Spy in every blink

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Revanth Warns of Severe Water, Power Crisis in TG Due to El Nino

Hyderabad, Oct 23 elangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Friday warned that the drought conditions caused by the impact of El Nino would continue for the next 8 to 10 months in the state.

Ruling out the availability of water for irrigation, he appealed to farmers to cultivate only rainfed crops and vegetables in view of the depletion of all water resources.

Speaking at a meeting with Congress leaders, MLAs, MPS and MLCs, the Chief Minister said that out of 30 lakh agriculture pump sets, 15 lakh have already dried up and even a single drop of water would not be available in the coming days.

He revealed that water storage in the projects has been reduced to less than 20 per cent of their capacity. The available water is more than 200 TMC, with some of the projects reaching the dead storage levels.

Emphasising that special attention should be paid to the provision of drinking water, the Chief Minister instructed the Cabinet sub-committee, along with officials at all levels, to ensure continuous monitoring of the supply of drinking water. A toll-free number would be provided to address the grievances.

The Chief Minister announced that a special scheme will be introduced after Sankranti for four months, until May, to provide daily employment to the workers. In addition to funds received from the Central government, the state government will also spend a significant amount on this scheme. This initiative should be utilised to restore access paths to agricultural fields, as well as canals, ponds, and small water bodies.

"We must provide work for every individual and ensure that everyone has food to eat. This scheme must be meticulously designed and implemented," he said.

Revanth Reddy said 'Kalajathas' (cultural troupes) should be organised to motivate the farmers. A help desk should be set up at Congress state headquarters Gandhi Bhavan under the leadership of MP Chamala Kiran.

He maintained that the government has the responsibility of disclosing the ground reality to ensure no one suffers during the crisis. The leaders should also take up a campaign to educate the farmers about the drought conditions through Rythu Vedikas. To give relief to the cattle, special centres would be established in villages to provide fodder and drinking water

The Chief Minister said that the government was already alerting all sections of the people about the prevailing conditions. He noted that many countries across the world were also facing drought. The intense heat and water scarcity were leading to a sharp increase in electricity consumption. In some parts of Maharashtra, drinking water is now being rationed and regulations have been introduced to reduce water consumption by 20 percent by each person.

The CM warned that the scarcity of drinking water will prove to be an even greater challenge than the shortage of water for irrigation. A situation may arise where people will be unable to even step out of their homes.

"We cannot tackle this drought without alerting the public and making them partners in our efforts", he said.



The Chief Minister slammed the BRS leaders for criticising the state government in dealing with the drought conditions amidst the El Nino weather conditions. The Chief Minister took strong exception to the BRS allegations that the drought was caused by the Congress party and not El Nino. Such statements are made with political malice.

He stated that the impact of El Nino is being felt across 100 countries worldwide, as well as in Indian states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.

Telangana CM Reddy calls for coordination among police forces of Southern states

Hyderabad, Oct 23 Telangana Chief Minister, A. Revanth Reddy, on Friday emphasised the need for coordination among the police forces of all Southern states.

He called for establishing strong systems that foster coordination across state borders among the police forces of the states.

Chief Minister Reddy was addressing a Southern Regional Police Coordination Committee (SRPCC) meeting at the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) here.

Directors-General and Inspectors-General of Police from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, representatives from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Puducherry and Lakshadweep and senior officials from Central agencies are attending the meeting.



He told the officials that they bear the responsibility of transforming South India into a secure region.

Chief Minister Reddy stated that the Government of Telangana is fully committed to sharing its technical infrastructure and ICCC systems with neighbouring states.

He noted that the conference provides an opportunity to foster better coordination between the police departments and specialized units of the various states.

Stating that safety and security are the very foundations of society, he said the public expects a police force that operates effectively, upholds ethical values, and functions with complete impartiality.

"In the current climate, where the nature of crime is constantly evolving, platforms like the SRPCC are crucial. Policing strategies must evolve, and reforms must be a continuous process. I am a firm believer in reforms. The resources we allocate to the police force are not merely an expenditure; I view them as an investment toward building a better society and ensuring the safety of our citizens," he said.

He told the participants that Hyderabad police system has been reorganised into three distinct commissionerates which allows each Police Commissioner to focus specifically on a defined jurisdiction, thereby enabling the achievement of better outcomes.

CM Reddy said the state government has established specialised units such as HYDRAA, EAGLE, and T-SAFE to focus specifically on various types of crimes.

"Currently, issues like cybercrime, drug trafficking, and traffic-related challenges have become critical. Each unit—and every specialised division—must prioritise technological integration and training to achieve the best possible outcomes," he said.

The Chief Minister claimed that the reforms implemented in Telangana are yielding positive results.

The Telangana Police Department is gaining recognition and acclaim at both national and international levels for its efforts in areas such as drug control, the prevention of cybercrime, and the eradication of Naxalism, he said.

He pointed out that during the PRAGATI review meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, Telangana was ranked first in the country for its control of cybercrime. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has commended our police officers for their efforts in transforming Telangana into a completely Naxal-free state.

He mentioned that the EAGLE unit has received a score of over 80 per cent from the Central Government for its performance in drug control. The Telangana Cyber Security Bureau has set new benchmarks in recovering and returning funds lost by victims of cybercrime.

Cong gears up for INDIA bloc mega rally against 'vote theft'; Venugopal meets UP, Haryana leaders

New Delhi, Oct 23 All India Congress Committee General Secretary KC Venugopal on Friday said the party held high-level meetings with senior leaders from Uttar Pradesh and Haryana to intensify mobilisation for the INDIA bloc's mega rally against "Vote Chori" scheduled for November 1 in New Delhi.

In a post on X, Venugopal said that he, along with Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, met AICC in-charge for Uttar Pradesh Rajendra Pal Gautam, UP PCC president Aradhana Misra 'Mona' and other senior leaders from the state to discuss strategies for building large-scale participation in the rally.

A separate meeting was also held with AICC in-charge Sanjay Dutt, Haryana PCC president Rao Narender Singh and senior leaders from Haryana to strengthen organisational efforts in that state, he said.

Venugopal described the November 1 event at Ramleela Maidan as the culmination of a massive 'Delhi Chalo' march that would converge in the national capital on the same day. He expressed confidence that at least one million citizens would join the march and the rally, calling the programmes against what he termed the "criminal Vote Chori" historic in nature.

Alleging that the electoral irregularities were orchestrated by "Gyanesh and Co." at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, the Congress general secretary said people from all parts of the country would attend the



events in large numbers. He asserted that the massive participation would send a strong message across India that the opposition was united in protecting democracy and determined to drive the "Vote Chors" out of power.

The INDIA bloc has been organising a series of protests and awareness programmes highlighting alleged irregularities in the electoral process. The November 1 rally is being projected as one of the largest mobilisations by the opposition alliance in recent times, with a special focus on drawing participation from northern states.

The Congress has appealed to supporters and citizens concerned about democratic processes to join the march and the Ramleela Maidan gathering in large numbers.

CM Naidu Holds Talks with Pawan, Madhav on Rural Poll Seat-Sharing

Vijayawada:Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu held separate meetings with Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan and BJP state president P.V.N. Madhav on seat-sharing among the ruling alliance partners for the rural local body elections.

The talks come as the Telugu Desam, Jana Sena and BJP seek to reconcile competing claims from aspirants, prevent rebel entry and finalise allocations among the three parties. At the CM's residence, they reviewed the latest election developments and the distribution of seats in the Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency (MPTC) and Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) elections.

Aspirants from all three alliance parties have already filed nominations in various constituencies, making it necessary for the leadership to resolve overlapping claims and ensure coordination.

After the meeting with Pawan Kalyan, Naidu met



Madhav. The talks focused on the seats to be allotted to BJP candidates in the MPTC and ZPTC elections.

The alliance's seat-sharing arrangement for the municipal elections was a reference point. Of the 123 seats distributed among the partners, Jana Sena was allotted 24 and the BJP nine, accounting for around 20 per cent and seven per cent of the total, respectively.

It remains unclear whether the same formula will be followed in the rural elections or whether allocations will be adjusted according to the parties' local strength and political equations in individual constituencies.

Political circles are abuzz with reports that Pawan Kalyan sought a 30 per cent share for Jana Sena in the rural local body elections. Naidu said the distribution could be done based on the respective parties' strength at the local level.

With the nomination process nearing its conclusion and candidates from alliance partners staking claims to the same seats, the leadership is seeking a mutually acceptable arrangement for the MPTC and ZPTC contests.

Another student suicide in Mumbai hostel, month after Sahil Wakode died at IIT



A second-year Chemical Engineering student at Mumbai's Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT), Siddhesh Patil, died by suicide in his hostel room on Tuesday night, in an incident that comes amid continuing protests at IIT Bombay over the death of another second-year student and concerns over campus mental-health support and institutional accountability.Patil was found in his room on the second floor of Hostel 5 on the ICT's Matunga campus. The incident is believed to have occurred between 10 pm and midnight. A senior institute official confirmed the death, adding that the police had been informed and an investigation was underway.

The police received information that a 19-year-old had committed suicide. "A 19-year-old second-year Chemical Engineering student at the Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT) was found dead in his hostel room. We have registered an Accidental Death Report." The Matunga police said.The police said that they are yet to determine the cause of the death. "We have registered an ADR; we await the post mortem analysis to determine the cause of the death. We will record the statements of his family and friends to ascertain why he took extreme steps. We are investigating the matter," the police added.While the institute has not issued an official statement, Vice-Chancellor A B Pandit informed students and faculty members about the incident through a message circulated on campus. "The police have been informed, and they have prepared a statement from all concerned and have taken necessary steps to release his mortal remains to his family members," the message stated.A classmate said Patil, who was from Nashik, was undergoing treatment for depression with a doctor in the city. According to the classmate, Patil had spoken to his doctor on Tuesday night about wanting to end his life. The doctor subsequently alerted his parents, who contacted students in the hostel and asked them to check on him."By the time we reached his room, he had died," the classmate said, adding that fewer students were on campus owing to the Dussehra festival.Patil was taken to a hospital by the institute administration but was declared dead on arrival.The incident comes a month after the death of Sahil Wakode, a 20-year-old second-year BTech student at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, who died by suicide on September 18. His death triggered sustained protests on the Powai campus, with students demanding an independent investigation, greater transparency in disciplinary proceedings and reforms to the institute's student welfare and mental-health support systems.Wakode's parents alleged that he had faced caste-based discrimination and harassment by a faculty member. The allegations were denied by the institute, which said it had received no complaint from him about caste discrimination. Police registered an abetment-to-suicide case on the basis of the family's complaint, and the investigation was transferred to the Mumbai Police Crime Branch.The protests continued into October. On October 18, Wakode's parents and student protesters were detained as police cleared a protest site near the IIT Bombay main gate, where students had been demonstrating for nearly a month.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio lands in Mumbai, set for talks with EAM Jaishankar



Mumbai: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio arrived in Mumbai on Tuesday for an official visit to India. Rubio is accompanied by his wife, Jeanette Rubio and US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor.Gor stated that he looked forward to a productive visit and advancing India-US ties."Great to be back in Mumbai, this time with my friend US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Looking forward to a productive visit and to advancing U.S.-India ties," Gor posted on X.

Later in the day, Marco Rubio will hold talks with External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar, with discussions expected to cover key areas of our bilateral cooperation, including energy, trade, investment, defence, critical emerging technologies, and other areas of mutual interest.While addressing a bi-weekly media briefing in New Delhi on October 16, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that Rubio and EAM Jaishankar will discuss regional and global developments.

Jaiswal said, "In so far as the visit of the Secretary of State is concerned, this forthcoming visit will provide an opportunity for both sides to review India-US relations and discuss ways to further strengthen the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership that we have with the United States. Discussions are expected to cover key areas of our bilateral cooperation, including energy, trade, investment, defence, critical emerging technologies, and other areas of mutual interest. The two sides will also exchange views on regional and global developments. The visit will provide an opportunity to sustain the high-level engagement between the two countries and advance our shared priorities."During his visit to India, Rubio will lay a wreath at the 26/11 memorial at the Taj Hotel and attend the "Freedom 250" reception in Mumbai. He is also expected to meet Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.After concluding his engagements in Mumbai, Rubio will travel to Gujarat's Jamnagar for talks that will include "enhanced energy cooperation", the US State Department said.This is Rubio's second official visit to India this year, as he had earlier visited in May.During his visit, Rubio will meet with senior government officials to strengthen the US-India strategic partnership, exchange views on regional and global dynamics, and discuss prospects for enhanced energy cooperation.According to the US State Department, he will also meet with business leaders to promote opportunities for commercial investment and economic cooperation.

