

No more Bathukamma sarees for Telangana's poor women?

Hyderabad: The Congress government's attempts to do away with schemes introduced by the previous BRS government, and in turn wipe out whatever imprints were left by former chief minister K Chandrashekhar Rao on the lives of the people of Telangana, might deprive lakhs of poor women in the State of the Bathukamma sarees that they were getting for free from the government for the last six years.

The distribution of sarees, known as the Bathukamma saree scheme, was a crucial part of the women's nine-day celebration of the floral festival, which reflects Telangana's culture. With the BRS government promoting the Bathukamma festival in a big way as part of its efforts to pass on crucial aspects of Telangana culture to future generations, the KCR regime had launched the distribution of Bathukamma sarees to poor women as a gift from 2017. The idea was to ensure that the women celebrate the festivities with joy, without having to worry about money to buy new sarees. Every year, nearly one crore sarees in nearly 30 designs and 20 different colours were distributed to women across the State. Experts from the National Institute of Fashion Technology were also roped in to design the sarees.

The Bathukamma saree orders were also a blessing in disguise for weavers in the State. As a means to provide regular employment and ensure better income, orders for Bathukamma sarees were given to weavers in Sircilla, Karimnagar and Warangal. Apart from weavers, ancillary workers including labourers, hamalis, auto-rickshaw drivers and even traders benefited from the scheme. However, with the



saree orders not being given as usual after the Congress came to power, weavers have been appealing to the State government to place the orders so that they could eke out a livelihood and also ensure that the sarees reached the women beneficiaries in time for the Bathukamma festivities. However, the orders are yet to be placed.

Though Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy announced on Monday that the

State government would distribute two sarees each to 63 lakh women Self Help Group members (about 1.3 crore sarees) every year, he did not make it clear whether other poor women would also get the sarees. That is not all. Though the announcement was made, the government is yet to place any orders with the weavers for even the sarees promised for the SHG members. With hardly a month left for

Bathukamma festivities to begin, it appears that the Bathukamma saree scheme has been shelved. This is being read by the Opposition along with Revanth Reddy's declaration in the Assembly that he would take up the responsibility of wiping out the imprints of the BRS government. If the saree scheme being shelved is part of this political act of vengeance, it is the poor women of Telangana who stand to lose.

GHMC adapts new methods to curb breeding of mosquito responsible for rising dengue cases in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: A silent winged invader that originated in the forests of Africa and made its way across multiple continents to India, is now caught in the middle of a storm, as public health and municipal officials desperately look for ways to counter its prodigious breeding habits and get a grip on cases of dengue in Hyderabad.

As dengue infections continue to rise, authorities from GHMC entomology wing and health department are literally racing against time to control the breeding of *Aedes aegypti*, the Asian tiger mosquito which is behind the surge of dengue infections in Hyderabad.

Oil balls made up of saw dust and dipped in engine oil, application of pyre-

thrum spray, and the traditional fogging, containing insecticide Malathion have been deployed on a war footing basis to control the breeding of mosquitoes. Do such anti-larval measures really work?

Unlike other mosquitoes, the *Aedes* mosquito is unique and it has different breeding habitats, says Professor, Department of Zoology and OSD to VC, Osmania University, Prof. B Reddy Naik. To control its population, one needs to have a separate strategy and not the one's meant to control breeding of other mosquitoes species. "*Aedes* mosquito breeds in secluded and remote areas. It is the small left over empty containers, receptacles, coconut shells, old tyres etc where these mosquitoes breed. So, the strategy to take-on

Aedes aegypti should be different," says Prof Naik. During heavy torrential rains and flooding, mosquito larvae get washed away. However, incessant and steady rains create a large number of unreachable potential breeding grounds in secluded areas for *Aedes aegypti*. "At present, we are unable to curb such unique breeding grounds of *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. As a result, they are proliferating quickly and the transmission of the disease is also happening at a fast pace," explains Prof Naik.

The senior researcher, who trains field level workers in the entomology wing, emphasizes the need to explore novel and newer ways of countering mosquito breeding. "There are numerous research



studies indicating that over the years, *Anopheles*, *Aedes* and *Culex* mosquitoes have developed resistance to insecticides. So, fogging and spraying usually do not give the desired result of curtailing larvae growth. Newer ways of vector-control measures must be explored all through the year and not during monsoons," says Dr Reddy Naik points out.

Flip-flops in Andhra Pradesh sand policy

Andhra Pradesh has witnessed many flip-flops in sand policies over the past decade. The current government issued GO 43 in July 2024, which withdrew the existing sand policies — namely, the New Sand Mining Policy 2019 and the Upgraded Sand Policy 2021 — and replaced them with an Interim Mechanism for Sand Supply until the formulation of the Sand Policy 2024 for the State. With this free sand policy came into existence again. From a novel experiment of entrusting the job of sand supply to Self Help Groups (SHGs) to free sand, auctioning sand reaches, and back to free sand supply. The successive governments have formulated policies that match their requirements. Both ruling and Opposition parties have gone beyond mudslinging, initiating probes into the sand policies of their predecessors as soon as they assumed power. A political narrative is built that the previous government indulged in large-scale corruption and illegal sand mining. In the process, the sand, a precious natural resource, is plundered and the State's coffers hardly fill with the supply of sand. The YSRCP, TDP, and NDA governments have undervalued the possible revenues through the sale of sand.

