LED light parts.

Why impose tariff cuts?

Reducing input costs for smartphone assembly units is the obvious reason for these demands. However, a principal justification makers cite for reduced tariffs on components is the saturation of the domestic market: nearly every phone made in India is assembled domestically, and the surplus is exported. By units, smartphones were the fifth largest classifiable commodity exported in the financial year 2022–23, compared to 2015–16, when the rank was 178. The implication goes, now that domestic demand is fulfilled, the need for high component tariffs has dimmed.The second justification, the industry cites, is the nature of the specific components that it is seeking duty cuts for: Printed Circuit Boards (PCBs) and sub-assemblies, which are highly complex, and miniaturised inputs for smartphones, are not close to being made

in India, increasing costs for local assembly operations. Domestic manufacturing of these components' could take around eight years, Pankaj Mohindroo, ICEA's chairman estimated.

In addition, the ICEA said in a report last year, "the overall aggregate demand necessary for domestic investment in some inputs is much larger than the demand created by the prevailing production level." This effectively means that current tariff levels on PCBs (20%) and other inputs are not resulting in increased domestic production of these components; rather, they are increasing the costs of assembly, as the components have to be assembled anyway.The tariffs are also leading to a strange consequence: domestic component makers are jacking up prices they quote to assembly units to a "just noticeable difference" below the net cost of an imported component. Cutting tariffs would force domestic component makers to cut their prices and relieve operating expense pressure for assembly units.

What about foreign competitors?

The industry is casting these proposed changes as a "competitive re-alignment" to keep up with other main electronics manufacturing giants in China, Vietnam, Thailand and Mexico. Vietnam's "bonded zones," which have special exemptions on duties, allow assembly and manufacturing units based there to enjoy much lower tariffs on component imports. "If Indian companies such as Micromax and Lava want

their phone to be competitive in the global market, they should not think of import substitution when selecting parts and components," ICEA argues. "They should use the best available technologies to make their phones, regardless of the fact the technologies are made in India or not.""When China started to assemble smartphones 15 years ago, Chinese firms' only contribution was labour intensive assembly, accounting for about 3.6% of the total manufacturing value addition," the ICEA report says. "But, today, Chinese firms have captured about 25 per cent of the manufacturing value added by providing battery, camera filter, glass back-cover, stainless frame, printed

circuit board assembly, and other parts, which are technology intensive and offer higher value added than pure assembly service," the ICEA points out. "[T]here is a need to scale up production of smartphones. At this stage this can only be done by increasing exports. To increase exports, smartphones have to be competitive vis a vis China and Vietnam. This would require reducing tariffs and most importantly maintaining a stability in the tariff regime."Smartphone assembly units have been buoyed by the production linked incentive scheme for mobile manufacturing, which subsidises phones which are domestically assembled.

The contentious takeover of SAIL-Steel Complex Limited in Kerala | Explained

The story so far: The National Company Law Tribunal's (NCLT) order to hand over SAIL-SCL Kerala Limited (SSKL) at Cheruvannur in Kozhikode district in Kerala to Chhattisgarh Outsourcing Services Private Limited (COSPL), as part of insolvency proceedings, has triggered protests from the Kerala government as well as employees of the company. A blame game is now on over the public sector undertaking (PSU) being allegedly run down and finally sold.The SSKL, the only mini-steel plant in Kerala, was founded in 1969 as a joint venture of the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation and a private entrepreneur. The company mainly manufactured TMT steel bars used for construction and with a production capacity of 55,000 tons per annum and it had made substantial profits in the mid-1980s. However, it faced turbulent times later and in an attempt to save it, the Kerala government entered into a partnership with the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) in 2010.

Matters got out of hand after the SSKL procured a loan of ?45 crore from Canara Bank in 2011 for the construction of a state-of-the-art re-rolling mill. The company could not clear the debt that accrued to ?104

crore by 2023. As debt mounted and unable to manage the expenses, the company partially ceased operations in 2014, and has been completely out of business since December 2016.Upon Canara Bank's request, the NCLT appointed Anish Aggarwal as the Receiver/ Resolution Professional in March 2023 to smoothen the insolvency proceedings. The NCLT-Kochi Bench order to hand over the company to COSPL, a Raipur-based business services company, for ?30 crore came in June 2024. However, the employees of SSKL fought the takeover tooth and nail and stopped the Receiver and a representative of COSPL from entering the premises of the company twice so far. Meanwhile, the Government of Kerala approached the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) challenging the NCLT's order, citing that it had not heard the government before coming up with the order and also that the SSKL cannot have the right to hand over the land acquired by the State without its permission. Even while the NCLAT served an interim injunction over the NCLT order, COSPL obtained an order from the Kerala High Court directing the police to offer protection to the company's officials to enter the SSKL premises. Their second attempt

to enter the premises in the first week of July also turned futile due to stiff resistance from the employees under the aegis of various trade unions.