'Every Shiv Sainik wants Shinde as CM again': Sena ministers go public on 2029 plan



Nearly two years after Devendra Fadnavis became Maharashtra's chief minister, the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena continues to harbour hopes of seeing their leader return to the chair, with the party now considering increasing its numbers by 2029, when the next Assembly election is scheduled.As more party leaders publicly expressed their desire to see Eknath Shinde return to the top post, Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik on Tuesday, October 20, said the Shiv Sena would seek to increase its strength in the next Assembly elections to make Eknath Shinde the chief minister again.

"Every Shiv Sainik wants Eknath Shinde to become Chief Minister again. Anand Paranjpe, ordinary Shiv Sainiks and I share this feeling. But we have to consider the numbers. Since we do not have the numbers today, Shinde is the Deputy Chief Minister. We will increase our strength in the next Assembly elections and make him Chief Minister again," Sarnaik said.Sarnaik also claimed that seeing Eknath Shinde return as chief minister is the people's wish.

The remarks come nearly two years after the November 2024 Assembly elections, in which the BJP won 132 of the 288 seats, compared with 57 won by the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and 41 by then Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).The BJP-led Mahayuti alliance retained power, and Devendra Fadnavis took the oath as the chief minister. Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar became his deputies. After Ajit Pawar died in a plane crash in Baramati, his wife Sunetra took the oath as the deputy chief minister.Sarnaik's statement is among a series of public expressions by Shinde Sena leaders favouring Eknath Shinde's return to the chief minister's post.Recently, Water Resources Minister Gulabrao Patil had also said that Shinde should become chief minister again, calling it the sentiment of party legislators. Patil said the party would work to increase its tally to make that possible.

Increasing tally to become CM needed?

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena leader Sachin Ahir argued that Eknath Shinde need not wait for an increase in numbers and could become the chief minister even now.The aspirations have brought the question of leadership within the ruling alliance back into public discussion.It should, however, be noted that Sarnaik's remarks do not amount to a formal demand or decision by the Mahayuti leadership to change the chief minister.

Pre-arrest police inquiry that cleared Mangaluru priest in Pocso case under scrutiny

Two days after a church priest in Karnataka's Mangaluru was arrested over allegations of sexually abusing minor boys, a police inquiry conducted before his arrest has come under scrutiny because the report concluded that allegations against him could not be substantiated.The inquiry, conducted by the Mangaluru South police and detailed in a September 8 report, recorded the statements of the church administrator, the priest who succeeded Pinto, and Pinto himself. However, the report does not mention recording statements from the alleged victims or their parents.

According to the inquiry report accessed by The Indian Express, Pinto denied the allegations and claimed that some parents and youngsters were unhappy with the stricter disciplinary rules he had introduced at St Vincent Ferrer Church in Valencia, Mangaluru, including closing its gates at 7 pm. The church administrator also told the police that some people had expressed dissatisfaction with the priest's rules. The report concluded that the allegations of abuse and mistreatment of minors had not been established.The inquiry followed complaints child-protection authorities received from parents concerned about their children's safety. In a communication to the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Dakshina Kannada, the authorities said allegations had been made against Pinto and that several parents had raised concerns about their children's safety. The DCPU subsequently requested the Mangaluru South police to investigate the allegations and submit a report.In its communication after the police inquiry, the DCPU said the police reported that the allegations could not be substantiated. The report was subsequently submitted to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) on September 16.The findings are now under scrutiny following Pinto's arrest in the Pocso case, raising questions about the scope of the initial inquiry and the steps taken to verify the allegations.

According to sources, the children's parents had first approached the bishop with a written complaint in August, expecting the church authorities to take action. However, instead of immediately reporting the allegations to the police or other competent authorities, the diocese conducted an internal inquiry, sources alleged.Following the inquiry, Pinto was placed on administrative leave and moved from the church associated with the diocese near the Karnataka-Kerala border. Sources alleged that he was subsequently moved between locations associated with the diocese, including an estate in Sakleshpur.Sources further alleged that the bishop was aware of the complaints from the initial stages and that the handling of the matter amounted to an attempt to shield the accused priest.Under the Pocso Act, suspected sexual offences against children must be reported to the authorities as soon as they come to light. However, the parents first approached the bishop, after which the church administration conducted an internal inquiry, allegedly delaying the filing of a police complaint.Sources also alleged that the families faced pressure for nearly two months not to pursue the matter, including appeals and threats made in the name of religion and community.

The families' supporters later brought the matter to the attention of the Mangaluru-based NGO Odanadi. Stanly K V, the NGO's founder, said he approached the Mangaluru Police Commissioner and submitted a complaint seeking action, after which the FIR was registered and Pinto was arrested.Stanly said the families had



mailed complaints to the Directorate of Child Protection in Bengaluru. According to him, the directorate sent an official communication to the DCPU, Dakshina Kannada, in September. He alleged that the subsequent inquiry involving the DCPU, the bishop's office and the local police did not result in timely action.Stanly has since submitted an additional complaint to the police commissioner, seeking to include the bishop in the FIR and to investigate the alleged delay by the church and government authorities."The FIR mentions the period of sexual abuse as August 14 to October 15, but the families' accounts indicate that the incidents occurred before August 14, which they described as the last date on which the abuse took place. The priest had already been placed on administrative leave during the period mentioned in the FIR. We have sought clarification on these dates based on the children's accounts," he said.

Police to probe lapses in initial inquirySudheer Kumar Reddy, Police Commissioner, while speaking to The Indian Express, acknowledged lapses at the police station level in the initial inquiry, saying the inspector recorded the priest's statement but did not speak to the victims or their parents.The case has now been handed over to an assistant commissioner of police (ACP)-rank officer, who has been directed to inquire into the lapses in the initial investigation and submit a report, the commissioner said.The FIR currently names five victims. The commissioner said the police would reach out to others who may have been affected and record their statements.The commissioner also confirmed receiving an additional complaint from the NGO. "We have received an additional complaint seeking the inclusion of the bishop's name in the FIR and raising questions about the period of the alleged offences. We will examine these allegations as part of the ACP-level inquiry. If the findings warrant any changes to the FIR, the necessary action will be taken," Commissioner Sudheer Kumar Reddy said.

PSU bank confirms 3,897 customer records exposed on dark web



New Delhi: State Bank of India (SBI) — India's largest lender — on Wednesday clarified that it experienced a data breach with 3,897 customer records found exposed on the dark web.According to the bank, it has received communications from its Threat Intelligence Service Provider, the Defence Cyber Agency and CERT-In regarding an alert concerning suspected exposure of customer data earlier in the week.

During preliminary analysis of approximately 375,000 records available on the dark web, 3,897 customer records containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII) were identified, the bank said in an exchange filing.The exposed information reportedly included customers' registered mobile numbers, dates of birth, names, gender, email addresses, residential addresses, branch and CIF identifiers, lead IDs and metadata associated with loan/lead records and other related files, it added.The state-owned bank further noted that it promptly activated its cyber incident response and containment protocols and engaged an independent CERT-In-empanelled cybersecurity agency to conduct a comprehensive assessment and investigate the nature and extent of the alleged compromise.

The bank said a detailed investigation is underway to establish authenticity and completeness of the exposed data, determine potential source and extent of exposure and assess associated risks. The incident does not have any material impact on its core business operations, financial performance or business continuity and core functions continue to operate normally without disruption, the bank said adding that appropriate remedial and preventive measures are being implemented.Shares of SBI on Wednesday traded on a flat note at Rs 970 at around 10 am on the BSE. The banking stock recorded a 52-week high of Rs 1,234.80 and a 52-week low of Rs 891.55, according to the exchange data.In the last one-year horizon, it declined 12 per cent but gained over the last five years.Earlier in the week, an unidentified hacker group operating under the name 'Siriusim' claimed to have obtained confidential customer information allegedly linked to the State Bank of India (SBI), including personal details, loan applications and account-opening documents.The claim was highlighted by cybersecurity monitoring account CyberPulse56 in a post on social media platform X. The group purportedly possesses 3.75 lakh data entries in CSV format and 2,722 PDF documents associated with the country's largest public sector lender, as per the post.

25-year-old man found dead in Kushaiguda lodge



Hyderabad: A 25-year-old man was found dead in a lodge in Kushaiguda, in a suspected case of suicide on Wednesday.The victim, identified as Kiran, had reportedly visited the same lodge four days earlier, when he spent time there with his friends. He returned to the lodge again and allegedly died by suicide by hanging from the ceiling fan in the room.

The motive behind Kiran's death remains unclear.The incident has raised questions about the circumstances that led to his death, with the Kushaiguda police nowninvestigating the possible reasons behind the incident.The police said efforts continue to establish the sequence of events leading to the incident and gather details about his recent activities.

Congress, BJP spar over delimitation and women's reservation Bill

New Delhi: The proposed delimitation exercise and the Constitution Amendment Bill linked to women's reservation have triggered a fresh political confrontation, with the Congress accusing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of attempting to push through delimitation in the name of women's reservation, while the ruling party has defended the move as a constitutional process.Congress spokesperson Surendra Rajput, speaking in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, said the INDIA Bloc and other major political parties were united on the issues of delimitation and women's reservation. He asserted that the Opposition would not allow the BJP to succeed if it attempted to use women's reservation as a means to advance its delimitation proposal."We will not make any statements based on speculation now. However, one thing is certain, all members of the INDIA Alliance and all major political parties are united on delimitation and women's reservation. The entire Opposition, whether it is part of the INDIA Bloc or no longer part of it, is united on these issues," Rajput said.Accusing the BJP of pursuing a political agenda under the banner of women's reservation, he added, "If the BJP wants to hatch any conspiracy, the INDIA alliance will not allow that conspiracy to succeed, and neither will the Congress party."Congress leader Husain Dalwai said, "…Through delimitation, they intend to shape constituencies in a way that keeps their government in power indefinitely. They want to sideline Muslims, split constituencies where Muslim, Christian, or Tribal communities reside, those who vote against them, and alter the boundaries to their advantage. All of this is in their plans, attempting to do so under the guise of security. What even is this SIR? Through such measures, they are trying to maintain power. The current government has been formed unconstitutionally, and they are spooked by the ongoing public protests…"BJP leader Guru Prakash Paswan, defending the proposed delimitation exercise, said it was part of the constitutional framework and should be discussed through constructive dialogue."This is a constitutional process. There are established procedures in Parliament, and India is a country of 1.4 billion people

Why Marco Rubio is visiting Reliance's Jamnagar Refinery?



Hyderabad: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's two-day visit to India includes a stop at Reliance Industries' Jamnagar refinery in Gujarat, the world's largest single-site oil-refining complex.The visit comes at a critical time for global energy markets, with Washington seeking to curb Russian oil revenues, manage fuel prices and reshape international crude trade amid geopolitical tensions.After meetings in Mumbai, India's financial capital, Rubio is scheduled to visit Jamnagar, where Reliance operates a refinery complex with a combined processing capacity of 1.4 million barrels per day.The trip is expected to focus on commercial investment and economic cooperation rather than high-level political engagements in New Delhi.US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor has described the visit as business-focused, with Rubio expected to meet Reliance officials and discuss opportunities for refining more Venezuelan crude.Reliance's Jamnagar complex consists of two refineries: an original facility commissioned in 1999 and an export-oriented refinery that began operations in 2008. Its ability to process heavy, sulphur-rich crude from different sources makes it a significant supplier of diesel, petrol and aviation fuel to international markets.

The company processed more than 216 varieties of crude oil, according to Reliance. Its refining capacity has also made it an important buyer of Venezuelan crude as the US seeks to redirect global oil flows.Reliance is estimated to account for 350,000 to 370,000 barrels per day of Venezuelan crude imports in October. Rubio has indicated that Washington wants the company to increase its processing of Venezuelan oil.The refinery is also important to European energy supplies. Trade data cited in reports showed that Reliance exported 21.66 million tonnes of refined petroleum products from Jamnagar in the first half of 2025. Diesel accounted for 9.81 million tonnes, followed by petrol at 6.14 million tonnes and jet fuel at 2.06 million tonnes.Europe was the largest destination, accounting for 28% of the company's refined-product exports during the period. Major buyers include BP, ExxonMobil, Glencore, Vitol and Trafigura.Reliance has become a key player in the debate over India's purchases of Russian crude since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Russia's share of the company's crude imports reportedly rose from about 3% before the war to 50% in 2025.Washington's efforts to reduce Russia's oil revenues have therefore placed Reliance under scrutiny.In August 2025, US President Donald Trump imposed an additional 25% tariff on Indian goods over New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil. Reliance subsequently reduced its Russian crude imports, although Russian oil continued to account for a substantial share of the crude processed at Jamnagar.