Neither of these governments has provided actual estimates of annual sand availability, its total value, or potential revenue for the State. In 2023, then Mines Minister Peddireddy Ramchandra Reddy claimed that his government made around ₹3,000 crore from sand auctions over four years. In contrast, the NDA government, in a white paper, stated that withdrawing the free sand policy and illegal sand mining resulted in a loss of ₹6,940 crore, with unpaid dues from sand contractors amounting to ₹1,167 crore, totaling losses of ₹8,107 crore. In another paper on State finances, the government said that the loss was ₹7,000 crore due to illegal sand mining. It is pertinent to mention that the auction of sand used to fetch ₹4,000 crore to ₹5,000 crore a year before the swift change in sand policies became a trend. Over the past eight to 10 years, the Andhra Pradesh government suffered a loss of not less than ₹40,000 crore. And, it would continue to suffer much more. If the growth in Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) (13.5% from 2014-19 and 10.5% from 2019-24) were taken into consideration, revenue from an auction of sand should fetch not less than ₹9,400 crore (at GSDP growth of 13.5%) and ₹8,200 crore (at GSDP growth of 10.5%) per a year. The government also argues that the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of revenue from mineral wealth was growing at 24% during 2014-19, and fell to seven per cent during 2019-24. Mineral revenue would have gone up to ₹7,239 crores by 2024 if the 24% CAGR continued. Going by the same analogy, revenue from the auction of sand should be no less than ₹13,600 crore per annum. So, the revenue through the auction of sand reaches should be around ₹41,000 crore to ₹47,000 crore if GSDP is considered, and ₹68,000 crore if the CAGR of 24% is applied, in the next five years. In addition, the government would also get a GST and Seigniorage Fee on the sand sold. But, as said earlier, successive governments have undervalued the precious natural resource, sand, for reasons best known to them.

Farmers' leader Anumolu Gandhi,

Waterman of India Rajendra Singh, and others filed a Public Interest Litigation in the National Green Tribunal highlighting how sand mining was being carried out illegally near the then CM N. Chandrababu Naidu's residence and also important government offices in Amravati in 2019. The NGT slapped a fine of ₹100 crore on the State government and the case is still pending. When Mr. Naidu came to power in 2014, he had roped in SHGs in villages that would oversee the excavation and sale of sand mining under a programme 'Pedarikam Pai Gelupu' (victory over poverty). As the initiative failed to meet expectations, some months later, Mr. Naidu changed the policy and introduced a tendering system for the sale of sand. It resulted in litigation in the Hyderabad High Court in 2015. The legal heat made the TDP government do another flip flop and he declared his government would sell sand free of cost to consumers. This was in



March 2016. The YSRCP government scrapped the free sand policy and introduced a new sand policy in 2019. The NDA

government recently scrapped the YSRCP government's sand policies and reintroduced the free sand policy.

Take on the challenge of rising income inequality

Addressing income inequality is a serious global challenge. It is a complex and multifaceted endeavour which demands examining, trying and implementing several different strategies to find a suitable way to foster a more equitable society. Here are some key areas to act on.

First, progressive taxation. Progressive tax policies are required to redistribute wealth from the affluent to the marginalised. It is not about stealing from the rich to pay the poor. It is about using tax money to improve health, education, skill development, the environment, and facilitate job creation. Second, education and skill development. Access to quality education, skill development and lifelong learning is critical to enhance employability and increase earning. Third, fair labour laws. Enforcing labour rights, minimum wages, safety, security, eliminating child labour, protection against exploitation, and collective bargaining are essential to ensure that all workers benefit from economic growth.

Fourth, investment in infrastructure. This will reduce regional disparities, assure inclusion and sustainability. It is critical to invest in infrastructure that is related to the environment, water, sanitation, forests, energy, climate change, housing, and transportation. Fifth, the contribution of the super rich. Bill Gates and Warren Buffett began a global campaign called the 'Giving Pledge' for the super rich to donate more than half their wealth in order to benefit the public. As of 2023, more than 235 super rich people in 28 countries have committed \$600 billion for public good. In many advanced countries there is a special inheritance tax (Japan 55%, South Korea 50%, France 45%, and the United States 40%) before transferring wealth to the next generation. However, it applies only to the super rich and large asset transfers. This tax has been proposed by several people in the past in India. The World Inequality

Lab says that in India, the share of the top 1% in the national income is among the highest in the world, and that India is today more unequal as a society than it was under British rule. Is this acceptable?

This is not a debate about increasing or introducing new tax for the middle class, the rich or the super rich. It is about locating the resources needed to lift millions more out of poverty and joblessness, and to do this in ways that encourage value addition through production and efficiency, quality and consumption as well as inclusion, sustainability, dignity and justice. The need is for analysis and debate, not for inventing falsehoods to cause a scare. India has already lifted millions out of poverty. However, what it has done is simply not enough. More needs to be done with brave and bold initiatives that copycat solutions will not achieve. The new economics is all about moving from "economies of scope and scale" to "economy of purpose". And the purpose is inclusion, equity and sustainability to lift millions out of poverty. Discussions on fiscal and other measures should be understood within this context. What are the strategies that India can pursue that can create resilience in these uncertain times? There is no silver bullet, and none is suggested. The need is for reflection and a policy framework that can ensure growth with justice and hope, by looking at and debating every possible option available through learning from global experience and drawing on India's creative and innovative abilities.

Some continue to see globalisation and market liberalisation as silver bullets rather than as strategies which demand capacities for vigilance and constant mid-course correction. Past turmoil in global markets, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the wars in Europe and West Asia remind us that globalisation extracts its own price. To me, the Gandhian model of development with a focus on decentralisation, local needs, local talent, local resources, local



production and "small is beautiful" makes huge sense in a hyper-connected world in order to ensure local employment and prosperity in India. Investment in small and medium-sized enterprises and local innovations is equally critical to network to scale for global markets. Unfortunately, banks prefer large loans to big companies as opposed to small loans to SMEs. This must change with digital technology for financial services. India has 800 districts with unique climate, natural resources, capabilities and talent to build 800 production centres for a variety of goods and services. It also means 800 digital platforms to network to build supply chain, logistics, markets and distribution centres.

Where the future lies Future jobs even in the AI-dominated world will come from food, education, health services, tourism and manufacturing. In fact, young Indian talent is the workforce for the world. This issue is thus about assessing progress in terms of human and technology development and a new economic model based on decentralisation and digital platforms to network needs and change consumption patterns and behaviours. The future definitely lies in a new tech economic model to deliver on inclusion, basic human needs, decentralisation, conservation and non-violence. The future also lies in a change in lifestyle that values happiness from "sharing and caring" as opposed to a "vulgarity of conspicuous consumption". Sam Pitroda is a telecom technocrat with 60 years of experience, an inventor, policy maker and global thinker

Canon releases EOS C80, a digital cinema camera with 6K full-frame sensor

Canon today announced the release of the EOS C80 digital cinema camera, a new product for the Cinema EOS System of visual production equipment, which will be available in early November 2024. It features advanced mobility thanks to its compact and lightweight housing, a 6K full-frame sensor, and an enhanced set of interfaces.