Meanwhile, the Kerala High Court cancelled its earlier order offering police protection to the officials on grounds that COSPL's right to enter the premises was contentious. In the most recent order, the Kerala High Court ordered to implead the Receiver in the case against the takeover filed by the State government.Ever since the NCLT order came, the employees and the trade unions have been alleging a conspiracy in it and the involvement of the land mafia. "The company is worth over ?300 crore and they are selling it for a mere ?30 crore. It does not even cover the debt owed to Canara Bank. The NCLT did not give the State government a chance to present its case or settle the issue amicably. COSPL does not have any experience in this field. It is a business services company. Hence we suspect something shady in this deal," K. Shaji, convenor of the Steel Complex Employees Coordination Committee, told The Hindu.

The employees also blame the State government for its lack of understanding with the SAIL. "SAIL had failed to keep its

end of the deal, which led to the closure of the company in 2015. It refused to cancel the partnership deal. Also, Canara Bank refused to accept the State's one-time settlement offer," said CITU district president Mampatta Sreedharan.On the other hand, SAIL had washed its hands off the SSKL long ago alleging that the Kerala government did not keep its part of the partnership agreement."The State government always blamed SAIL for its neglect. On the other hand, SAIL has clarified that the State did not keep its word that TMT bars from the steel complex will be used for works under the Public Works department in Kerala by default. The Public Works Minister, who is also the local MLA, could have made it possible quite easily," Mr. Shaji alleged.The employees also suspect the role of the Receiver in the deal, citing that he had published the advertisement inviting expression of interest from prospective buyers in a Malayalam daily and only in its Malappuram edition, effectively "hiding" it from a majority of the stakeholders and even the State government. That the company is located on 33 acres of prime land along the national highway 66 is the reason why the employees suspect the involvement of land mafia.

SBI Hyderabad Circle organized Cyclothon at P V Gyan Bhoomi, Necklace Road, Hyderabad for promoting sustainability initiative measures among the staff. The Probationary Officers of 2023 batch along with Senior officials participated in the event, with lot of enthusiasm. The theme for the event is **"Pedal for the Planet"** to care for our Land and our future.

The event was flagged off by Sri Rajesh Kumar, Chief General Manager of Hyderabad Circle and other Senior executives of the Circle. Speaking on the occasion Shri Rajesh Kumar said that SBI and its employees always take pride in being the companion in India's Journey towards Sustainability, be it agricultural sector, industries, infrastructure, education, science and technology. To percolate the culture of sustainability in the minds of the young officers who recently joined the SBI fold, the Hyderabad circle has undertaken Cyclothon activity with the theme **"Pedal for the Planet"**.

Shri Rajesh Kumar said to reduce the carbon footprint, the circle is participating in enhancing generation of renewable energy and increase carbon offsetting. It is the Bank's aspiration to lead India in Climate finance- with a pathway to Net Zero emissions by 2055 i.e., the centenary year of SBI formation. Bank shall reduce the carbon footprint of its operations to achieve the voluntarily envisioned goal of achieving Carbon Neutrality by 2030.

Shri Rajesh Kumar said that, as a part of the Green Initiative towards Sustainable Development Goals, our Bank's mission is to facilitate 7.5% of domestic gross advances to be Green Advances. To achieve this, our Bank is focusing on financing Rooftop Solar Photovoltaic Systems as part of the Housing Loan project. To encourage Residential Housing projects - implementing water management, waste management and solar photovoltaic as a part of the building design under the sustainability initiative the Bank is offering interest rate concession of 25 bps. Also, Bank is promoting Green Car Loan, Sustainability Linked Loans such as Surya Shakti Solar Finance, Finance to Biofuel Projects, Compressed Biogas under SATAT (Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation) Scheme. Bank has envisaged 25 % of Green Advances to be funded by Green Line of credits from multilaterals/ DFIs/ Green Bonds/ Sustainability-Linked instruments/ Green Loans/ Domestic Green deposits etc. The Bank expects lending towards green sectors, renewable / sustainability projects will rise in coming years and in this direction, Bank has started Green Rupee Term Deposit scheme for meeting the funding requirements**.**

Further, our Circle is encouraging generation of Virtual debit card through Yono, Green pin generation process, digitalization to facilitate ease of business and strengthen the sustainability agenda by reducing paper usage. Our Circle adopted Green Initiatives by practicing energy saving techniques, rainwater harvesting, solar power plants installation, ecofriendly materials usage and going in for IGBC certification for its buildings & infrastructure. To combat plastic pollution PET bottle crusher has been installed at Hitec City Metro station, LHO & Administrative Offices.