The possibility of further US tariffs had raised concerns for Indian exporters and Reliance, but Trump later suspended the proposed measures.Rubio has acknowledged that India has diversified its energy sources while continuing to purchase substantial quantities of Russian oil. He has also described India as an important US partner, highlighting the challenge Washington faces in balancing geopolitical pressure with economic cooperation.The refinery has also drawn attention over European restrictions on petroleum products derived from Russian crude. Critics argue that the rules may leave a loophole for products processed in third countries that also handle Russian oil.

US fuel prices and investment interestsRubio's visit comes as the Trump administration faces domestic pressure over inflation and fuel prices ahead of the US midterm elections. Reliance is a major exporter of diesel, a fuel whose rising prices have become a concern for American consumers and policymakers.The company also has growing investment links with the US. Reliance is backing America First Refining's proposed refinery at the Port of Brownsville in Texas, a project announced by Trump in March and described as the first major new US refinery in about five decades.The investment has been cited by the administration as an example of its efforts to attract international capital to the US.Rubio's decision to include Jamnagar in his India itinerary underscores the refinery's importance beyond its industrial scale. Reliance sits at the intersection of US efforts to influence Russian oil revenues, expand Venezuelan crude exports, contain fuel-price pressures and attract foreign investment.The visit highlights how energy security and commercial interests are becoming central to the broader US-India relationship, even as the two countries continue to navigate disagreements over trade and India's ties with Russia.

Trump says Iran war could end soon, predicts sharp fall in oil prices



Washington: US President Donald Trump said that the war with Iran could end soon, predicting a sharp fall in global oil prices once the conflict concludes, even as he warned that Washington must ensure Tehran cannot rebuild its nuclear weapons capabilities in the coming years.Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office alongside Vice President JD Vance, Trump defended the economic costs of the military campaign, saying higher petrol prices were a relatively small price to pay for preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.The President also criticised European allies for declining to assist the United States during the conflict.Responding to a question about public dissatisfaction with the economy, Trump said the Iran conflict was the principal factor keeping energy prices elevated."As soon as the war is over, it's going to end very soon the Iran war," Trump said."Oil is going to drop like a rock and that's the only thing holding it back," he added.The President did not provide a timetable for ending the conflict or explain what military or diplomatic developments could lead to its conclusion.His prediction about oil prices was not supported by a detailed assessment of global supply conditions.The remarks carry particular significance for energy-importing economies, including India, which are vulnerable to fluctuations in international crude prices and disruptions to shipping through the Persian Gulf.Trump defended the administration's military campaign against Iran, arguing that Washington had no alternative because of the threat posed by Tehran's nuclear programme."You can't let them have it," he said, referring to nuclear weapons.He described Iran as the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism.The President acknowledged public concern about higher fuel prices but said the economic burden was justified."It's a big price, but actually it's a small price to pay for not letting Iran have a nuclear weapon," Trump said.He claimed that American military operations had severely damaged Iran's nuclear facilities, including installations buried beneath substantial layers of rock.However, Trump said the administration wanted assurances that Tehran would not be able to restore its capabilities several years later."We could leave right now, and we would have done a good job, a great job," he said."But it's not good enough for me. We have to make sure it doesn't happen in five years, six years, ten years."Earlier in the same Oval Office interaction, Trump said the United States was making progress against Iran but had not decided how to conclude the campaign.We just have to make a final decision of which way do we want to win? Do we want to win the nice way or the not nice way?" he said.Trump also disclosed that he had contacted several European leaders to ask whether their countries would help the United States.He said the responses were negative.

"But I was testing them. I just called individual presidents and prime ministers to ask would they like to help us? And they said no," Trump said.The President criticised the refusal, arguing that the United States spent substantial sums supporting European security through NATO."We spend hundreds of billions a year on NATO and they said, no," he said.He did not identify the leaders contacted, specify the assistance requested or explain whether the discussions concerned military operations, logistics or other forms of support.The comments reflected continuing differences between Washington and European governments over the scope of military involvement in the Middle East.Trump also warned that Europe's internal political and immigration challenges were weakening the continent, although those remarks were made in response to separate questions about unrest in France.The Iran conflict has heightened international concerns about energy security, regional stability and the safety of commercial shipping.

US Justice Department lets ruling stand on job ads targeting H-1B visa holders

Washington: The US Justice Department has allowed a ruling to stand that job advertisements aimed only at H-1B visa holders do not, by themselves, amount to illegal discrimination against American workers, a decision that bears directly on a visa programme dominated by Indian professionals.Attorney General Todd Blanche let lapse the 60-day window to review an August 12 decision by an administrative law judge in the department's Office of the Chief Administrative Hearing Officer (OCAHO), despite a request from 13 House Republicans to take up the case, according to Breitbart News.

The judge dismissed a complaint by US Tech Workers against Boston Consulting Group over its participation in "P33 Chicago H-1B Connect", a Chicago initiative that served as a jobs board for H-1B visa holders.The ruling held that "discriminatory advertising does not represent a discrete cause of action under the INA", or the Immigration and Nationality Act. Such evidence, it said, is limited to "part of a case alleging nonselection, recruitment, or termination, rather than as independently actionable violations of the INA.""The Department thoroughly reviewed the ALJ's decision and stakeholder concerns, and ultimately determined that the underlying decision was consistent with OCAHO precedent," the Justice Department said in a statement, according to Breitbart News."The Department aggressively targets employers who discriminate against American workers through unlawful hiring practices," the statement said.In their October 9 letter to Blanche, the lawmakers, led by Representatives Paul Gosar and Chip Roy, said the decision "suggests that section 274B does not provide a cause of action for discriminatory advertising"."If employers can expressly target foreign workers while discouraging Americans from applying, those protections are substantially weakened," they wrote.John Miano, a lawyer for US Tech Workers, told Breitbart News that "the whole 25 years of prosecuting companies" over such practices "is set back 25 years by this."



The report came on the day the department announced that online grocery company Instacart would pay $5 million to settle charges that it discriminated against American workers while recruiting for green card-linked jobs under the PERM programme. Last week, data company Cloudera agreed to a two-year bar from the PERM programme in a similar case.Indians make up the largest share of H-1B visa holders, accounting for more than 70 per cent of approved petitions in recent years, and most employment-based green card applicants from India move through the PERM route.The ruling means job boards and ads targeting H-1B workers, such as the Chicago initiative, face a higher legal bar, as US workers must show they were actually harmed in hiring or recruitment.

Houthi missile strike kills 60 recruits at Yemen military camp

Cairo: The death toll from a Houthi missile strike on a government military camp in southern Yemen rose to 60 people, primarily new recruits, making it the deadliest strike since fighting in the country began escalating three months ago, Yemeni officials said Tuesday.At least a dozen people were still missing a day after the Iranian-backed rebels hit the al-Alam training camp in the southern province of Shabwa with ballistic missiles, three officials said.

Monday's strike was part of a recent surge of fighting in Yemen, which started when forces from the internationally-recognised government and Saudi-led coalition launched airstrikes on Houthi-held Sanaa International Airport in July, shattering a 2022 ceasefire deal that largely stopped fighting in the country's civil war.The Houthis have also fired missiles and drones on Saudi Arabia, which has struggled to counter the Houthi attacks, even with far superior US-supplied arms.

The strike on the al-Alam camp hit while recruits were lining up in formation for a training session. Videos from the area circulated online and were analysed by The Associated Press and showed many motionless bodies lying on the sandy ground of the camp.More than 200 other recruits were also wounded, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief the media.One of the officials, from the local government, said several suffered serious injuries and were transferred to hospitals in other provinces in life-threatening condition. He said at least 15 of the recruits killed were from a single Yemeni tribe.

In televised comments aired by the Saudi-owned Al Arabiya satellite news television, Shabwa governor Awad Ibn al-Wazir said the dead were new recruits from across Shabwa being trained to provide security in the province and not combat operations."These recruits have never before participated in any mobilisation or on any front," he said. "They have no connection to the front lines … they were (part of) a non-offensive security force."The Shabwa provincial government said in a statement Monday that the Houthis fired three ballistic missiles on the camp. The Houthis claimed the attack, saying they had killed and wounded dozens but did not provide further details.The camp, which was previously used by a militia backed by the United Arab Emirates, is located in the Jardan district, north of the provincial capital of Ataq. It sits on a crucial supply line connecting to the government-controlled province of Marib.Shabwa and Marib, along with neighbouring Hadramawt province, contain what has been dubbed the Yemeni government's "triangle of power," a strategic area in which the country's oil and gas production is located.On Tuesday, authorities in Saudi Arabia issued an attack warning for the capital area in the late morning, followed by the sound of an explosion in northern Riyadh where the King Khalid International Airport is located. The airport has come under repeated Houthi attacks this month, forcing the facility to suspend its operations.The all-clear was given a short time later, and Saudi Arabia said a ballistic missile fired by the Houthis had been intercepted.Yemen first plunged into civil war in 2014, when the Houthis seized Sanaa and much of northern Yemen and forced the government into exile.A Saudi-led coalition intervened the following year in an attempt to restore the government to power. The conflict created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters and killed more than 150,000 people.



US-designated terrorist Muhammad Sarwar dies in Lahore

Lahore: Muhammad Sarwar, designated as a global terrorist by the US Treasury Department, died in Pakistan's Lahore on Sunday."Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) Punjab President Muhammad Sarwar has passed away. He was on his way from home to the mosque to offer prayers when he collapsed and died," a PMML spokesperson said in a statement.

The exact cause of his death has not been specified by PMML. However, 24NewsHD TV Channel reported that Sarwar died "due to a head injury sustained after falling down the stairs".PMML is a political offshoot of Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed's Jamaat-ud-Dawa. Saeed has been in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat Jail since 2019 in multiple terror financing cases, for which he was convicted for multiple years, as per officials.PMML leaders — Khalid Masood Sindhu, Saifullah Qasuri, Hafiz Talha Saeed, Yaqub Sheikh, Khalid Naik Gujjar, and Muzammil Iqbal Hashmi — expressed grief over the loss of their party leader."With the death of Muhammad Sarwar, the party has lost a strong and fearless leader," said Muzammil Iqbal Hashmi.Sarwar's funeral was scheduled to be held at JuD headquarters, Jamia Al-Qadsia, in Lahore's Chuburji area late on Sunday night.In 2016, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated Sarwar and Shahid Mahmood, another senior Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) leader, as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs).The action was aimed at disrupting LeT's fundraising and support networks. OFAC said the two men were designated for acting for or on behalf of the group, adding that all their property and interests in property subject to US jurisdiction were blocked."Sarwar and Mahmood of



Lashkar-e-Taiba are responsible for raising and moving funds to support the terrorist group's operations. The action not only aims to expose activities, but also disrupts Lashkar-e-Taiba's financial network and ability to carry out violent terrorist attacks," OFAC said at the time.According to OFAC, Sarwar had been a senior LeT official in Lahore for more than 10 years and had held various leadership roles in the group. He had served as LeT's Lahore chief since at least January 2015.As the group's Lahore chief, Sarwar maintained ties with its senior leaders. Between 2012 and 2013, he worked with LeT's foreign affairs chief Hafiz Abdul Rahman Makki, who asked him for money to cover travel within Pakistan in early 2013, OFAC said.Makki was designated by OFAC under Executive Order 13224 in November 2010.Sarwar's association with LeT dated back to the early 2000s.

Indian-American voters make their presence felt in Texas, New York races

Washington: An Indian-American man's post saying he voted for Democrat James Talarico in Texas, citing "xenophobia, racial resentment", has drawn hundreds of thousands of views on social media, as more than 500 Indian Americans rallied behind Representative Tom Suozzi in New York.The post on X account (user name: Vasant Bhatt) had about 857,000 views, 7,300 likes and 3,000 replies within seven hours of being posted on Monday.