The EOS C80 inherits the advanced mobility and operability of the EOS C70 (released in November 2020). It is also equipped with an RF mount that enables a shallow depth of field for achieving striking and high-quality visual expression with gorgeous bokeh, through the use of a 6K full-frame sensor which is also included in the EOS C400. It features an enhanced set of interfaces, including SDI—widely used in video production—to support a wide variety of visual content production from movies and TV dramas to live footage such as news reports and live broadcasts and is even equipped to handle developed metadata for virtual production.

Through coordination between the 6K full-frame, back-illuminated stacked CMOS sensor and a DIGIC DV 7 image processing engine, the EOS C80 can minimise rolling shutter distortion and also shoot high-quality 4K video through 6K/30 P for internal RAW recording and 6K over-sampling. In addition, users can switch between three levels of Base ISO (base sensitivity) to match the brightness of the shooting scenario, thus enabling noise-reduced shooting even in dark locations such as night-

time or indoors. The camera is also equipped to handle recording at frame rates of up to 4K / 120P and 2K / 180P and is capable of shooting impressive slow-motion footage.

While maintaining mobility thanks to compact and lightweight housing, the EOS C80 is also equipped with an SDI video outlet, thereby allowing for simultaneous SDI/HDMI output to external devices. Through the built-in Wi-Fi interface or an ethernet port, the device can forward video data through IP streaming, and also support workflows including centralised remote-control operation connecting multiple cameras in order to suit a wide variety of shooting styles such as live video production. Additionally, the device features a multi-function accessory shoe that can be attached to various accessories separately from a newly designed handle unit. This enables high-speed communication and power supply from the main unit to these accessories. The EOS C80 offers improved operability and ease of use that help to support high-quality video production. It has been installed with an “EOS iTR AF X” algorithm that harnesses Canon’s unique Dual Pixel CMOS AF II autofocus (AF) system and deep learning, thereby enabling high-speed, high-accuracy and wide-ranging AF with excellent tracking capabilities and high-performance subject detection; this in turn allows users to shoot while concentrating on camera work such as composition and zoom operation without having to worry about focus even when work-



Compact, lightweight and an enhanced interface to handle diverse shooting styles

ing as the sole camera operator. It also features a bright LCD panel to improve outdoor visibility. Furthermore, the joystick is specifically shaped to fit the movement of

the user’s thumb and is located right where the thumb is positioned when holding the grip, thereby allowing for quick and accurate menu operations, or setting changes.

In Assam, a stock market ‘fraudster’ goes on the run – and trading scam dominoes begin to fall

On August 21, 29 year-old Deepankar Barman, who claimed to be the director of a company called DB Stock Broking and promised huge returns on investments to his clients, locked up his Guwahati office and fled, leaving scores of investors in the lurch. Barman is yet to be traced, but his disappearance has led to a series of revelations which rocked the state, bringing dozens of such ‘trading scamsters’ in Assam to the surface – mostly young men who would claim they had cracked the code to making big returns in the markets, and flash luxury lifestyles on social media. According to Assam Director General of Police G P Singh, 59 people in 28 cases across the state have been arrested in a crackdown against trading frauds, and the state CID has taken charge of the matter. Some are as young as 22, operating from different towns and cities in Assam, while some are local ‘finfluencers’ or financial influencers. Fourteen SITs have also been constituted by the state CID to investigate these cases.

“People told me he had proven to be reliable. I especially gained confidence because they had received payments even during the height of the Covid pandemic. He said he was investing in stocks, debt, IPOs, etc. He was promising returns as high

as 7% monthly, 24% quarterly, 50-54% half yearly and 100% yearly. So I invested with him. After initially receiving the promised returns, I invested some more in March. At the end of July, we were confused because the payment did not come in time. We followed up with him and he told us the issue would be resolved soon and that he had been unable to pay us because of a shortage of employees. We waited and then saw on local media that he had shut down his office and fled,” the investor told The Indian Express. The web unravels. Since then, the investors, who have put money ranging from a few thousands to several lakhs, have not received any further information. They first protested in front of his locked office and then his residence in Guwahati’s Jalukbari. On August 22, they received another shock. Barman had told them he was partnered with a stockbroker, Angel One. Responding to news reports about his disappearance, Angel One issued a statement that DB Stock Broking was not an “authorised person” registered with them, and that Barman was registered in his individual capacity since 2019, and that the trading volume mapped to him was “miniscule”. The investors then went on to file complaints with the police.

While police said the extent of his fi-

ancial dealings are still under investigation, they have received close to 30 complaints from different people. Even as a lookout circular was issued against him, people elsewhere in the state began to have doubts about the financial dealings that they had entered into. Around 480 km away from Guwahati, suspicions began to swirl around Bishal Phukan, a 22-year-old who claimed to be a stock trader and investor, and founder of different ventures including a production company and, most recently, a pharmaceutical company six months ago. Since 2021, his social media has been splashed with images of an affluent lifestyle – with frequent car purchases to international vacations. He had been taking money from different people in and around Dibrugarh promising high returns – as much as 30% – on investments made with their money through his demat account in 60 days. As the local media began raising questions about the nature of his dealings, he even released a statement on his social media on August 24 claiming that he had “understood the market” after he began trading in 2020 – he would have been 18 at that time – and that he had committed “no offence” by taking people’s money through a “valid banking transaction” on the basis of a “valid agreement”.