As part of Sustainable Development goal, we promote generation of renewable Solar Power & Rainwater harvesting. We have a total installed capacity of 1.4MWp of solar power plants at 32 different locations across the circle, which is generating 16,80,000 units per year. Green Power (Power generated from renewable energy resources like solar, wind, geothermal, biogas, biomass, and hydroelectric power) is used at 3 locations (LHO, SBILD Hyderabad and SBILD Secunderabad) contributing towards eco-friendly environment. . Bank also encourages the use of e-vehicles by installing EV chargers in their buildings/ premises. The green top/ cover is being increased at various Banks own buildings by taking up landscaping activities.

The General Managers Of the Circle Shri Prakash Chandra Baror and Shri Ravi Kumar Verma impressed upon younger generation to inculcate the sustainability practices for safeguarding of our nature and planet.

Regards

(G Ramakrishna)

ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER (M, C & CSR)

Donald Trump assassination attempt: Conspiracy theories spreading online about the assassination attempt and Thomas Matthew Crooks

Misinformation and conspiracy theories were spreading online after an assassination attempt on former U.S. President Donald Trump at a campaign rally on Saturday.Thomas Matthew Crooks, 20, was alleged to have shot at the Republican presidential candidate from a rooftop during the rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, wounding Trump's right ear. One spectator died and two others were injured.

Within hours of the shooting, an image surfaced online of a man dressed in a black sweatshirt, hat and black sunglasses. Social media posts said the man was "Antifa extremist" Mark Violets and that he was named by local police as the suspect in the assassination attempt.However, the man in the photograph is Marco Violi, who had nothing to do with the shooting. Violi is an Italian sports writer who shares content on the Italian soccer team AS Roma.In a statement emailed to Reuters and shared on his social media, Violi said he was in Rome and had awoken at 2 a.m. to numerous messages, adding that he "categorically denied any involvement in the situation."Violi was not the only individual to have been misidentified in the immediate aftermath of the shooting.Viral posts also misidentified another man, Maxwell Yearick, as the shooter. In 2016, various media outlets reported that Yearick ,who does not resemble Crooks, was arrested outside a Pittsburgh Trump rally after an altercation with police. Doctored images of Trump and Secret Service agents smiling on stage surfaced in the immediate aftermath of the shooting. The fake images were shared to support claims that the assassination attempt had been "staged" as a ploy to boost Trump's popularity in November's election.The original photographs were captured by an Associated Press photographer and show Trump and the agents with serious facial expressions.The FBI on Sunday said Crooks acted alone and the agency had yet to identify a motive.Predictive programming is a conspiracy theory, often revived in the aftermath of a major news event, that suggests

governments and powerful groups provide indications of planned events to the public by embedding predictions in books, TV shows and movies.Within an hour of the attempted assassination, a fabricated screenshot resurfaced of a cartoon of Trump in a casket and was described as a scene from the TV series "The Simpsons."But this image has made the rounds on social media since at least 2017.Matt Selman, an executive producer for the show, told Reuters in an email that the screenshot never appeared on the show, adding that it is "all too easy to create fake Simpsons 'predictions' like these for the purpose of misleading people.

Canon Elevates Legacy with EOS R1 & EOS R5 Mark II:
Unveils the Next Gen Innovations in Filmmaking & Photography

Canon India, a leading company in digital imaging solutions, today unveiled two remarkable additions to its EOS R series: the EOS R1 & EOS R5 Mark II. As pioneers in the photography and videography segment, Canon is yet again ready to revolutionize the industry and surpass customer expectations with its next gen intelligent features, quality, speed and convenience.EOS R1 is the company's first flagship EOS R system camera targeted at action genre photographers who need to capture the decisive moment even under severe shooting conditions, along with media & video production departments. With its powerful new image processing and autofocus systems, the new camera is setting new standards and redefining speed in the digital era.

The EOS R5 Mark II, a full-frame mirrorless camera that outperforms the EOS R5, with groundbreaking features like the high-performance new 45-megapixel back-illuminated (BI) stacked CMOS sensor and Accelerated Capture image processor system. Additionally, it includes enhancements such as Eye Control AF and Cinema EOS features, bringing Canon's esteemed "5 series" from the EOS system into the next generation. These functionalities make EOS R5 Mark II a true all-rounder camera for photo and movie professionals alike. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Tiger Ishii?, Executive Officer, Canon Inc., President & COO, Canon Marketing Asia & President & CEO, Canon Singapore, said "As a dynamic epicenter of technological advancement and creative innovation, India has proven to be an essential hub for Canon's global growth strategy. The market has been proving exceptionally well for our camera business, establishing our leading global market share in the DILC segment. As we look forward to strengthening our legacy of EOS series, the launch of the EOS R1 and EOS

R5 Mark II underscores our unwavering commitment of bringing pioneering cutting edge technologies to empower users. These new cameras are more than products; they are gateways for Indian filmmakers and photography professionals to redefine storytelling through unmatched visual excellence. With India as one of the

top performing markets in Asia, I am confident that this launch will contribute significantly to making this year a landmark for us."