"I just cast my ballot for James Talarico. As a second-generation Indian American, I am thoroughly disgusted by the xenophobia, racial resentment, and increasingly brazen attacks on my identity," the post read."My family has contributed to the American story through hard work, sacrifice, and an unwavering belief in the opportunities this nation promises. I am every bit as American as anyone else, and I will not tolerate being treated as a perpetual foreigner in the country I call home," the post said.

"I implore every eligible Texan to get out and vote. This election is about the kind of state and country we are prepared to defend—and the principles we refuse to surrender," it added.The post drew a pile-on from right-wing accounts. Patrick Casey, a conservative commentator, attacked it in a post that drew about 32,000 views and said the author had once interned for Republican Senator Ted Cruz.Talarico is the Democratic nominee for the US Senate in Texas.Texas has one of the largest Indian-American populations in the country, concentrated in the Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston areas.The episode comes as Republican rhetoric on immigration and H-1B visas has become a theme in several races, and as some Indian Americans, who have long leaned Democratic, have been courted by both parties.In New York, more than 500 Indian Americans gathered in Uniondale to back Suozzi's re-election bid.Community leader Varinder Bhalla compared Suozzi to former Representative Stephen Solarz, a longtime champion of ties with India in Congress, the outlet reported.Suozzi, a Democrat, represents New York's 3rd District on Long Island, home to a sizeable Indian-American community.The 2026 AAPI Voter Survey found Indian-American voters backing Democratic Senate candidates 66-18, though its Indian-American sample is small.Early voting is under way in Texas ahead of the November 3 election.Indian-American turnout is being watched closely in suburban districts where margins are narrow and where both parties have run targeted outreach in Hindi, Gujarati and Telugu. Both parties have sought to energise Asian-American voters, the fastest-growing group of eligible voters in the US, ahead of a midterm that will decide control of Congress.



EDITORIAL

Europe's autumn of unrest

Across Europe, particularly in France, there is a clear pattern of economic anxiety turning into a mass upsurge that is fast spinning out of control. France is at the epicentre of the most widespread social unrest seen in decades. What began in late September as localised blockades by high school students in the Paris region over crumbling infrastructure and teacher shortages soon snowballed into a national crisis. Public resentment over rising cost of living, declining public services and massive unemployment has created a perfect storm in a country that is steeped in debt and stagnant economic growth. Waves of mass protests are sweeping other European countries too. Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, Albania, Greece and Ireland are facing unrest to varying degrees. France, Europe's second largest economy and one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, is virtually burning as violent protesters unleash some of the worst episodes of vandalism in French history. Against a backdrop of economic stagnation and a tradition of popular protest, it has witnessed escalating violence and looting. Violent fringe groups targeted public buildings, looted luxury boutiques and supermarkets and attacked police vehicles and officers. Luxury retail stores, including outlets of Apple, Louis Vuitton, Hermès and Rolex, have been targeted by looters as violent protests over the cost of living and government spending have erupted across France. Demonstrators have torched cars, vandalised buildings and clashed with riot police, leaving several cities grappling with disorder. In Paris, masked demonstrators have vandalised shops and restaurants, while burning barricades and clashes with security forces added to the unrest.

Against the backdrop of a fragmented parliament and mounting pressure ahead of the upcoming presidential election cycle, the protests have also become a vehicle for challenging President Emmanuel Macron's administration. The scale of the violence has left both policymakers and observers around the world stunned. With the next presidential elections just six months away, and the country deeply divided between the far right and the far left, there are fears that the protests and violence could recur.

The country is already in campaign mode ahead of the April elections, with far-right candidate Marine Le Pen leading the polls. She has positioned herself as a staunch law-and-order candidate while blaming the left for the chaos. Labour unions have already called for mass demonstrations on November 5 to protest the proposed budget cuts and tax measures. This is an acid test for the ruling dispensation. Although the triggers may vary across Italy, Spain, Portugal and Albania, high fuel and energy costs underpin the unrest in each case. Adding fuel to the fire is the intense election cycle in the coming months. High-stakes elections are scheduled in Spain, France, Italy, Poland and Greece amid the growing influence of far-right and anti-immigrant movements. If France cannot contain the unrest soon, the instability risks spilling across borders.

Delhi High Court to hear pleas by CJP leaders, AISA's Neha Bora against magistrate orders



The Delhi High Court will hear pleas by Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) leaders Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka and All India Students' Association president Neha Bora Wednesday, challenging orders of special executive magistrates (SEM) against them.Justice Subramonium Prasad will hear the matters later today.

Ranka and Das were arrested on October 14 for allegedly breaching security and entering Jantar Mantar during the protests. On Monday, the SEM extended their custody by two days, taking the total to seven days.The order signed by SEM Ritu Raj, an ACP-rank officer with the Delhi Police, said that Ranka and Das's conduct did not inspire "confidence", that they have "no respect for law" and that they have habitually called for protests at a de-notified site. While being taken away, Das had termed the SEM a "police court" and said "there's no justice".

Their key challengeThe two, who moved court on Tuesday, are challenging the grounds on which their sureties were rejected and the demand for fresh ones.As per the SEM order, two persons acted as the surety for Ranka and Das. For one person, the SEM court said that the photograph of the person did not match with the Aadhaar card. For the other person, the court said that basic details like parentage were not there.Das and Ranka, in their plea, argued that the SEM's grounds for rejection are contrary to the principles of personal liberty and shows "complete misapplication of the law".Their plea had sought an urgent hearing, including a possible night hearing, alleging violations of their fundamental right to liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Neha had moved the Delhi High Court on Monday, challenging a notice by the SEM asking her to show cause why she should not execute a peace bond given the likelihood of her indulging in "breach of peace".On October 16, the student leader was detained at Mandi House while on her way to the "Lehra Do Tiranga" march at Connaught Place. Delhi Police also took Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke into preventive custody ahead of the march.She was released in the early hours of October 17 after completing formalities related to her detention under Section 65 of the Delhi Police Act, 1978, which allows police to remove someone who refuses to comply with their "reasonable directions".The same day, SEM Mahesh Kumar Meena issued a notice directing Neha to appear before the Special Executive Magistrate (SEM), New Delhi district, on October 19.

The notice accused Neha of creating "nuisance by shouting loudly in protest" at the Mandi House roundabout and of previously being "involved in repeated protest-related activity in and around Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, despite prohibitory orders 163 BNSS".It also claimed she "instigated people to participate in unauthorised demonstration at Central Park, Connaught Place, which is not a designated protest site, and hoist the national flag without obtaining valid permission".Key grounds of her challengeIn her plea, Neha had described the police notice and the direction to execute a peace bond as a "colourable exercise of preventive powers to suppress peaceful dissent", based on "vague and factually incorrect" material.Represented by advocates Abhik Chimni and Pranjal Abrol, she flagged in the plea that the notice does not justify the "likelihood" of breach of peace and does not even disclose a period, occasion, or event in relation to which breach of peace is being apprehended by the Delhi Police.She also argued that with "routine deployment" of prohibitive orders being issued "against every call of protest", such powers cannot be a "preventive administrative shortcut to be used whenever protest is anticipated".

Maharashtra request prompts four changes to poll panel software



The Election Commission of India (ECI) has implemented four changes to its ECINet software and procedures sought by Maharashtra Chief Electoral Officer S Chockalingam, giving Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) greater discretion in handling notices issued during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.The changes allow voters to submit documents beyond the 13 categories listed in notices, make personal hearings exceptional, give EROs greater authority to decide cases involving discrepancies and remove mandatory upload of an extract from the previous SIR roll.

Chockalingam sought the changes in a September 24 letter to senior ECI officials, arguing that software restrictions were limiting the powers of EROs, who are legally responsible for preparing and revising electoral rolls.The issue concerns voters who receive notices because their records could not be linked to the previous SIR roll or because the software flagged mismatches in their details. Such "logical discrepancies" can include a mismatch in a parent's name or an implausible age gap between parent and child. These flags do not establish that a voter is ineligible.The first change removes the requirement for voters issued such notices to routinely attend personal hearings at the office of the ERO or Assistant Electoral Registration Officer (AERO). Under the procedure announced by the ECI on September 26, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) visit voters' homes, collect supporting documents and upload them on ECINet for the ERO or AERO to consider. Hearings may be held in exceptional cases, preferably online.The second change allows voters to submit documents beyond the 13 categories listed. The Maharashtra CEO's office said in an October 1 press note that the BLO App had been updated with an "Any other Documents" option. Chockalingam had argued that the list was indicative, not exhaustive, since voters from tribal, homeless and other vulnerable communities might not possess any of the specified documents.The third change gives EROs greater discretion in deciding cases involving logical discrepancies. Previously, if an ERO could not resolve a discrepancy on the basis of a BLO's report alone, supporting documents had to be sent to the District Election Officer (DEO) for verification. Chockalingam sought authority for EROs to decide such cases themselves. Under the revised procedure, the ERO or AERO assesses documents and field-level verification material. The Maharashtra CEO's September 30 instructions said that eligible voters should be given opportunity to submit documents.The fourth change removes the mandatory upload of an "Extract of Last SIR" in every logical discrepancy case. Chockalingam had argued that the software identified discrepancies by comparing voter records with the previous SIR roll, making the additional upload unnecessary. On October 15, he confirmed to The Indian Express that the upload was no longer compulsory. He said the change would reduce the workload of BLOs.The changes follow an Indian Express investigation published on September 23 that reported concerns raised by Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi that software controls were restricting the powers of officers concerned.

Ex-DU professor accused of rape denied pre-arrest bail: 'Risk of threatening victim'



A Delhi court has denied anticipatory bail to a former Delhi University professor accused of raping a former student and threatening to circulate her objectionable videos."WhatsApp chats between the accused and the victim do not merely show a past consensual relationship… (it) also discloses creation of objectionable recording, threat and continued pressure on the victim," Additional Sessions Judge Gomati Manocha said in her order dated October 12 while denying the professor anticipatory bail.

"The accused, being the prosecutrix's teacher, is a material circumstance and cannot be ignored," ASJ Manocha said.She added that if bail is granted, "there is a substantial risk of influencing or threatening the victim, risk of tampering with electronic evidence and possibility of repetition of threats or coercive contact"."The chat messages cannot be assessed selectively. They are messages vide which the accused has also threatened to circulate objectionable video. They corroborate the victim's allegation of coercion and intimidation and continuing control of the accused upon the victim. This also shows the real possibility of the witness tampering and also explains why the victim may have continued contact with the accused," ASJ Manocha said in her order.The court also directed that the investigation be assigned to a senior police officer to ensure a fair probe in the case.The complainant had alleged that the professor invited her to his flat in July 2023 and covertly recorded objectionable videos of her and then used them to compel her to meet him again.She alleged that in November 2023, the professor engaged in non-consensual sexual relations with her, recorded objectionable videos, and threatened to make them public if she disclosed the matter or refused his demands.The FIR in this case was lodged on August 18, 2026. In her allegations, the complainant also said that the professor continued to sexually exploit her across various locations between December 2024 and May 2026 under repeated threats of releasing the alleged videos.

Delhi High Court to CJP's Saurav Das, Ashutosh Ranka

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday questioned the plea filed by Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) leaders Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka, noting that they had allegedly breached a bond to maintain peace a day after furnishing it. The two had moved the Delhi High Court on Tuesday, challenging a Special Executive Magistrate's October 19 order remanding them to two more days in custody.Justice Subramonium Prasad, addressing their counsel Abhik Chimni, observed that the bond furnished on October 10 was allegedly breached the very next day, October 11. The judge said the High Court examines the decision-making process rather than the decision itself, unless the decision is so perverse that it "shocks the conscience".The court also asked whether authorities were entitled to demand stricter proof when the two had allegedly breached the peace bond for a second time by trespassing at Jantar Mantar and waving a flag.Questioning why the plea should be entertained, the court pointed to the alternative remedy of challenging the Special Executive Magistrate's October 19 order before an appellate court. It also noted that the outcome of the proceedings before the magistrate concerning the duo's custody remained to be seen.Chimni argued that the two should not have to spend another two days in custody, questioning the legality of the October 19 order. He contended that the magistrate lacked jurisdiction to extend their custody.

Two people injured in explosion at under-construction building in Bengaluru



Two people were injured in an explosion at an under-construction building on Jeremiah Road in Bengaluru's Pulakeshinagar on Tuesday afternoon.The police suspect a battery may have exploded, but the exact cause of the blast is yet to be established.