Last week, Dibrugarh police lodged a suo motu FIR and arrested him. ASP Dibrugarh Sizal Agarwal said his dealings were a “multiple crore scam”, and that the initial investigation had found that he had taken around Rs 60 crore from investors not just in Assam but as far as Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Kerala. Phukan’s case received exceptional publicity, especially because the people the police have summoned in connection with the case is choreographer and social media influencer Sumi Bora, whose lavish wedding in a five-star hotel in Udaipur last year had made news. ASP Agarwal said that during interrogation, Phukan claimed he “considers her a sister”, and had “gifted” the wedding to her by spending Rs 3 crore on it. The case has since been transferred to the state CID and will be investigated by a SIT constituted by it. Phukan’s case and the publicity it received truly opened the floodgates, with police launching a crackdown against such cases and people coming forward with complaints in different parts of the state, leading to the arrest of a total of 59 such people within the span of a week. For instance, in Sonitpur district, at least 11 people have been arrested by the police in four different cases for individually running such unregulated operations.

PhonePe and Liquid Group partner to expand UPI QR payment acceptance in Singapore

PhonePe today announced that it has partnered with the Liquid Group, a fintech leader in digital cross-border payment solutions, to expand its merchant acceptance network in Singapore. This collaboration will allow travellers to conveniently scan and pay using their PhonePe app at Liquid Group's extensive merchant base in Singapore, a popular travel destination for Indian visitors.

These QR codes will be widely available at tourist-centric locations, including Changi Airport, duty-free shops, restaurants, bars, retailers like The Cocoa Trees, Charles & Keith, Luvenus Jewellery, Hard Rock café, etc. sightseeing spots, and transportation services. This collaboration is facilitated through Liquid Group's partnership with NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL). Through this partnership, Liquid Group has enabled its merchants to accept UPI as a payment method, making it convenient for Indian travellers to use their preferred UPI App for transactions. To make payments at merchant outlets, PhonePe users simply need to scan the QR code generated/displayed by the merchants. Transactions will be processed in Indian Rupees (INR), ensuring both transparency and ease of use. In addition to making payments to the Liquid group merchants during travel to Singapore:

PhonePe users can receive international remittances through UPI via the PayNow-UPI real-time remittance corridor. This simplifies and fastens the process of transferring money by leveraging the UPI

infrastructure, thereby eliminating the need for the customers to share details such as bank account numbers and IFSC codes. Singapore based Non-resident Indians (NRIs) can also link their NRE/NRO bank accounts and make payments for various services for use cases in India such as utility bill payments, transferring funds to their friends and families in India and merchant payments on ecommerce or physical merchants. The above capabilities were rolled out as part of PhonePe's enablement of UPI based features for international use cases earlier in 2024 and have seen positive uptick in the last few months. Speaking on the partnership, Ritesh Pai, CEO of International Payments at PhonePe said, "We're thrilled to partner with Liquid Group to bring the convenience of UPI payments to Indian travelers visiting Singapore. This popular destination is a favorite among Indian tourists, and we're excited to empower them to pay quickly and easily at their favorite food, shopping, and sightseeing spots making their travel experience even more enjoyable."

Alvin Seck, CCO of Liquid Group said, "We are excited to join forces with PhonePe to enhance the payment experience for Indian travellers in Singapore. By integrating UPI into our extensive merchant network, we are not only simplifying transactions but also reinforcing our commitment to providing seamless, cross-border payment solutions. This partnership aligns perfectly with our goal of making global payments more accessible and efficient for consumers and businesses alike."



Move over ghee coffee, here comes ghee tea

After the widespread popularity of ghee coffee for weight loss, ghee tea seems to be having a moment — at least on the internet. Being touted as a superfood for gut health, period relief, and constipation, many social media posts suggest adding a dollop of ghee to tea. Taking it a step ahead, dietitian Shilpa Arora even shared a recipe for making this tea. "Add A2 ghee in boiled tea, without milk. It is an age-old Ayurvedic recipe," Arora suggested. Even YouTuber Simmy Goraya shared her version of this tea, which she said helps prevent period cramps:

Ajwain: 1 or ½ spoon
Milk Sugar (optional) ¼ teaspoon
ghee
Should you add ghee to tea? (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

Is ghee tea that effective? Ghee tea is a mixture of ghee with a base of traditional tea, usually black or herbal. "A spoonful of ghee is added to a cup of tea, giving it a creamy richness. Ghee contains loads of healthy fats, vitamins, and other beneficial compounds; at the same time, tea contains antioxidants and several other health benefits. This combination is proclaimed to provide a soothing drink that can likely promote digestive health and overall well-being," said Dr Rohini Patil, MBBS and nutri-

tionist, founder, Nutracy Lifestyle.

On its own, ghee doesn't offer any hydrating mechanisms, said Dr Patil. However, when it is added to tea, especially herbal varieties traditionally known for mild laxative effects, it can help boost overall fluid intake of vital significance toward avoiding constipation, added Dr Patil. According to Dr Patil, another reason is that ghee, being rich in butyrate — a short-chain fatty acid — helps feed gut health. "Butyrate helps preserve gut lining health and may help reduce inflammation as well as promote bowel movement regularity," said Dr Patil.

Ghee is packed with antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds which may help lower the intensity of menstrual cramping. "By probably lowering inflammation, ghee tea may, therefore, provide relief from the pain related to menstrual cycles," said Dr Patil. While ghee tea may offer possible advantages, there are a few things one should consider: Moderation: Ghee is very dense in calories and fat, so enjoy it in moderation and avoid too many additional calories. Allergies and sensitivities: Since ghee is clarified butter, make sure you don't have an allergy to dairy. If you are sensitive, then be sure to consult a health pro-



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professional before giving ghee tea a try. Consult a professional: If you have chronic constipation or debilitating menstrual cramps, it is of utmost importance to

consult a healthcare expert. Ghee tea will definitely support you, but not as a replacement for medical treatments and professional advice, stressed Dr Patil.