Sharing Canon's intent behind the new products, Mr. Toshiaki Nomura, President & CEO, Canon India, said, "The newly launched, much awaited flagship EOS R1

introduces new dimensions in imaging technology with excellent usability and reliability to stay at the forefront of users' needs and technological advancements.

With its powerful new image processing and autofocus systems, the new camera is setting new standards and redefining speed in the digital era."

Meta Launches Meta Verified
Subscription for Businesses in India

Meta has now introduced Meta Verified subscription plans for businesses on Facebook and Instagram in India. The company introduced Meta Verified for businesses last year beginning with a small test to learn how Meta can offer the most valuable subscription toolkit to help businesses achieve their goals on its apps. Earlier this year, Meta also announced the expansion of the initial test from one subscription plan to four, and last month the company followed it up with the launch of

Meta Verified for businesses on WhatsApp, announced during its Conversations Conference. The expanded Meta Verified business offering on Facebook and Instagram includes the verified badge along with enhanced account support, impersonation protection, and additional features to support discovery and connection. Together these features give businesses an opportunity to grow and support a wider variety of business needs and activities on Meta apps.

Meta's enhanced offerings are based on feedback from businesses as well as market research since the company started the test last year. Business owners have told Meta that they value the ability to get verified because it helps provide credibility and gives customers more confidence to engage with them. In fact, the verified badge continues to be one of the top reported reasons for subscribing to Meta Verified. With Meta Verified, businesses can unlock new ways to build credibility on Meta apps and grow their brand. Meta Verified now offers four subscription plans to give businesses increased options for selecting a plan that's best suited to their needs. The subscription plans in India are available for purchase only via iOS or Android at this time for businesses on Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp. Businesses have an option to either purchase Meta Verified for Facebook or Instagram or WhatsApp or do a bundled purchase for

Facebook and Instagram. All plans offer a foundational toolkit of the verified badge, account support and impersonation protection, and then each plan builds on it by offering additional features to support businesses keeping in mind where they are in their journey on Meta apps. The value of benefits across the four plans could vary depending on the businesses' specific goals and activity on Meta apps. Enhanced support is a key part of all offerings. Meta support starts with access to chat or email with agents and builds to requesting a call back from the agent to dedicated case monitoring. Similarly, a business can add more links in their Reels as they go up in plans, or access more features to enhance their profile as their presence on Meta apps grows. Meta Verified plans for businesses start at as little as INR 639 for a single app per month and go up to INR 21,000, which is an introductory discounted rate for two apps per month.

OPPO India Enters Record Books with the Reno12 Series for Most AI Avatars Created in a Day

Photo generated by AI Studio

OPPO India has become the first smartphone brand to enter both, the Asia Book of Records and the India Book of Records for creating 13,000 AI avatars in a single day using its AI Studio feature on a smartphone. This innovative feature allows users of the Reno12 series to transform any photo into a digital avatar with the device's Generative AI technology. This milestone for OPPO India underscores the brand's commitment to advancing AI technology. This record-setting event—held on AI Appreciation Day on 16th July 2024—also engaged the audience on the company's digital platforms to highlight the innovative features of the Reno12 Series.

Commenting on the occasion, Sushant Vashistha, Head of Digital Marketing, OPPO India said, "Setting a record for creating 13,000 AI avatars in a single day on the Reno12 Series is just incredible. This feat—exploring the new possibilities with AI—is even sweeter because we did it on AI Appreciation Day. OPPO's AI Studio transforms portraits into fun digital avatars that range from cowboys to cyberpunk heroes." OPPO India is also thrilled to announce that the record-breaking Reno12 Pro 5G will be available for sale starting from 18th July 2024 at INR 36,999 for the 12GB+256GB model and INR 40,999 for the 12GB+512GB variant across the OPPO e-Store, Flipkart, and mainline retail outlets.