Material recovered from the blast site has been sent for forensic examination, and further investigation is underway.Residents told the media that the explosion, which occurred around 2.30 pm, was so loud they initially suspected a gas cylinder blast.The injured people, suspected to be construction workers, were taken to a hospital for treatment. Both are said to have sustained severe injuries.Speaking to the media on Wednesday, Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge said authorities were examining the material recovered from the site. "We are evaluating that. All materials have gone for a forensic audit. Once that is done, we will get back to you," he said.Vikram Amathe, Deputy Commissioner of Police (East), visited the site following the incident. A team from the Anti-Terrorism Cell also examined the site as part of the investigation.

Yamuna set for Sabarmati riverfront-style makeover in Delhi along 52-km stretch



Boasting of cycle tracks, walking paths, sports grounds and recreational spaces, the Delhi government is planning a Sabarmati-style riverfront along a 52-km stretch of the Yamuna in the Capital, officials have said.The government is moving a proposal for a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Sabarmati Riverfront Development Corporation to replicate Ahmedabad's riverfront model in Delhi. With the Wazirabad barrage dividing the stretch, this project, according to officials, will be implemented in two phases.

The first phase will cover the stretch from Palla to Wazirabad, while the second will extend from Wazirabad to Kalindi Kunj near the Okhla barrage. Consultants are being engaged to guide the project, officials underlined.The first phase will be taken up on priority and is expected to serve as a model for the larger riverfront project. "If the plans proceed as envisaged, the riverfront model would take shape during the current government's tenure," said Delhi Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh.The aim, he said, is to develop a clean, green and world-class public space where residents can come for morning walks, yoga and other recreational activities.The Minister, who recently visited the Sabarmati riverfront in Ahmedabad along with officials from the Delhi Jal Board and the Irrigation and Flood Control department, said Delhi would adopt the best practices of the Gujarat project while adapting them to the Capital's requirements.The proposed riverfront is part of the government's broader efforts to rejuvenate the Yamuna, with the development of public spaces to be accompanied by measures to improve the river's water quality.

The Minister said the Yamuna would become visibly cleaner in about two-and-a-half years.

Of Delhi's 37 sewage treatment plants (STPs), 28 have been upgraded over the past 18 months, he underlined.New treatment plants are also being developed to add 250 million gallons per day (MGD) of capacity with an aim to ensure that all sewage generated in the city is treated.The Yamuna flows for around 52 km through Delhi. The government is also focusing on the 22-km stretch between the Wazirabad and Okhla barrages, which has been a major focus of efforts to address pollution in the river.As part of an effort to encourage public participation in the river's rejuvenation, Singh also announced plans to build huts along the Yamuna's banks where people can celebrate their birthdays. "I appeal to every Delhiite to celebrate your birthday with Mother Yamuna. I will celebrate mine there on November 7.

As winter nears, Delhi air quality deteriorates, set to turn 'poor'

Delhi's air quality is expected to deteriorate to the Poor category from WednesdayOn Tuesday, the Capital's Air Quality Index (AQI) rose to 179 in the Moderate category, up from 139 on Monday. (Express Photo by Tashi Tobgyal)Delhi's air quality is expected to deteriorate to the Poor category from Wednesday, with the pollution levels likely to remain in that category for the next six days, according to The Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) forecast.the Capital's Air Quality Index (AQI) rose to 179 in the Moderate category, up from 139 on Monday.PM2.5 was the prominent pollutant in Delhi on Tuesday, compared with ozone (O3) and PM10 on Monday. The AQI in neighbouring Noida stood at 161, while Gurugram recorded 184, both in the Moderate category.Transport emissions continued to be the largest contributor among the sources tracked by IITM's Decision Support System (DSS). As of October 19, the transport sector accounted for 23.02% of Delhi's emissions, followed by residential sources at around 6%. Industries, construction, road dust, waste burning, and the energy sector together accounted for around 15%.The DSS has also forecast a rise in the contribution of stubble burning to Delhi's pollution, from around 4% to 12% by Wednesday, indicating an increase in the impact of farm fires on the capital's air quality.Satellite data analysed by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute has recorded between September 15 and October 19, a total of 1,171 events were recorded across the six states and Delhi, including 368 in Punjab, 9 in Haryana, 370 in Madhya Pradesh and 175 in Uttar Pradesh. Ninety eight paddy residue-burning events across six northern states were reported on Monday, including 27 in UP, 25 in Punjab, 24 in Rajasthan and 18 in Uttarakhand. No events were detected in Haryana or Delhi on Monday, which was the latest available IARI data.The deterioration in AQI comes amid fall in temperatures and changes in wind speed that affect the dispersion of pollutants.According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the minimum temperature in Safdarjung base station was 17.7 degrees Celsius and the maximum temperature was also below normal at 31.8 degrees Celsius on Tuesday.The IMD forecast no significant change in maximum temperatures over the next 48 hours, followed by a rise of 1–3 degrees Celsius. expected to increase to 21,600 square metres per second .

Mumbai 7/11 blasts: How the prosecution's pressure cooker theory blew up in court



7/11 Mumbai Blasts, 2006 Mumbai Blasts, Mumbai blasts case, bombay high court ruling, 2006 terror attack, mumbai bombings case, organized crime act, flawed prosecution case, acquitted terrorists, mumbai train explosion, legal analysis mumbai blasts, terrorism in indiaEhtesham Qutubuddin Siddiqui (centre), one of the 12 acquitted, at Mumbai airport.

The prosecution in the July 11, 2006 Mumbai serial train blasts case had relied on a key finding in the Maharashtra police's investigation – that the bombs that ripped through the train coaches were packed in pressure cookers that the accused allegedly placed on the luggage racks.While acquitting the 12 accused on July 21, the Bombay High Court, however, raised doubts over the reliability of accounts of certain witnesses who claimed to have seen some of the accused placing "black rexine bags" with the bomb-filled pressure cookers.Police claimed that during their investigation, one of the accused led them to a marshy location near the tracks on Mira Road from where they recovered "a brown plastic bag in mud, containing several items, including 7 rubber gaskets, 5 whistles, broken electric wires…" They also seized a five-litre 'Kanchan' brand pressure cooker from the house of another accused, Faisal Ataur Rahman Sheikh. Further, an eye witness, shopkeeper Mohanlal Kumawat, claimed that "some Kashmiri-looking persons purchased eight cookers" from him in May 2006. The police then went on to join these dots to allege that pressure cookers were used in the blasts.However, the court records that a forensic report indicated that the rubber gaskets and whistles recovered from the spot were "duplicates, as they did not match the original products from the Kanchan company in terms of markings and physical characteristics".

The bench of Justices Anil S Kilor and Shyam C Chandak said that to examine the Anti-Terrorism Squad's theory, the court needed to ascertain the possible size of the bags allegedly containing the pressure cookers – and whether it would be big enough to attract the witnesses' attention.The court noted that the "typical dimensions of a five-litre pressure cooker, irrespective of manufacturer, is approximately 41 centimetres in width and 20 cm in height (16.14 x 7.87 inches)." Comparing this to an A4-size sheet, the court said that the "bag required to put a 5-litre cooker loaded with a bomb will be of a normal size and not an abnormal one that would attract anybody's attention, including that of Prosecution Witness, one Subhash Kamlakar Nagarsekar, and give cue for triggering memory.

The court also said that while the statement of shopkeeper Kumawat is "relevant for the prosecution's story that the bombs were packed in cookers by the accused", he was not examined or called for Test Identification Parade (TIP). The court notes that five other witnesses who claimed to have seen the "suspected passengers planting bombs" on the trains were also not examined or called for TIP.Instead, on November 2, 2006, over a 100 days after the blast, the ATS called taxi drivers Santosh Kedar Singh and Rajesh Satpute, who said they transported two accused Asif Khan Bashir Khan and Mohd. Faisal Ataur Rahman Shaikh, respectively, to Churchgate station – a delay that the court took note of.The HC said that one of the taxi drivers "did not give any special reason" for remembering the face of the accused even after about 100 days since "there is hardly any chance for any taxi driver to have long interaction and to have sufficient and ample opportunity to notice and observe the passengers and their faces, unless there is some special reason."The court went on to point out how in Mumbai, passengers and taxi drivers have minimal interaction and that "there is no opportunity or practice of bargaining, as the fare is calculated strictly in accordance with the fare meter installed in the taxi".The court notes that taxi driver Santosh Kedar Singh had during his cross-examination admitted that it was difficult to "remember a passenger after a week and it becomes more difficult after a month."

Eliminate unnecessary animal studies, establish clear conditions for comparative clinical trials, say healthcare advocates



There is an urgent need to eliminate unnecessary animal studies, and establish clear conditions for requiring comparative clinical trials for affordable biosimilars without compromising safety and efficacy, members of civil society said in a letter to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) on the draft guidelines on biosimilars.

A biosimilar is a biological medicine like another already approved biological medicine. While it is not an exact copy, it is clinically similar in terms of safety, purity, and potency. Biosimilars are developed to be a more affordable alternative to the reference biologic, increasing access to treatment options and potentially lowering healthcare costs.

"These guidelines mark a significant step toward making affordable, lifesaving biosimilars available to Indians suffering from serious illnesses like cancer, diabetes, and auto-immune disorders like arthritis. Biosimilars offer hope to patients by providing lower-cost alternatives to expensive biologic medicines. In India, where many struggle to afford basic healthcare, these drugs can transform lives. The draft guidelines are progressive as they have simplified the approval process, but we believe additional changes can make biosimilars even more accessible, ethical, and affordable, while maintaining safety and quality,'' the group, which includes patient advocates, healthcare organisations, and concerned citizens, said in its letter."The proposed guidelines on seeking reduced animal testing are encouraging. However, without a complete waiver, we are looking at increased costs and delayed access to affordable biosimilars. So, by eliminating these tests, India can lower production costs, speed up the biosimilar development, and uphold ethical standards, as well as make biosimilars more affordable for patients," K.M. Gopakumar, co-convenor of the Working Group on Access to Medicines and Treatment, a civil society network for affordable healthcare, said.

There is also a global trend to make clinical efficacy studies an exception rather than a rule, Mr. Gopakumar added. "The draft guidelines' provision to skip clinical trials when a biosimilar is proven similar through lab tests is a positive step. But the language used grants significant discretion to the licensing authority and carries the risk of regulatory arbitrariness. Moreover, it could be exploited by originator companies to initiate legal action against biosimilar manufacturers, alleging potential compromises in safety and quality,'' he warned, adding that the group is demanding a clear definition for the situation where a biosimilar developer needs to carry out comparative clinical trials.Calling on the CDSCO to ensure the finalised guidelines on biosimilars remain free from any conflict of interest, the group said that the 2025 Draft Guidelines on Similar Biologics offer an opportunity to advance India's healthcare system."By removing animal studies, clarifying clinical trial waivers, and prioritising affordability, India can make biosimilars more accessible, reduce ethical concerns, and reinforce India's leadership in affordable medicine.

As Uttar Pradesh merges schools, longer walks, safety fears keep some away

Unlike Class 3 student Manoj Yadav,7, who is sitting at his assigned seat at the Patti Kalyanpur primary school in Uttar Pradesh's Rampur on a weekday afternoon, his sister Laxmi, 7, also a student of Class 3, hasn't been attending classes since July 1.On July 1, the sole primary school in their village Abbas Nagar, 1 km away, was 'paired' with the bigger Kalyanpur school. While Manoj walks with a group of students from their village to the Kalyanpur school daily, his parents feel the path is unsafe for Laxmi.

Uttar pradesh school merger Students from Abbas Nagar in Uttar Pradesh's Rampur walk through a thickly wooded area between their village and their newly merged primary school in Kalyanpur, located 1 km away.

In line with a recent directive by the Basic Education Department under the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, which emphasises greater collaboration, coordination and sharing of resources among institutions, since July 1, over 10,000 government primary schools across Uttar Pradesh have been 'paired' with nearby schools with better facilities.While similar exercises aimed at rationalising resources have been carried out in other states too, UP government officials insist the schools in the state are not being merged but 'paired'. "Unlike mergers, where schools cease to exist, paired schools can be shifted back to their original buildings in case of overcrowding at the new ones," said a district-level education officer.Uttar pradesh school merger The locked primary school at Abbas Nagar village.