AICTE and OPPO India kick off Nationwide E-Waste Awareness Drive across colleges under 'Generation Green' Campaign



The All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and OPPO India, today kicked off the second leg of the 'Generation Green' campaign with a nationwide electronic-waste awareness drive (e-waste) at Ramjas College, University of Delhi. With this, the college becomes the first 'Eco-Conscious Champion Institute' under the programme. As part of the first leg, OPPO India and AICTE promoted green skills among youth by offering internships across colleges in India. More than 9,000 students from over 1,400 institutions applied for these internships, and 5,000 were selected. These students are now engaged in hands-on sustainability activities such as awareness sessions, E-surveys, Green Day celebrations, etc.

The second leg educates youth about the increasing challenge of electronic waste management, such as discarded wires, mobile phones, chargers, batteries, etc. and the need for effective disposal for a sustainable future. Dr Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairperson of the National Education Technology Forum (NETF), graced the launch ceremony as the Chief Guest. Also present at the occa-

sion were Mr Rakesh Bhardwaj, Head of Public Affairs at OPPO India and Prof Ajay Kumar Arora, Principal of Ramjas College, University of Delhi among other dignitaries. During the two-day programme, students from various societies—such as the Literary Society, Dancing Society, Music Society, Photography Society, Quiz Society, Fine Arts Society, and more—will be engaged in a diverse range of activities.

"Responsible e-waste disposal is critical to safeguarding our environment and public health," said Dr Anil Sahasrabudhe, Chairperson of the National Education Technology Forum. "Addressing sustainability within the education sector is essential for creating a ripple effect that can influence broader societal change. Initiatives like the 'Generation Green' campaign empower the youth to take an active role in addressing this issue. By educating young minds and fostering a sense of responsibility, we can cultivate a generation that prioritises sustainable practices, ensuring proper e-waste management and contributing to a greener, healthier future for all."

Within just a month, over 1 lakh stu-

dents from schools and colleges have committed to reducing energy use and managing e-waste responsibly, contributing to a more sustainable lifestyle. The programme's goal is to reach at least 10 lakh students in India by the end of 2024.

"At OPPO India, we are committed to the Net-Zero vision of the Government of India and are leading a national movement towards a sustainable future that is driven by the power of youth," said Rakesh Bhardwaj, Head of Public Affairs at OPPO India. "Their active engagement is clearly visible through the vibrancy and engagement they bring to the campaign, reaching over 1 lakh green pledges gathered in just a few weeks. Young people are stepping up, taking responsibility, and leading the way in adopting environmentally responsible lifestyles. In the first phase, we onboarded 5,000 sustainability champions from over 20 states and 3 Union Territories, who are now inspiring others to act for a cleaner, sustainable future. As we enter the second phase, these young leaders will focus on e-waste management through active participation at colleges across India, further building the green mindset needed for a thriving green economy."

According to the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report, India saw the highest—163 per cent—growth globally in generating electronic waste from screens, computers, and small IT and telecommunication equipment (SCSIT) between 2010 and 2022. This represents a significant challenge and a notable potential for effective e-waste management.

"We are honoured that Ramjas College has been chosen to launch the second leg of OPPO India's 'Generation Green' campaign. As an institution deeply committed to sustainability, we have continuously strived to integrate eco-friendly practices into our campus culture. This collaboration perfectly aligns with our vision of fostering environmental responsibility among the youth. By empowering our students and the youth of India to address the pressing issue of e-waste, we are taking a significant step toward creating a cleaner, greener future. We are proud to lead this initiative and serve as the first Eco-Conscious Champion Institute in this nationwide drive," said Prof. Ajay Kumar Arora, Principal, Ramjas College, University of Delhi.

From crisis to cascade of hope

In early July, both States were on the brink of a water crisis. However, since the second half of July, nature brought a dramatic change in the situation with rains, bringing copious inflow to the river. The situation turned positive with regard to the realisation of water by Tamil Nadu — from deficit to “over surplus.” In a matter of 15 days, Tamil Nadu received its entire share — even marginally higher — for July and August, as mandated in the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)’s final award of 2007, which was modified by the Supreme Court in February 2018. The spell of surplus flows continued in the subsequent weeks. Totally, as of September 2, the lower riparian State received about 181 tmc ft since June 1, the inaugural date of any water year, whereas the stipulated quantum for the entire year — up to May 2025 — is 177.25 tmc ft. The Tribunal and the Court have fixed Tamil Nadu’s share for July at 31.24 tmc ft; for August — 45.95 tmc ft and for September — 36.76 tmc ft. The southwest monsoon is crucial for both States, as it represents the wettest period for Karnataka and yields the highest quantum of (123.14 tmc ft) of water for Tamil Nadu. So, barring the initial five or six weeks, the 2024-25 water year has not been problematic for the two principal riparian States. Implementation mechanism

The current year is in stark contrast to the corresponding period (June-September 2) of last year when the aggregate realisation by Tamil Nadu was a mere 33.2 tmc ft. A close perusal of the data of 30 years (1994-95 to 2023-24) reveals that on 11 occasions, the realisation during June-September was less than 100 tmc ft, as against the stipulated 123.14 tmc ft. This means that at least once in three years, there is distress. This is where the final award’s implementation mechanism — Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) — and the Supreme Court assume importance, of course, apart from the spirit of accommodation.

The efficacy of the CWMA and its assisting body Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC), as institutional arrangements, was put to test during 2023-24. Unlike its predecessor, the Cauvery River Authority, which was a high-profile setup with the Prime Minister as the chairperson and Chief Ministers of all the basin States as Members, the CWMA is headed by a full-time official with government officers of all the States and various departments of the Union government. Many of their decisions last year were not to the liking of the two States, but given the constraints, the performance of the CWMA and CWRC can be considered satisfactory.