In keeping with the celebrations, new buyers who purchase the Reno12 series and activate the My OPPO app between 18th July and 26th July also stand a chance to win an international holiday among other prizes that include OPPO Reno12 devices, family dining vouchers and OPPO Enco Buds 2. For more details, customers can check "Buy Now & Win International Trip & Other Exciting Rewards". Customers can avail of the following offers* on the first sale of the OPPO Reno12 Series Customers can enjoy an instant cashback of up to INR 4,000 on the OPPO e-Store, Flipkart, and mainline retailers with leading bank cards from SBI, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, One Card, Kotak Bank, Bank of Baroda and DBS, coupled with no-cost EMI for up to 9 months Customers who pre-book their Reno12 Pro 5G before 18th July and Reno12 5G before 25th July, will receive a special 6-month One-Time-Screen Replacement (OTSR) service Additionally, customers can avail of Zero Down Payment and low-down payment schemes from leading financiers like Bajaj Finserv, TVS Credit, HDB Financial Services, IDFC First Bank and Home Credit. New customers get 3 months of YouTube Premium and Google One free on the Reno12 Series.

A pathway for the most populous nation

The world population is expected to touch 8.5 billion by the end of this decade. While Asia is expected to be overpopulated, Europe, it is said, will be underpopulated. Due to falling fertility levels and rising longevity, the future population could have a higher number and share of older people. Thus, the two significant transformations are expected to be an imbalanced distribution of the population across regions and a skewed age structure.The population today is more centred in urban areas. By 2030, it is estimated that two-third of the people will inhabit urban spaces, which will put a strain on infrastructure and amenities. This, in turn, could compromise the quality of life of urban citizens.Women's health and rights

The theme of this world population day is 'women's sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights', marking the 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). This gives us an opportunity to accelerate efforts to realise the ICPD's programme of action. While there has been reasonable progress in three decades — women have greater access to modern contraceptives today and maternal deaths have declined considerably since 2000 — there are still unequal results across regions. It is unacceptable that each day, 800 women die globally from preventable causes relating to pregnancy and child birth. A disproportionate share of these deaths occur in developing countries. Reduced maternal mortality levels need to be associated with reduced fertility levels because lower fertility reduces exposure to maternity. However, decline in fertility levels is also associated with delayed childbearing among women.World population day has obvious significance for India. The most populated country in the world with a median age of 28 years could help balance the population-deficit regions. Lowering fertility levels and rising longevity also transforms the size and composition of households. There will soon be an uneven distribution of children and the elderly within households, which will have implications for inequality, an important concern for India. For instance, the Kerala Migration Survey 2023 reports that 42% of households have no elderly people whereas 37% of households have one elderly person, 20% have two, and 1% have three elderly people.The accommodation of elderly people and children is uneven across rich and poor households. This gives rise to a lower dependency burden (the ratio of dependent young and old to the population of working age) in rich households compared with poorer ones. In addition, the care burden in households is also shaped by the presence of children and the elderly. Due to societal stereotypes, the burden of care falls on women. This leaves women with less time to participate in paid work.Migration trendsThe distribution of the population in the future will continue to be shaped by migration. In recent decades, we have seen greater mobility of people. People often migrate due to poor development and infrastructure in their regions. A study estimates that 60 crore Indians migrate within the country annually, and 2 crore migrate abroad. Given the potential of India's future urbanisation, it is important to encourage the emergence of new cities in order to release pressure on existing mega cities. These need to have the same kinds of infrastructure and public amenities as the mega cities. We talk about smart cities, but are Indian cities 'smart'?It is clear that cities are the drivers of the global economy. At present, 600 urban centres drive 60% of the world's GDP. An assessment of global cities by Oxford Economics resulted in the Global Cities Index, which ranked the top cities in the world based on five categories: economics, human capital, quality of life, environment and governance. This exercise evaluates the urban quality of life, which needs to be studied so that the trends of rapid urbanisation and growing migration can be understood.Unfortunately, not a single Indian city appears in the top 50 ranking of world cities. The best-ranking Indian city is Delhi, which occupies the 350th position out of 1,000 cities in the world. This poor performance is due to India's poor environment and quality of life, which undoubtedly threaten the sustainability of its cities. To make India's urban spaces livable, we need to address all these challenges.It is also noteworthy that the most populous country of the world does not have a realistic count of its population. Most projections of India's population are based on decades-old data. Until India conducts its census, we will only have estimates. It is important to know the exact count and the demographic make up so that we can draft better policies.World population day is significant for India since we have a global footprint. Despite more countries adopting stringent immigration policies, more Indians will continue to emigrate, at least in the near future. At the same time, India needs to seriously prepare its workforce for the global labour market. It is said that the 21st century belongs to India. But this statement will be validated only if India prepares its workforce to keep up with the evolving global needs. The world should count on us as much as we count on ourselves.S. Irudaya Rajan is Chair and Honorary Visiting Professor at the International Institute of Migration and Development, Kerala; U.S. Mishra is Honorary Visiting Professor at the International Institute of Migration and Development Kerala

Yuvraj Singh on Abhishek Sharma's maiden T20I ton: "Many more to come"

Harare: Former India legendary all-rounder Yuvraj Singh was the proud man after watching his student Abhishek Sharma scoring maiden T20I century in his second international match.