However, the Opposition — from Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav to Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati — has opposed the move, saying it will "deprive" future generations, particularly those from the backward, Dalit and minority communities, of their right to accessible and affordable education.The policy has also prompted protests from teachers' associations and parents, with petitions being filed against it in the Allahabad High Court.

Upholding the state's decision, the court had on July 7 said the move did not violate Article 21A (right to free and compulsory education for children aged six to 14). The court also said the move aimed to provide children with quality education and equal opportunities since resources in small schools were scattered, depriving children access to adequate teaching staff, libraries, sports and digital learning facilities.Kanchan Verma, Director-General, UP school education, says, "Of 1.32 lakh government schools in UP (with nearly 1.48 crore students), 10,784 primary schools are being paired."

Officials said these pairings were done keeping in mind multiple factors, including low enrolment and poor infrastructureYet, since the recent pairings in UP, teachers say some of their students, especially the girls, haven't been attending classes.While the Abbas Nagar school had 41 students, the Kalyanpur school had 115 students and five teachers, including two Shiksha Mitras, before the pairing. Only 14 of Abbas Nagar students were present at Kalyanpur during a recent visit

"Twenty-seven of my students — 16 girls and 11 boys — have not been attending school since the pairing. A few have joined private schools, but most are sitting at home," says Shiv Kumar, the former head teacher at Abbas Nagar school who now reports to the Kalyanpur school.Staff from old schools have been reporting to the new ones since July 1.Sitting near a bundle of freshly cut fodder, Manoj and Laxmi's aunt Meera, 48, says, "Manoj went to school, but Laxmi does not want to go.""Beech mein jungle hai (there is forest on the way)," Laxmi explains sheepishly.

Though the family is yet to take a call on Laxmi's education, Meera says her parents are farm labourers and can't afford to send her to a private school.Uttar pradesh school merger (From left) Radha Yadav, her daughter Meenaksi Yadav, a Class 4 student, her sister-in-law at their Abbas Nagar house. Meenakshi has stopped attending school since the pairing. Like Laxmi,



Meenaksi Yadav, a Class 4 student from Abbas Nagar village, has not been going to school since July 1. On a school day, she sits next to her mother Radha, 40, a farm labourer, who says, "Door pad gaya (the Kalyanpur school is far). She would walk alone to the local school. What if someone does something to her in the woods on the way to Kalyanpur?"A senior education department officer in Lucknow said efforts are on to encourage the students to attend the new schools and that all grievances of parents would be addressed.He adds, "No one is forcing parents to send their children to the new schools. They can send them to their old school."However, when The Indian Express visited the Abbas Nagar school at noon on a weekday, its main gate was locked.The government's move has triggered similar fears in Lucknow, where nearly 154 primary schools have been paired.

Uttar pradesh school merger The Baka primary school in Lucknow's Malihabad tehsil. Two primary schools from the nearby Paharpur and Bargadhi, have been paired with this school.

At Paharpur in Malihabad tehsil of rural Lucknow, the primary school has been paired with the school in Baka, nearly 3 km away.With the Right to Education Act mandating that the primary school must be in a 1-km radius of the child's residence, Ram Pravesh, Basic Shiksha Adhikari, Lucknow, says, "We have asked Block Education Officers to carry out a ground-level feasibility check, including schools located far from a neighbourhood."Till last year, the Paharpur school had just 28 students. After its three teachers — two assistant teachers and one Shiksha Mitra — started encouraging families to send their children to school, the number rose to 54 this year. Though the Paharpur school was merged with one at Baka due to its 'poor infrastructure', none of its 54 students have been attending school.

In Paharpur village, the families cited several reasons for keeping the children away from the Baka school — from increased distance to aggressive stray dogs near a gaushala en route.Before the pairing, Mula Devi's grandchildren, Class 2 student Kunal, 7, and Class 3 student Payal, 8, walked barely 500 metres from home to school. "We took them to the new school one day, but a stray dog attacked us on the way. We decided the children can't walk to school. If the government doesn't reverse its decision, we will either send them to a private school or they will stay at home," says Devi, 62.Paharpur teachers say they are trying to encourage the students to attend the new school. "We started ferrying some students to school on our motorcycles, but the arrangement wasn't sustainable," says Vijay Kumar Bajpai, the former teacher incharge of the Paharpur school.

Even the primary school in Bargadhi, which had 14 students, has been paired with the one at Baka, located around 1 km away. Rahisa Khatoon, an assistant teacher at Bargadhi, says all 14 have been attending classes in Baka.In Malihabad tehsil's Datali village, the primary school had just 39 students. Since it was paired with the school in Bhulsi, located around 2 km away, only 12 have been attending classes

Are you losing strength year on year? Time to check your muscle health

Most of us start noticing minor alterations in our physical functioning with age. Activities such as lifting boxes, getting up from a chair, or climbing stairs, become a little bit harder. Some dismiss such alterations as part of normal ageing, but they are actually signs of sarcopenia. With advancing age, we progressively lose muscle strength, mass, and overall muscle function. In addition, the majority of individuals do not have an idea of how prevalent and severe sarcopenia is.

Understanding sarcopeniaThe etymology of the term "sarcopenia" stems from Greek words "sarx," meaning flesh, and "penia," meaning loss. It refers to progressive loss or reduction in skeletal muscle precipitated by ageing. We can lose 3–5% of muscle mass every decade from age 30, and after 60, the rate accelerates. The loss can affect anyone, especially those with less active lifestyles; it is not just athletes or seniors that this happens to.

Muscles are crucial for posture, movement, and overall functioning. Thus, loss of independence and quality of life can occur when your muscles start to get weaker. Sarcopenia, as with most other diseases, is often ignored in the initial phase. You might notice more fatigue, slowness in walking, or trouble lifting objects that were once easy to lift. There could be symptoms like atrophy of limb muscles, a slower gait, and even an increased risk of falling. Though some may attribute these signs as harmless, they signal an impairment that can get very debilitating when left unchecked. Sarcopenia also enhances the likelihood of hospitalisation, falling, fractures, and mortality. Despite sarcopenia's serious complications, it often goes undiagnosed and untreated.Simple tests can identify sarcopenia. Physiotherapists, trained professionals, can use clinical tools like grip strength, walk speed, and sit-to-stand tests to detect early signs of muscle weakness. Overall health and muscle health are importantly indicated by grip strength.

Once diagnosed, there is no call for a miraculous cure. Instead, movement—purposeful, structured, and focused movement with a physiotherapist's guidance—is the best therapy. Prevention, treatment, and even the reversal of sarcopenia are up to physiotherapy. A physiotherapist does not merely write prescriptions; they design programmes tailored to each patient's age, ability, and underlying medical conditions.Stability exercises might be appropriate for a person having difficulties with balance, whereas low-impact resistance exercises might be suitable for a person with knee arthritis. Resistance training is the most appropriate exercise for sarcopenia. Resistance training is all about building muscle strength, while aerobic exercises are appropriate for the heart. Light weights, resistance bands, or one's own body weight can be utilised for this. To prevent injury, physiotherapists should guide patients to perform these exercises gradually, safely, and effectively, thereby building strength.

Resistance training and balance exercises are important for elderly citizens. To offer complete enhancement of physical function, physiotherapists also incorporate endurance and flexibility training. Fear— fear of falling, fear of hurt, or fear that their status will deteriorate—is one of the principal barriers to overcome for individuals with sarcopenia. Physiotherapists address this on a psychological as much as on a physical level. Physiotherapy restores strength and helps gain confidence by imparting effective techniques, correcting postures, and providing a secure exercise setting.Take the case of Mr. X, for instance. Last year, the 68-year-old retired educator noticed that he was moving slowly, was more tired than normal, and could not easily get out of his chair. Initially, he attributed it to a natural part of ageing, but when he fell twice in the space of a month, nothing was the same again. He was investigated and diagnosed with sarcopenia after a trip to a physiotherapy clinic. He managed to regain his strength through the use of a tailored resistance training regimen at home, some dietary advice from a dietician, and regular balance exercises. Six months later, he is again taking morning walks and, more importantly, he feels good about his body.Nourishment is as vital as physical therapy. Older people often don't get enough protein for muscle repair and growth. To ensure patients receive the amount of protein they need (usually 1–1.2 grams per kilogram body weight) as well as essential nutrients such as vitamin D and calcium, physiotherapists tend to collaborate with dietitians.Early diagnosis and treatment, vitalEarly treatment is crucial. The longer muscle loss goes untreated, the harder it becomes to reverse. Physiotherapists advise that all people over 50 should undergo routine screening, especially if they've not been active, recently been unwell, or have seen a reduction in their capabilities. In its initial stages, early physiotherapy can both halt sarcopenia and reverse it.



Telangana grapples with high-levels of blood pressure

Hyderabad: Men and women in Telangana are grappling with high prevalence of elevated blood pressure, a major metabolic risk factor that increases their vulnerability to Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, chronic kidney diseases progressing to kidney failures, various forms of heart ailments and peripheral artery diseases.The sustained elevated levels of blood pressure, if left unmanaged, can lead to hardening and narrowing of the arteries, putting immense strain on the heart and other vital organs.The prevalence of elevated hypertension is particularly severe among men across all age groups in both urban and rural settings. In contrast, the prevalence of elevated blood pressure among women in the State is lower, although it remains significant when compared to the national average.Overall, across the country, the prevalence of elevated blood pressure among men (above 15 years)



is 24 percent while among women, it is 21 percent. In contrast, based on the recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-2021 data, 15 percent of women (15-49 years) in Telangana

When genes wield a sickle



Kumar was travelling for work in 2016 when he received a call from his daughter's school. An urgent voice on the other end informed him that the six-year-old had fell unconscious.Far away from his home in Araku Valley, he frantically called his wife and asked her to rush to the school. It took him a few hours to reach the school, with worry gnawing through his heart.He found that his daughter's legs had swelled and lumps had formed on several parts of her body. With no major medical facilities available in the tribal area, a frightened Kumar decided to take his daughter to King George Hospital (KGH) in Visakhapatnam, about 120 km away. It was at the hospital that he first came to know about the malady afflicting his child, a name that has not left his mind since: Sickle Cell Anaemia.

"We were unaware of the disorder then, but I have since enquired about it and learnt that there are some more cases in Ananthagiri, Pedabayalu and Paderu. In some cases, children have even died," says Mr. Kumar, stress and fatigue weighing him down. He later took his daughter to a retired paediatric doctor in Visakhapatnam, who, he says, had a vast experience treating such children. The child underwent treatment for over two weeks, and Kumar, his wife and the rest of the family were told to get tested. The results showed that Kumar and his wife were 'traits', which means they are in safe zone and asymptomatic."Jaundice is the most common health issue she suffers. If she gets stressed owing to studies, games or any other reason, she develops swelling on her body, joint ache and fever among other issues. Sometimes, there is a drop in platelets, and we need to monitor blood levels regularly," Kumar explains.

"Jaundice is the most common health issue she suffers. If she gets stressed owing to studies, games or any other reason, she develops swelling on her body, joint ache and fever among other issues. Sometimes, there is a drop in platelets."KumarParent of a child with the conditionEven a change in temperature triggers health complications in a person with Sickle Cell Anaemia, he says. During November-February, when temperature drops to single digits in the Agency areas, his now 15-year-old daughter battles with breathing difficulties in the mornings."Every month, we go to Visakhapatnam from Araku Valley for health check-up. We had even tried taking her for advanced treatment in Hyderabad. Once one develops this disorder, the patient needs lifelong treatment," says Kumar, who is a pastor.According to sources, a number of children in the Agency areas of Alluri Sitharama Raju district suffer from Sickle Cell Anaemia, a genetic blood disorder in individuals who inherit mutated haemoglobin genes from their parents. It causes the red blood cells to take the form of a crescent or a sickle. These misshapen cells have a shorter survival rate and can clog small blood vessels, leading to anaemia, severe pain and other major health complications.