Needless to say, there is enormous scope for improvement on their part. First, there should be greater transparency in their functioning. Both the Authority and the Committee will have to make public, as quickly as possible, all their decisions in writing. In an intense water conflict such as the Cauvery, the version of the affected parties, in times of crisis, cannot be expected to be impartial. Even otherwise, dissemination of authentic information is vital in an inter-State water dispute. If the authority is constrained by a shortage of manpower, in carrying out its functions effectively, the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti should intervene and solve the



problem. Moreover, the Authority should enlarge its composition from being a body of only officials to one of multi-disciplinary and a mix of officials and non-officials, who could be drawn from farmers, environmentalists, and independent water experts. The Union government could follow the example of the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board Act. The law provides for six non-official directors on the Board of the water agency, which includes persons to represent the interests of the public, industrial, and commercial establishments. As for the composition of the CWMA, the implementation mechanism that the Tribunal had in mind is only recommendatory and there is no bar on

the Union government to fine-tune it. The presence of a non-official environmentalist can push the government to take the problem of environmental degradation of the much-venerated river more seriously in view of the challenges being caused by climate change.

The “feel good factor” prevalent now can be used to look at the problem of Bengaluru’s drinking water shortage, which assumed a serious proportion earlier this year. The Supreme Court, in its 2018 judgment, made a special allocation of 4.75 tmc ft for the city while the Karnataka government has been pressing for implementing the ₹ 9,000-crore Mokedatu Balancing Reservoir-cum-Drinking Water

Project. At present, the Mokedatu project is before the Central Water Commission. Given the trust deficit between the two States (which explains the reason behind Tamil Nadu’s opposition to the project), the idea of the participation of a third party — say, the Union government — can be explored to execute not only the Mokedatu project but also any other project, including hydro-electric across the Cauvery, upstream of the Mettur reservoir. After all, attempts made since the late 1990s in this regard failed. There is no harm in making yet another earnest attempt as the intention is to optimally utilise the precious water resource which, if untapped, will go to waste, as is happening now.

Indian Immunologicals Limited in collaboration with CIBA-ICAR to produce vaccines for fish

Hyderabad: Hyderabad-based vaccine manufacturer Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL) on Thursday announced partnership with Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA), Chennai, an Indian Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR) institution, to commercially develop a recombinant monovalent viral nervous necrosis vaccine for finfish, which has been originally developed by CIBA.

Viral nervous necrosis (VNN) or viral encephalopathy and retinopathy (VER) is an acute viral disease affecting several species of marine, brackishwater and freshwater fishes. The disease causes up to 100 per cent mortality in larval and early juvenile stages. Adult fish when infected, is asymptomatic but can transmit the virus to the offspring through eggs and gonadal fluids. Dr K Anand Kumar, MD, IIL, said, “we are the first in India to get to fish vaccines and are covering different kind of fishes and culture conditions.” Viral nervous necrosis is a major threat for brackishwater aquaculture.



In a time of turmoil and crisis, the stoic roadmap to a meaningful life

The world is in turmoil. We muddled through a pandemic, and continue to witness climate disruptions, rising inequalities, racial injustices, economic slowdowns, wars and uprising. The fear of loss and the greed for more keep lives on edge in a world where one crisis follows another.

The need for clarity and resilience to deal with hardships is felt like never before. In this scenario, can art of living strategies offered by Stoics help?

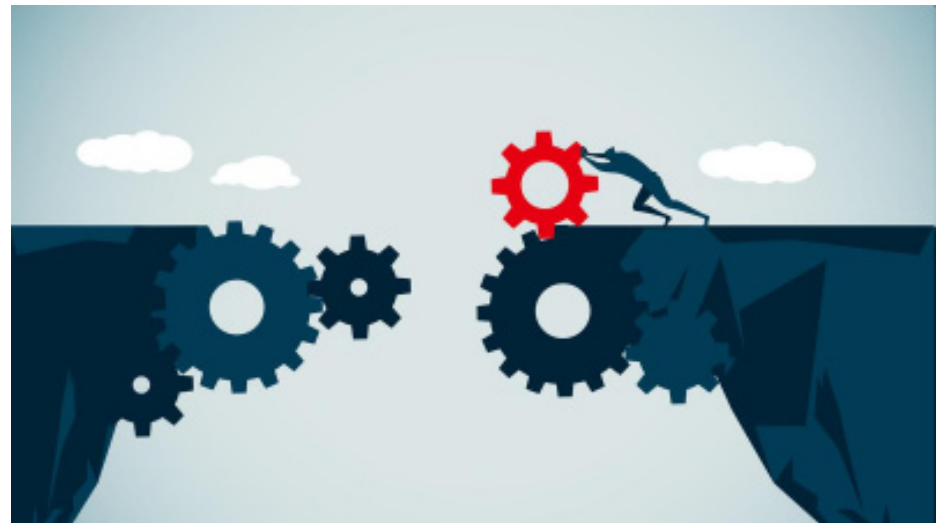
After Alexander the Great's conquests and death upended the Greek world, Hellenistic philosopher Zeno of Citium, propounded the development of logical living with reason as its decisive principle, where there is no space for exhibiting the pain one suffers. Though Zeno's original writings are lost, his sayings are preserved by later writers and Republic is cited as the most famous work that outlined his vision of an ideal Stoic society. For example, Mr. Spock in the original Star Trek is a perfect example of a stoic person who tried to never demonstrate his feelings. Bandwidth of emotions

The philosophy is not just about 'unfeeling'. Between Prime Minister Modi's 'stoic silence' over ethnic violence in Manipur and wrestler Vinesh Phogat's 'stoic attitude' in proving herself whether on the mat or standing up against alleged sexual harassment, there is, for instance, a bandwidth of emotions that help us to understand universal truths about people and what makes them thrive in any situation. There's a hard path at any given moment in our lives that could benefit us as we either push through a current difficulty to build our character, or mull in the moment waiting for the experiences we live in to disappear, writes William Mulligan, founder of YouTube and Instagram account, Stoic Teachings, in his first book *The Everyday Stoic: Simple Rules For A Good Life* (2024). "We all have our own philosophy. Maybe it's about how we treat people and allow others to treat us and how much negativity we let into ourselves," he says, explaining the Stoicism doctrine based on how to accept things that cannot be changed and not to brood over things beyond our control. Truths we have lost sight of