Abhishek smashed 46-ball ton against Zimbabwe in the second T20I after failed to score any run in his international debut on Saturday. Other than Abhishek, Ruturaj Gaikwad slammed unbeaten 77* while Rinku Singh played a knock of 48 not out off 22 balls to steer India to 234/2 in 20 overs.

India comfortably won the match by 100 runs after bundling out Zimbabwe for 134. Avesh Khan and Mukesh Kumar clinched three wickets each while Ravi Bishnoi picked up two scalps.

Abhishek Sharma, who was awarded Player of the Match, made a video-call to his family and Yuvraj after the match. The veteran cricketer was happy with his performance and congratulated him on the feat. He also added that it is just the start and many more are yet to come."Well done, very proud. You deserved it. Many more to come, this is just the start," Yuvraj said on the video-call with Abhishek.Abhishek revealed that Yuvraj was happy after he got out on duck in the first T20I and said it's a good start. However, Abhishek feels the T20I century has surely made him proud."I had called Yuvi paji after the first match and I don't know why, but he was very happy, he was like that's a good start. I think he must be proud today as well, just like my family. So I am really happy, and it is all because of him as well, the hard work that he has put on me. For 2–3 years, he has been working really hard on me and not just cricket, even off the field as well. So, it's a big moment," Abhishek said.

India's demographic journey of hits and misses

As we observe World Population Day on July 11, there is much to look at in India's demographic journey over the decades. It was in 1989 that the United Nations established the day after Dr. K.C. Zachariah, a renowned demographer, had proposed the concept of a 'World Population Day'. The world population had touched five billion in 1987 and challenges such as poverty, health and gender inequality were plaguing the world, developing countries in particular.The decades of the 1960s and 1970s were scary as the global population was growing at a yearly rate of 2%. For India, there was a prediction of doom. This meant that widespread poverty, hunger and deaths were soon to follow in the next decades. However, despite the predictions, the next decades told a different story altogether. Global fertility rates declined rapidly. Due to improvements in living conditions and medical infrastructure, life expectancy increased. In India too, fertility rates began to fall since the 1970s and at present is below the replacement level. India's progress in many health parameters has been outstanding. There have been significant reductions in maternal and child mortality.In 2015, the UN adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were soon recognised as important metrics in assessing the progress of nations. With 2030, the target year, drawing closer, India's progress in the SDGs should be understood particularly in light of its population dynamics.India's population dynamicsThree components, namely fertility, mortality, and migration, play a pivotal role in shaping India's demographic landscape. India has made significant strides in reducing its fertility. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5, India's total fertility rate (TFR) decreased from 3.4 to 2 between 1992 and 2021, dropping below the replacement level of 2.1. There has been a significant drop in the mortality rate as well. The average life expectancy of Indians has also increased over time. With this, India is experiencing a demographic shift, towards an ageing population. According to the 2011 Census, individuals aged 60 years and above constituted 8.6% of the total population. The figure is projected to rise up to 19.5% by 2050. But what really do these changing dynamics signify?