Kumar says he and his wife are constantly worried about their daughter. "We are tense till she returns home from school. We had even submitted a representation to the school, requesting the management to call us even if it's a small health issue," he says.K. Praveen, another resident of Araku Valley mandal, recalls how he and his sister were diagnosed with Sickle Cell Anaemia in 2010 when they were around 15 years old. He becomes emotional when he talks about how she suffered for 15 years before passing away in September last. "It cost us about ?25,000 a month for her treatment and diet. She often suffered joint pains, high fever and jaundice; PMS added to her health problems every month," he recalls.The disorder has become a challenge faced by several tribal communities in the district, and each year, a significant number of new cases are diagnosed.District Medical and Health Officer Jamal Basha says consanguineous marriages are the primary reason why the condition is prevalent among tribespeople. Individuals in the communities continue to marry their blood relatives as part of their tradition. This leads to persistence of the disorder in the next generation. Nutritional deficiencies, especially a lack of essential vitamins, minerals and iron in their diets, exacerbate the condition, making it harder for the affected children to fight the symptoms, he adds.Jamal Basha says tests are being taken up throughout the year to find the prevalence of Sickle Cell Anaemia among schoolchildren and pregnant women. A massive drive was organised a year ago to find adolescents with the condition. "Over the past two years, we screened about 4.01 lakh cases, of which 12,595 cases came out as 'traits'. As of now, there are about 1,372 positive cases [individuals with Sickle Cell Anaemia]," the DMHO says.

For mild and moderate cases of anaemia, the department provide the patients with iron-and-folic acid tablets, and their condition is monitored time to time through tests. Severe cases should be treated more carefully. They are given iron sucrose and monitored regularly. Some times, the patients require blood transfusion, he says."Earlier, severe cases used to be handled by the KGH in Visakhapatnam. Now, however, the government has made diagnosis available at Government Paderu Hospital. We have physicians and testing equipment such as HPLC at the hospital. However, we shift critical patients who require blood transfusion to the KGH," he adds.About two years ago, the State government introduced a scheme to provide a financial assistance of ?10,000 to the families of patients, which, according to many parents, is insufficient.

Anil, a poultry farmer from Pedabayalu, says it costs him around ?20,000 a month to take care of his 12-year-old daughter, who suffers from the condition. The money goes into buying nutritious food, medication and travel.Anil, who gets his daughter treated at a private hospital in Visakhapatnam, says he spends two days every month for her treatment. "We include a lot of vegetables, mutton and dry fruits in her diet. Daily medicine should never be missed," Anil explains, adding that his income from the farm is insufficient to meet the expenses and that he often borrows money.Many parents also turn to various doctors in Telangana and Maharashtra, seeking advanced care, the costs of which are making them poorer by the day.

Satish Kumar, a resident of Hukumpeta who has a son suffering from the disease, throws light on the devastating effect the disorder has on childhood. "Children are under a lot pressure from a young age... My son wants to play and have fun with his friends but is unable to do any of that. He is not fully aware of his condition but knows he has some health issue," he says."Sickle Cell Anaemia has been ravaging tribal communities for decades. Though the government has conducted tests and provided medication, no proper research has been taken up. There has to be a permanent solution, now that ASR district has a medical college," says Killo Surendra, a member of A.P. Girijana Sangham and a resident of Araku Valley."Though the government has conducted tests and provided medication, no proper research has been taken up. There has to be a permanent solution, now that ASR district has a medical college"Killo SurendraA member of A.P. Girijana SanghamSurendra also opines that more awareness should be spread among the tribespeople about the disease. It is vital that the communities that bear the brunt of the disorder receive more support so that they can fight it and ensure a better future for their children.Jamal Basha says the department has been spreading awareness about the disorder through posters and pictures on RTC buses, at weekly shandies and through ANMs and ASHA workers. This apart, awareness programmes are held at students hostels as well.A Senior Health Assistant from Alluri Sitharama Raju district, who did not want to be quoted, claims that many tribal families in the interior areas of the district are unaware of the condition and lack access to proper healthcare. Owing to a delayed diagnosis and treatment, the consequences are often devastating.

Do immigrants have the same right to protest as citizens?



Ranjani Srinivasan, an Indian doctoral student at Columbia University, left the U.S. on March 11, 2025, following the revocation of her student visa by the U.S. State Department. Her departure followed a raid on her campus residence by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, who have accused her of being a "pro-Hamas sympathiser". Earlier, on March 8, immigration authorities arrested Mahmoud Khalil, a Palestinian student activist and green card holder, for allegedly violating his terms of residency by supporting a U.S.-designated terrorist organisation. Should immigrants have the same right to protest as citizens? Prabhash Ranjan and Happymon Jacob discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Aaratrika Bhaumik. Edited excerpts:

Do immigrants have the same right to protest as citizens under international human rights law?

Prabhash Ranjan: Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) enshrines freedom of expression as a fundamental human right, extending to both citizens and immigrants. Article 19(2) specifically guarantees the right to seek, receive, and disseminate information across borders through various media. However, Article 19(3) qualifies this right by imposing special duties and permitting states to impose restrictions when necessary to safeguard national security or public order. Additionally, other provisions of the ICCPR explicitly prohibit war propaganda and the advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that incites violence.While international law affords immigrants the same right to protest as citizens, the extent of this right depends on the host country's domestic legal framework. Some states enforce stricter regulations, whereas liberal democracies may adopt a more permissive stance.

To what extent do foreign policy and national security considerations constrain immigrants' right to peaceful protest?

Happymon Jacob: The application of international human rights law is deeply influenced by domestic politics. The critical question is what happens when international legal norms and expectations collide with national political realities. For instance, in the U.S., a long-standing tradition of free speech has created a global expectation that Americans will consistently uphold this right. However, instances where American actions diverge from these expectations expose a disconnect between historical tradition and contemporary reality. This phenomenon is not unique to the U.S.— across Africa, Asia, and parts of Europe, non-citizens often do not enjoy the same degree of free speech as citizens. Moreover, the ability to exercise free speech or participate in peaceful protests frequently depends on an individual's legal status — whether they are a natural-born citizen, a permanent resident, or an undocumented immigrant. The social contract that binds a government to its citizens does not necessarily extend to non-citizens in the same way, further entangling the legal and political framework governing these rights.

Does the crackdown on protesting foreign students in the U.S. violate First Amendment rights?

Prabhash Ranjan: The Immigration and Nationality Act, 1952 authorises the denial of entry and deportation of non-citizens who endorse or support terrorist activities or organisations. President Trump's executive order, issued in January directing federal agencies to combat antisemitism on campuses, is rooted in this law. Thus, its issuance does not exceed constitutional authority. However, the critical question is whether the order itself is constitutional.U.S. law extends First Amendment protections to non-citizens, regardless of their immigration status, particularly in matters concerning criminal penalties and law enforcement investigations. However, it remains uncertain whether non-citizens enjoy the same level of First Amendment protection as citizens when facing deportation proceedings. This is where Happymon's argument becomes relevant — each case must be evaluated based on the individual's legal status. For instance, a green card holder would have stronger legal protections than someone on a student visa. Historically, during the Cold War, legal aliens in the U.S. were deported for their affiliation with the Communist Party. While the U.S. legal system has since become more robust, past precedents highlight the enduring legal complexities surrounding such deportations.Happymon Jacob: I don't believe measures such as these will significantly influence the decisions of international students, including those from India, to study in the U.S. Only a small fraction of Indian students are likely to engage in such protests, making it an unlikely deterrent. However, a more pressing concern is whether reductions in university funding could ultimately discourage international talent from enrolling in American institutions. If that happens, it could pose a serious challenge for a nation that relies on immigration-driven innovation and expertise.U.S. immigration judges operate within the Department of Justice, where the Attorney General has the authority to remove them. Could executive influence compromise the fairness of deportation proceedings?

Prabhash Ranjan: Yes, executive control over immigration judges is deeply problematic. Law and politics are not as divorced as we might wish to believe. While judges are ideally expected to operate in depoliticised courtrooms, the reality is that legal interpretations often unfold within a broader political context. That said, my confidence lies less in individual immigration judges and more in the U.S. judicial system as a whole. At the appellate level, independent review and judicial scrutiny of executive actions can help ensure fairer outcomes. However, for immigrants caught in this system, the process itself can feel like a punishment — perhaps by design.The Trump administration has reportedly invoked Section 212(a)(3)(C) of the 1952 Act to justify the arrest of Mr. Khalil.

Why blood sugar goes up despite reducing rice, wheat



My patients have a perennial question. "I have reduced rice and wheat a lot. I thought my blood sugar would come down, but it is still high. What am I doing wrong?" Reducing rice and wheat can help, but blood sugar is not affected by only these two foods. What you eat instead also matters. Sometimes, people reduce the main carbohydrate but unknowingly replace it with other foods that can raise blood sugar.

I always ask my patients what their typical meal looks like. After reducing rice, what do they usually eat? Most have the same answer. They have little rice, more vegetables and sometimes potato or sweet potato. Some have fruits in between. Others drink tea or coffee with biscuits. Sometimes people switch to ragi dosa or millet dishes because they think they are better for diabetes. Remember that millets and ragi are nutritious, but they are still carbohydrate-containing foods. Simply replacing a large portion of rice with a large portion of millet does not automatically make the meal low in carbohydrates. Also, most millets available in the market are polished. This process removes much of the fibre, which can make the millet digest faster and may result in a higher glycaemic index, which measures how quickly a food raises blood sugar. The portion, preparation and what you eat with millets matter.Sweet potatoes can be part of a healthy diet, but they are also carbohydrate-rich. If you already have rice, dosa or roti on the plate and then add a large serving of potato, the total carbohydrate load can become high.

Some of my patients claim they have whole fruits but "healthy" does not mean "unlimited." Eating several servings at once, choosing very sweet fruits frequently, or drinking freshly squeezed fruit juice can raise blood glucose. Fruit juice is especially easy to over-consume because it provides sugar without the same fibre and fullness as whole fruit.Biscuits are another common trap. They contain refined flour, added sugar and fat. Even "digestive," "multigrain" or "sugar-free" biscuits are not automatically diabetes-friendly. A typical serving of digestive biscuits delivers a fast-acting load of carbohydrates (around 17 g or more per couple of biscuits) that your body breaks down quickly.Do not be misled by vitamin-rich packaged drinks. Vitamins do not cancel out the sugar. Look beyond the health claims on the front of the package. Check the nutrition label for total carbohydrate and added sugar.So, what should your plate actually look like? Think beyond simply cutting rice. Fill a good part of your plate with non-starchy vegetables, include a sensible portion of protein such as dal, pulses, eggs, fish, chicken or curd, and keep your carbohydrate portion controlled. Limit sugary drinks, sweets, biscuits, bakery foods and frequent fried snacks.So, reducing rice alone is not enough? Blood sugar responds to your overall eating pattern, portions,

Can cancer-fighting CAR T-cell therapy work on stomach and brain tumours? Takeaways from early trials

CAR T-cell therapy essentially uses a cancer patient's own immune T-cells and engineers them in a laboratory to add receptors that can bind specifically with the cancer cells only.CAR T-cell therapy essentially uses a cancer patient's own immune T-cells and engineers them in a laboratory to add receptors that can bind specifically with the cancer cells only. Despite a failed bone marrow transplant, Delhi's Dr (Col) VK Gupta beat his blood cancer after receiving CAR T-cell therapy at Tata Memorial Hospital. Not only did he recover, he was able to go back to work in his outpatient clinic. He is among those with blood cancer who has benefitted from this cutting edge cancer treatment that re-engineers the body's own immune cells, enabling them to fight the cancerous ones. Can this therapy now work for solid and hard-to-treat tumours as well?Earlier this month, there was good news on this front with two studies indicating increase in life span. Positive results from the first ever phase II trial of CAR T-cell therapy for solid cancers — those in the form of gastrointestinal tumours — were published from China. Another early study on the impact of a double target CAR T-cell therapy on a very difficult-to-treat brain cancer was also published in the US. "With so many people working on the problem, it is possible that we could soon see CAR T-cell therapy for solid cancers. While the results are unlikely to be as dramatic as we have seen with blood cancers, any hope is good when survival otherwise is just a couple of months," says Dr Hasmukh Jain, a specialist of blood cancers from Tata Memorial Hospital. He collaborated with the IIT Bombay team that developed the country's first CAR T-cell therapy.

What is CAR T-cell therapy and how does it work?

CAR T-cell therapy essentially uses a cancer patient's own immune T-cells and engineers them in a laboratory to add receptors that can bind specifically with the cancer cells only. These engineered cells are then multiplied and infused in the patient. Usually, the cancerous cells have the ability to hide from the unmodified T-cells. However, with the new receptors on the T-cells, they cannot. The body's immune system then kills the cancer cells.