In a world full of darkness, books on Stoicism make for a transformative reading experience, equipping readers with insights into a more productive perspective of life. For beginners, reading the big three Roman philosophers — Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus and Seneca — is a good way to cover the basics. With *The Enchiridion*, Epictetus helps us to dive into human desires and calm rationality in order to cultivate a resilient mindset. It is an essential guide to enlightenment and emotional well-being. The free-minded writings of Seneca in his *Letters to Lucilius* discuss ethical theory and practical advice and how both are distinct and yet interdependent. He regards his philosophy as a balm for the wounds of life and suggests uprooting destructive passions. While Marcus' Meditations is a personal collection of his reflections on applying stoic philosophy to his life and is one of the most widely-read

classics on self-improvement, Donald Robertson uses anecdotes from Marcus' life in his book *How to Think like a Roman Emperor* (2019). Robertson's *Stoicism and the Art of Happiness* (2013) showcases how stoic philosophy is a form of self-help today. In the context of people trying coping mechanisms to understand their place in the world and emerging strong, Vinesh Phogat is an example of a real Stoic. Academic philosopher John Sellars who is the chair of the Modern Stoicism organisation, has penned a good introduction, *Lessons in Stoicism: What Ancient Philosophers Teach Us About How to Live* (2020), that underlines the comeback of Stoicism as a fashionable buzzword. Stoic philosophy started in 300 BC with Zeno of Citium and continued for 500 years until the fall of Rome; it evolved during the two crises and has had numerous revivals since, including Neo-stoicism in the Renaissance era and modern Stoicism in the 21st century.

A popular modern book on Stoicism is *The Daily Stoic* (2016) by Ryan Holiday and Stephen Hanselman, which draws on historical icons and contemporary heroes to demonstrate the power of owning our convictions and acting accordingly in an era of dishonesty. "Your values, your character and your deeds determine your success and legacy," Ryan writes, pointing out that the path to greatness is not possible without goodness. To make the 2000-year-old philosophy a framework to modern life, another good read is Victor Frankl's 1946 book, *Man's Search for Meaning* where he



chronicles his experiences as a prisoner during World War II. He observes its impact on fellow inmates at a Nazi concentration camp; there were some who were able to connect to a purpose in life in such bleak times through completion of tasks, caring for another person or finding meaning in suffering with dignity.

In *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (2009), William Irvine tells readers how to become thoughtful observers of their own life and identify the sources of distress, minimise worry, and let go of the past. Author and professor of Philosophy in City College of New York, Massimo Pigliucci's book *How to be A Stoic: using Ancient Philosophy to Live a*

Modern Life (2017), reminds readers to look to history for inspiration and be surprised by its power. In *How Should We Live?* (2015), cultural historian Roman Krznaric explores twelve topics including love, family, and empathy; work, time, and money to reveal how people have missed a chance to learn from the ancient Greeks. It is replete with ideas from the past and sheds light on the decisions we make in our daily lives. As Gregory Hays, a classics scholar says, Stoicism, after all, is about being in control of one's thoughts and emotions. It is a recognition that human societies and relations are varied and complex and the path toward a better world goes through each of us.

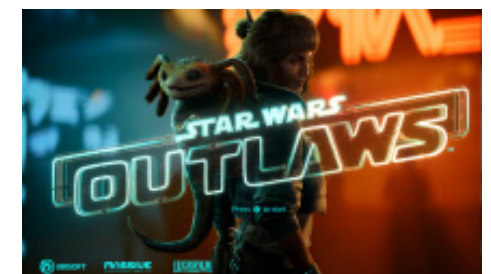
In Han Solo style: Surviving the underworld in a galaxy far, far away

Outlaws is one of the most awaited games of the year — an open world interpretation of the iconic Star Wars franchise that promises new terrains, a non-Jedi/Force centric protagonist, and the opportunity for players to engage with the various factions in the galaxy. There is a lot to like here as you navigate the uneasy peace across planets, build your reputation, develop relationships, and balance the Pykes, Crimson Dawn, Hutts, and the Ashigas. The open world is both dynamic and vibrant as you explore all what it can offer a thief like Kay.

The open world that *Outlaws* offers is breathtaking and both visuals and background score that accompany it are top notch. This is flagship game development, one that rivals the cinematic experience that the Star Wars films offer. However, in terms of gameplay, *Outlaws* is unlike anything that EA and Respawn offer with the Jedi franchise. This is a live and dynamic world that doesn't need to be saved or rescued, rather one you must understand and benefit from.

Kay is a thief and a fixer and the jobs she receives are often to steal, smuggle, infiltrate, or enforce. Stealth, imagination, and surviving the odd alarm is her expertise and along with her pet Nix she must

emerge unscathed from the jams she lands up in. Nix is not just plain adorable but is also the heart and soul of the experience as it pickpockets, sabotages, and triggers detonations on unsuspecting guards. Massive has done a great job with the RPG skill tree and abilities here as some of the unique abilities are not just unlocked but also implemented in novel ways. In early parts of the game you will find abilities like "fast talk," "keep talking," and "I know someone" quite useful in earning both credits and connections. The game also offers a reputation-based system and a decision-making system that determines your relationships with the various factions and also how welcome you are in their territories. While your decisions don't change the way the story progresses, they do unlock new missions and opportunities for Kay. *Outlaws'* combat is its weakest offering as its stealth mechanics are too similar to *Assassins Creed* and the gun-based combat is forgettable. While the unique interactions that Nix offers spice things up a bit, Kay doesn't have the same charisma and stroke of luck that Han Solo carries despite the leather jacket and the retro hairdo. The fun and light combat style that seems inspired from the early Star Wars movies doesn't translate too well either as



the animations struggle to convey the nonchalance.

Outlaws shines remarkably with its characters and NPCs though, and I had a great moment in-game when I wanted to meet Gorak the leader of the Pyke syndicate — an NPC sold me a VIP ticket to Gorak's area of the cantina for 50 credits only for me to find out from the bartender that the ticket was fake. When I went back to where the NPC had sold me the ticket, he had vanished. This is top-notch writing and there are a lot more moments like this that elevate the overall game.