India's population dynamics is intertwined with its 'development' scenario. The reduction in fertility signifies a transition toward smaller family norms. This can reduce the proportion of the dependent population and result in a demographic dividend — a period where the working-age population is larger than the dependent population. India can harness the potential of its young workforce by creating employment. The decline in mortality and increase in life expectancy are reflections of a robust health-care system and increased living standards. The issue of population ageing, however, requires a long-term plan — focusing on geriatric care and providing social security benefits. Migration and urbanisation are also critical issues. Rapid rural to urban migration is posing a threat to the existing urban infrastructure. Among all these, gender equality also finds an important place. Women labour force participation, which is straggling, their notable absence from political representation and their unending plight within society are the silent issues which can sabotage India's path to 2030.With six years in hand to meet the targets, India's road to 2030 crosses the path with its population dynamics. Population issues such as gender equality and socio-cultural divides cannot be ignored in the journey to achieve SDGs. It is only with a thorough understanding that India will be able to achieve a 'development' which is sustainable in its truest sense.The country's SDG journey'Development' in the simplest way means ensuring the basic requirements of food, shelter and health for all. 'No Poverty, Zero Hunger and Good Health' are the three most important SDGs which form the core of 'development'. India's journey from the brink of a demographic disaster to striving towards the 2030 goal of 'leaving no one behind' has seen a couple of hits and misses.India made great leaps towards the goal of eradicating poverty. The proportion of the population living below the poverty line reduced from 48% to 10% between 1990 and 2019. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) that came into effect in 2006 played a critical role in addressing rural poverty. The Janani Suraksha Yojana of 2005 — it provides cash benefits to pregnant women — not only accentuated institutional deliveries but also saved poor families from hefty health expenditures.In his controversial book, The Population Bomb (1968), Paul R. Ehrlich raised serious questions about India's ability to feed its population in the years to come. With the Green Revolution, India became self-sufficient in crop production and averted a catastrophe. The proportion of the population suffering from hunger reduced from 18.3% in 2001 to 16.6% in 2021. However, India's nutrition picture is not completely rosy. India contributes a third of the global burden of malnutrition. Though the Indian government launched the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for. Holistic Nourishment (POSHAN) Abhiyaan in 2018, it will still require a miracle to fulfil the target of 'Zero Hunger' by 2030.Health is one sector in India where progress made has been remarkable. All the critical mortality indicators have seen steady declines. The Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) decreased from 384.4 in 2000 to 102.7 in 2020. The mortality rate for children under five reduced significantly post 2000s. The infant mortality rate also reduced from 66.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 25.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2021. Although India is still not near reaching the targets, it seems to be on the right track. These achievements show that there has been a significant improvement in the quality and coverage of health care.Despite these achievements, India's road towards 2030 is not easy. According to Oxfam, the top 10% of India's population holds 77% of the national wealth. If the fruits of development are not equitably distributed and if development does not percolate to the poorest of the poor and the wealth scenario remains so skewed as it is now, 'sustainable development' can never be achieved in its truest sense. Absolute growth in GDP numbers has limited importance for a country where the top 1% holds 40% of the total wealth. Hunger and nutrition is another sector in crisis. In the Global Hunger Index (2023), India's rank was 111 out of 125 countries. In terms of nutrition, stunting, wasting and underweight among children below five years and anaemia among women pose serious challenges. India's epidemiological trajectory shows that the country has a double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCD). This is a serious challenge for India which also combats the early onset of NCDs and the rising health needs of the elderly.What needs looking intoFor India to achieve the SDGs, the changing population dynamics has to be acknowledged while forming policies. India needs to address income inequality, harness its demographic dividend by creating job opportunities for the youth of India and address changing health needs. NCDs, which incur high out-of-pocket expenditures, are catastrophic for some families. India needs a stronger safety net to save these families from slipping into utter poverty. The nutrition scenario should be set right by strengthening programmes. This will require an increase in budgetary allocation for the health and nutrition sectors. Another, but often missed, paradigm of this entire development discussion is gender equality. A gender equal approach and empowerment of vulnerable women can solve most issues and propel India's progress in the SDGs.India still has a long journey to cover in order to meet all the targets of the SDGs. This will require multisectoral collaboration and political will. India's progress in SDGs is directly proportional to the well-being of its population and the route to progress lies in a better understanding of its population dynamics and addressing the issues.Paramita Majumdar is a doctoral fellow in population studies at the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai. Nitin Kumar is an independent researcher and a Legislative Assistant to Members of Parliament (LAMP) Fellow (2023-24), New Delhi

Discovering the history of South India through its objects

It is a large house with cream walls and lilac windows situated along a narrow road in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district, solid-looking but not particularly distinctive. "It is very boring on the outside," agrees Chennai-based historian Dr. Pradeep Chakravarthy, nodding towards the photograph of this old house that he has shared with the audience of The Bangalore Room in Indiranagar, who are here to attend his talk titled A History of South India through Selected Antiques."Whether it was the Mughal kings we know so much about or the South Indian kings we know nothing about…their lives were very similar to us in terms of feelings and emotions.""Whether it was the Mughal kings we know so much about or the South Indian kings we know nothing about…their lives were very similar to us in terms of feelings and emotions." | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTAnd yet, it is this house, one that six generations of his family have lived in, that triggered his lifelong passion for history, says Pradeep, recalling lazy summer afternoons spent in that house as a boy, rummaging through the many discarded objects that littered the upstairs floor of this house. "One rule of our family was that when something was broken, we threw it upstairs," he says wryly.

On one such excavation, he found an object that triggered his lifelong fascination for history: a child's notebook, so old that the brown paper covering it flaked off when he touched it. He remembers flipping open the book, clearly one dedicated to maths, and finding a rather relatable epithet written neatly in it. It said, "I hate maths", with flowers drawn around the words. "Here was somebody who I didn't know…everything in his life was so different…but I could connect with that emotion," says Pradeep, with a laugh. "That was an important moment for me because I realised that, fundamentally, human nature doesn't change."

This one image, he says, taught him to see history very differently — not as a long string of dates and battles, but as stories of people whose lives were not very different from those of our own. "Whether it was the Mughal kings we know so much about or the South Indian kings we know nothing about…their lives were very similar to us in terms of feelings and emotions." The other thing he learnt from this home, growing up surrounded by old objects, was having a visual image of history. Pointing to a range of antiques arranged behind him at the talk, loaned for the occasion by Bengaluru's Natesan's Antiqarts, he says, "My hope is that through these objects, not only will you see them and admire them for their art, but also see the stories and some of the meanings behind it," says Pradeep.

The first object that Pradeep selects from the collection on display is a beautiful bronze lamp. "Lamps started off with a very practical point of view—giving light," he says. He then goes on to decode the various elements of the lamp, starting from the very top. "The minute you see this shape, with four wick holders, you know it is from Tirunelveli in the southern part of Tamil Nadu."According to him, the tradition of worshipping gods we are familiar with came fairly recently, only about 2000-odd years ago. "In the Rig Veda, the oldest Hindu texts, the two main gods it concerned itself with was Agni, which was for fire, and Indra, which was for water," he says. The oldest tradition, he adds, was simply to worship just the lamp. "That is true enlightenment. When you can focus your eyes on the lamp…on a steady flame…it calms and focuses the mind," he says before expanding on some of the finer details of this object.

For instance, he points out this lamp was created using the lost wax process, an ancient metal casting tradition dating back to at least 4000 BCE, where a mould made with wax is used to cast metal. Also, the upper part of the lamp, narrow at the top and enlarged at its waist, appears to represent a Mother Goddess, a symbol of fertility found in prehistoric excavation sites, "something we must have worshipped around 10,000 years ago," he says. Even though we have forgotten this tradition of worshipping this Mother Goddess figure, "the motif has continued," he says. Additionally, in the region of the Thamirabarani river, where this lamp is probably from, pottery shards with images of a female figure like this, carrying two sheaves of rice with a river with fish and crocodiles in the background, have been discovered. "All of these are fertility symbols," he explains.Pradeep then goes on to focus on another lamp, this one with a hamsa effigy on it. According to him, this mythical bird is a common motif found not just on lamps but also sculpted into the public audience halls of palaces of the past. "The reason we like the hamsa is that it was a mythical bird considered so pure at heart that if you gave it a mixture of water and milk, she would drink the milk and leave the water behind," he says. He decodes the metaphor of this symbol, saying that it is for us to remember that while there is good and bad in everything, we need to take the good and leave the bad. Pradeep also brings in the concept of ramya, or inner delight. "

Every motif that is on a work of art or object has an inner meaning," he says. "You need to keep looking at it and ask yourself why the artist put it here."

Pradeep spoke about all the other objects on display, tracing the techniques, history, mythology, and philosophy that have shaped them: a pithari or oil jar, Tanjore paintings, mixed metal receptacles, a silver-inlaid hookah base, and a colourful metal leaf tray from Kerala. Among the more fascinating stories Pradeep narrated was the connection between Tanjore paintings and what is today Karnataka. In 1565, the Vijayanagara Empire fell after the Battle of Talikota and was taken over by the combined army of the Deccan sultanates of Ahmadnagar Bidar, Bijapur, and Golconda. Tanjore, which had become part of the empire back then and was being run as a feudatory kingdom by the Nayaks, was going through conflict, so the Sultan of Bijapur sent a force commanded by the Maratha general Ekoji Bhonsle, the younger half-brother of the Maratha king Shivaji, to quell it. Ekoji went on to defeat the Nayaks and become the ruler of Tanjore, establishing a Maratha Kingdom that lasted nearly 200 years.Under the rule of the Maratha king Serfoji II, Tanjore paintings truly grew into their current form, building on pre-existing art traditions that share many similarities with the Mysore school of paintings, both having Vijayanagar influences.

"What Serfoji does differently is that he introduced the concept of gesso with a gold sheet," he says, adding that Tanjore paintings, which are traditionally painted on a cloth-covered board, embody the very fundamental philosophical concept of srishti, sthithi and samsara (creation, condition, destruction). "Weather changes the wooden board… the paint on the cloth will start cracking…the board, glue and cloth will move," he says. "Tanjore paintings are meant to be destroyed."At the event, Pradeep also admitted that much of his own learning came from an antique dealer he knew, who had a wealth of knowledge about the art and antiques of South India and was willing to share it. "What I learnt was a factor of the intelligent questions I asked," says Pradeep, who firmly believes that asking the right questions and observing things more carefully is key to understanding the past.After all, the word history originates in the Greek word 'historía' or inquiry, stemming from the Greek tradition of asking questions. "The whole understanding and purpose of history was to ask questions. The more questions we asked, the more we learnt what we didn't know," he says.Pradeep believes our history also has lessons for our present. And if we don't learn from them, we are condemned to repeat it, he warns. "That is what is happening today," he says.