Outlaws, isn't perfect, but for an open world Star Wars, it gets a lot of things right. If you are a fan of the galaxy far, far away or of open worlds this is a must try. Please do remember it needs a lot of time both to understand and enjoy.

The battleground States that could decide the U.S. Presidential elections | Data

The battle lines for the U.S. presidential elections were drawn when Vice President Kamala Harris and Governor Tim Walz were announced as the Democratic Party's nominees for President and Vice President, respectively. They will face the Republican Party's nominees, former President Donald Trump and his running mate, J.D. Vance. As of now, according to opinion polls, Ms. Harris has a three-plus point lead on average over Mr. Trump. In the U.S., it is not enough for the candidate to win the popular vote in percentage terms. They have to win the electoral college, a group of presidential electors from each State whose number is determined by the population of the State. The electoral college consists of 538 electors and the candidate requires a majority of 270 votes to become President. Large States such as California, Texas, New York, and Florida, for example, provide 55, 38, 29, and 29 electoral college votes each. In this first article of a series of articles on the U.S. elections, we will look at 'battleground States' or 'swing States'.

The maps show how each State voted in elections since 2000. States that were won by the two parties by more than 5% points are marked (red for Republican and blue for Democrats). The larger the difference in vote shares between the parties, the deeper the shades of colours (dark red for more Republican votes and dark blue for more Democrat votes). Chart appears incomplete? Click to remove AMP mode

Since 2016, when Mr. Trump made his electoral foray, the starkness in the support base of the two parties has been more pronounced than ever before. States that are largely rural, have a substantial number of religiously minded voters, are less racially diverse, and have a large white-working class population tend to vote Republican, while Democrats receive substantive support from States with a significant urban population, a diverse demography, and a considerable number of college-educated voters. There are some States with a mix of urban and rural voters and a diverse demography; these are the swing States where there is intense competition between the two parties. Some swing States, such as Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, are from the 'Rust Belt' — i.e., they were industrialised but have seen industrial decline and relative urban decay since. Some others, such as Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina in the south-east and Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico in the west/south-west, are from the 'Sun Belt' — i.e., they have a warm climate. Swing States are marked with a yellowish tinge. Since 2016, these States have moved decisively towards the Republican Party. Ms. Harris and Mr. Trump need victories in a definite combination of swing States in the two Belts to win elections. If the swing States are not included and the two parties' strongholds are expected to vote for them, the Democrats and Republicans would have 221 and 189 electoral votes, respectively. The opinion polls show a close race in the swing States (Table 1). If the polling averages hold true in these States, the electoral college votes would



break 292-246 in favour of the Democrats. But the margins between the two parties are very close. If one of the Rust Belt States (say, Pennsylvania) and one of the Sun Belt States (say, Georgia) provide more

votes to Mr. Trump than Ms. Harris, the electoral numbers would be 281-265 in favour of the Republicans. The table shows the latest polling averages for Ms. Harris and Mr. Trump in the swing States (as of Au-

gust 31) As the election gets closer, the two parties will focus on campaigning in these States. In forthcoming articles, we will look into the two parties' support bases and how they have changed over time.

How NEP 2020 engenders discrimination within the state system of education

September 5 is celebrated as Teachers' Day to mark the birth anniversary of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, scholar, philosopher and former president of our country. This year it is being marked as Student-Teacher Solidarity Day by hundreds of thousands of students and teachers wearing black badges to protest against the present education crisis in the country.

We remind ourselves of India's unequivocal commitment to public education for development, social justice and democracy, with the words of its first Education Commission (1948-49) chaired by Dr. Radhakrishnan. One of its members was Dr. Zakir Hussain, chairperson of the Basic Education Committee (1938), and co-founder of Jamia Millia Islamia.

"Freedom of individual development is the basis of democracy. Exclusive control of education by the State has been an important factor in facilitating the maintenance of totalitarian tyrannies. ... We must resist, in the interests of our own democracy, the trend towards the governmental domination of the educational process. Higher education is, undoubtedly, an obligation of the State but State aid is not to be confused with State control over academic policies and practices.... Intellectual progress demands the maintenance of the spirit of free inquiry".

However, the last decade has witnessed an unprecedented trend of increasing centralisation and control by the Union government. Central funding is leveraged to push through its agenda of commercialisation, gross stratification of the public system, early vocationalisation (which can be caste-based) for the proletariat, and distortion and communalisation of curricula. The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) is a generic umbrella for new fiats directed towards institutions and states. Ironically, despite the "concurrent" status of education in the Constitution, the government seems to be bulldozing the best-performing States to succumb and conform.

For instance, two years ago some teachers of Delhi University targeted students of Kerala (having the highest educational indicators), who were admitted through the cut-off system with their Class 12 marks, as beneficiaries of a "marks jihad" state board conspiracy. Moreover, the next year with a shift to a centralised entrance test based on the CBSE curriculum (CBSE students dominate DU admissions), officials stated that the Kerala 'anomaly' had been resolved. No such concerns were raised about the numbers admitted from Bihar or Haryana, being under the same dispensation.

Funding 'exemplar' schools

Kerala and Tamil Nadu have been facing protracted delays with respect to centrally funded schemes, and have not received pending instalments of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which expressly aims to ensure equitable access to quality education for all children, including the 6-14 year old under the Right to Education Act. The funding is shared in a 60:40 ratio by most States, amounting to a central support of about ₹3.2 lakh per school (as per 2021-22 figures). Indeed both States have been under implicit pressure to sign an MoU to implement the scheme of selected PM-SHRI schools, which requires states to contribute 40 percent of a much larger sum, but with the implementation of the CBSE curriculum, among other grounds for conformity with NEP.

The current budget allocates a large portion of its funds to this centrally favoured scheme of the 'exemplar' PM-SHRI, while substantially reducing funding to SSA. As per an analysis by Center for Budget Governance and Accountability, of the central budget allocations between the years 2019-20 and 2024-25, while the share of funding to 'exemplar' schools increased from 19 percent to 29 percent, the share of SSA dropped from 62 percent to 51 percent in the Department of School Education budget.