Why are solid cancers more difficult to treat using this method?

This, experts say, is because it is much more difficult to target solid cancers than blood cancers. "One of the biggest problems with CAR T-cell therapy for solid cancers is that there aren't enough good targets. Several of the solid cancer markers are also found on normal, healthy cells, so they cannot be used. There have been cases of pulmonary toxicity with therapies whose target was expressed in small quantities in the lungs. Or, take for example, the BRCA gene mutations in breast cancers; these are expressed by other healthy cells as well," says Dr Mayank Singh, associate professor of medical oncology at AIIMS-New Delhi.Another challenge is that the same type of cancer may be molecularly very different in different patients — or even within the same patient — making it extremely difficult to find a suitable target for CAR T.Besides, solid tumours are a more complex disease,



says Dr Jain. "Unlike blood cancers, other cancers are not in the blood where the T-cells are. So, they have to find the tumour and enter it. This is difficult as the T- cells are not able to effectively penetrate the tumour microenvironment or the immediate area round the tumour," he explains. This is hostile towards immune cells and can deactivate them, including the modified T-cells given to patients.

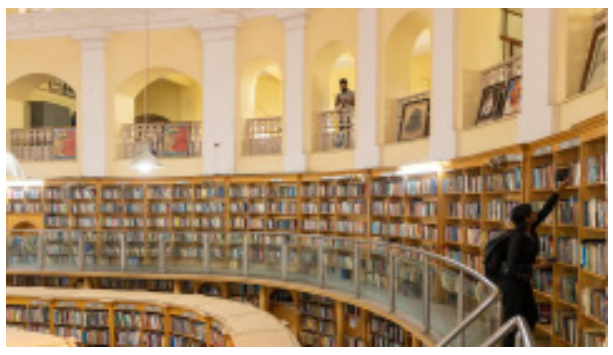
What did the two recent studies show?

The phase II study from China showed that the outcome was better with the new CAR T therapy as compared to the therapy generally prescribed by the physician. Patients with gastrointestinal cancers carrying a specific mutation called CLDN18.2 — having received two unsuccessful treatments previously — were given either the new therapy or existing treatments. The study found that 35 per cent of the patients given the new treatment responded as compared to 4 per cent of those on existing treatments.Those on the new therapy also lived 2.4 months longer on average as compared to the control group.Another new CAR T-cell therapy, which used two targets instead for a very difficult to treat brain tumour called glioblastoma, showed promise in a trial conducted at University of Pennsylvania. The tumours became smaller in nearly two-thirds of the patients with recurrent glioblastoma who received the novel therapy. And, several of the patients have already lived 12 months or longer, which is significant considering that people with this type of cancer typically survive only for six to ten months.Importantly, the researchers also found evidence to suggest that the modified T-cells remained in the patients' immune system and continued to prevent tumour growth over time.

What is the status of CAR T research on solid tumours across the world?

Experts say that studies on brain and spinal cancers called gliomas and those targeting CLDN18.2 are probably at the most advanced stages of development and may be approved within a few years. "Now, researchers are using AI to identify suitable targets for CAR T therapies. This is the reason for the recent increase in trials," says Dr Singh.Are Indian companies working on solid tumours?

Access to libraries as critical element of social justice



The midmorning sun beats down on the 40-odd people alighting from a bus and fanning across the quiet interiors of the Mythic Society library housed in the Daly Memorial Hall on Nrupathunga Road, a gorgeous heritage building constructed in 1917.We walk past glass-shuttered shelves holding books about India's prehistory, a translation of A.R. Krishna Shastri's Vachana Bharatha and the library's enviable collection of rare manuscripts and books. We flip open one, The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant by the French traveller, botanist and linguist Jean de Thévenot, to find ourselves stumbling across an unfamiliar, now-forgotten letter — the archaic long 's' written as 'l' — catapulting us to a time before it was discarded by most printers in the latter half of the 18th century.The Mythic Society library is one of the five we visit as part of the recently-held Bengaluru Public Libraries, an initiative by the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan. The other four covered include the Goethe-Institut Library, the State Central Library in Cubbon Park, the Alliance Francaise de Bangalore Library and finally, the IIHS Library.

Preedip Balaji, the founding librarian at IIHS, Sadashivanagar, who curated the walk, expands on why these specific libraries were chosen. According to him, institutions, even public-funded ones, often make it hard for people to just walk into their libraries to use them. The publicness of a library, therefore, became a central aspect of this walk.While at first glance, all these libraries are different from each other, aesthetically and thematically, one thing ties them all together: they are accessible to everyone who wants to use them. "Of course, there are membership plans and other things if you want to check out. But there is no cost for walk-ins, and many services are free. That was one major factor that we looked at," he says. "I see the library door as a critical element of social justice."The idea for a walk of this sort emerged in 2019 as part of IIHS's City Scripts, the institute's annual urban writing festival. "We could conceptualise it and make public libraries be just a part of the festival," says Balaji, pointing out that they could add to the narrative around promoting literature and writing in this case. While many literature festivals occur nationwide, public libraries don't get spoken about often enough at these festivals. "That was the idea, and we thought we could do it," he says. "The idea is to voice the concerns of building public institutions like libraries, which would be more heard, seen and participated in as they manifest time and space in our cultural memory and crucially safeguard our democracy through principles of freedom, access, and inclusion."The initial two iterations of the walk, in 2019 and 2020, took place on a smaller scale, with only three libraries covered: the Mythic Society Library, the State Central Library in Cubbon Park, and the IIHS Library. Then, the pandemic happened, and everything came to a standstill for two years, including these walks. "We've been meaning to pick this up for a while and have been looking for sponsors who could help us to scale it up from the original conceptualisation we had," says Balaji. "In the Goethe-Institut, we found a good partner who understood and provided the means."Sheshagiri Kulkarni, who heads the library at the Goethe-Institut, believes that this recent partnership also helped create the "wow" factor. "The walk was on a smaller scale before," he says. "But in our case, we brought buses, added more libraries and included lunch, breakfast and all that," he says.Public institutions like libraries and archives, which hold the nation's memory, help build narratives which collectively speak for the truth, making them "a crucial asset for the nation," believes Balaji. Unfortunately, he thinks libraries aren't discussed enough in the national media. "Many stories are happening with libraries at the centre, state, and local levels, but it doesn't go mainstream," he says. He feels that the GLAM sector, which includes libraries, archives, museums, and galleries, needs more government spending and must be more integrated. For instance, the One Nation, One Subscription, under implementation, should include providing access to science information to the tax-paying public to build an inclusive library ecosystem with strong public library laws. "Libraries are not…cannot be a siloed institution," he argues.

As someone who himself didn't have access to books but textbooks while growing up, Balaji is also fully aware of the need to create a library culture in the country and cultivate a reading habit in children. "Much of our public doesn't have access to different kinds of books," he says, adding that reading plays a vital role in kindling the imagination. Merely looking at books as something used to prepare for competitive exams is restrictive, in his opinion. "Reading as a pleasurable activity should be part of our growing up."Even though India has a fairly robust library system, especially in the South Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka, their full potential has not been explored, adds Kulkarni. "In Western countries, they organise events in libraries. That is missing here," he says, pointing out that people mostly flock to libraries to study for competitive entrance exams. "Our libraries are full, but they are not always used meaningfully, I would say."Having said that, there have been some positive attempts to strengthen Karnataka's rural public library system, thanks to the efforts of Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta, Additional Chief Secretary, Govt of Karnataka, he adds. "They have taken so much interest, and there has been a drastic change in a very positive way."

Every year, between November 14 and 20, the Indian Library Association (ILA) celebrates National Library Week in honour of the public library activist Padmashri Iyyanki (Ayyanki) Venkata Ramanayya. "We were waiting for the right opportunity," says Kulkarni, adding that library week was a perfect occasion to kickstart the walk.At first, they were not sure if they would get enough participants, says Kulkarni, who credits Dr. Michael Heinst, the Director of the Goethe-Institut, Bengaluru, with buoying the initiative. "He comes from Germany, which has a good book-reading culture, and he told us to go ahead with it."Though expectations were kept relatively low, they soon found themselves overwhelmed by the public response to the walk: there were over 200 registrations, which led to them to do the same walk on two separate Saturdays, the originally-planned November 16 and again, on November 30.He recalls how many people were surprised by the public library system in Bengaluru, with many wanting to register at these libraries right away. This, of course, is a desired outcome of a walk that was intended to be "not touristy, but exposure to public libraries." Libraries are not a one-time affair. People need to come back to them, feels Kulkarni.

The pending mosque-temple disputes across India



The Supreme Court on December 12, 2024, issued a nationwide directive barring civil courts from registering fresh suits or passing orders in pending cases seeking the survey of mosques to ascertain whether temple structures lie beneath them. A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna issued the freeze order while hearing a batch of petitions questioning the validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 (1991 Act) — a statute which preserves the character of religious places as they existed on August 15, 1947.Despite the law, a surge of petitions seeking the redetermination of the character of places of worship have surfaced across the country, with a bulk of them in Uttar Pradesh.Here's a look at the suits concerning religious shrines pending in various civil courts.A view of the Gyanvapi Mosque next to the Kashi Vishwanath temple complex at Varanasi, Uttar PradeshThe dispute over the Gyanvapi Masjid spans several decades. Hindu groups claim that the mosque was built atop the remnants of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, which Mughal emperor Aurangzeb allegedly demolished in the 17th century. In 1991, a suit was filed on behalf of the deity Adi Vishweshwar demanding the removal of Muslims from the complex and the restoration of the temple. In 2021, five Hindu women approached a Varanasi district court seeking permission to worship religious idols purportedly located within the Gyanvapi mosque. In July 2023, the court ordered the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct an extensive survey of the mosque to ascertain its antecedents. Subsequently, it concluded that a large Hindu temple existed before the construction of the mosque. On January 31, 2024, the Varanasi district judge allowed Hindus to offer prayers at the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi Masjid. A petition moved by the Gyanvapi Masjid Committee seeking the implementation of the 1991 Act is currently pending before the Supreme Court.Multiple suits concerning the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Eidgah land dispute are pending before various courts in Mathura. A common demand in these cases is the removal of the mosque from the 13.37-acre complex it shares with the Katra Keshav Dev temple claiming that it was built at the site of the birthplace of Lord Krishna. In 2020, a group of Hindu petitioners sought to annul a 1968 compromise between the mosque committee and the Shri Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sangh, which had allowed the mosque to remain at its current location.On May 26, 2023, the Allahabad High Court transferred to itself 18 petitions related to the dispute pending across various courts in Mathura. Subsequently, on December 14, 2023, the High Court ordered a court-monitored survey of the Eidgah complex to assess the historical claims made by both sides. It also appointed an advocate-commissioner to oversee the survey of the mosque. However, the Supreme Court stayed the High Court's order, noting that the Hindu side's plea for the survey was very "vague".

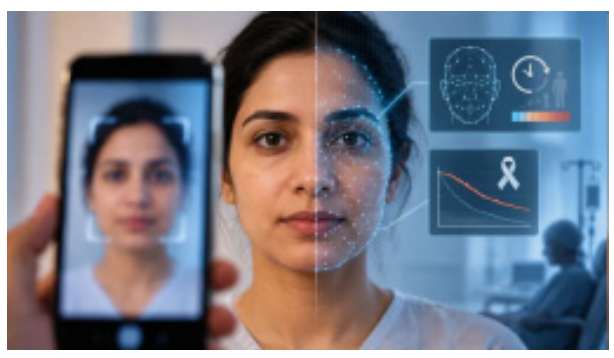
In 2013, eight devotees of Lord Sheshnageshwar Teeleshwar Mahadev Virajman filed a suit, claiming that the Teele Wali mosque was constructed during the reign of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb by demolishing a pre-existing Hindu temple or religious structure known as Laxman Teela. The petitioners have also sought a court-appointed Commissioner to conduct a survey of the mosque. The case of the maintainability of the suit is pending before the Allahabad High Court. Another suit seeking an injunction to allow devotees to offer prayers inside the mosque premises is pending before a Civil Judge in Lucknow. The district court has fixed March 15, 2025, as the next date of hearing.

Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, Uttar PradeshState police personnel deployed outside the Shahi Jama Masjid following religious violence in Sambhal on November 25, 2024.On November 19, 2024, eight petitioners including advocate Hari Shankar Jain instituted a suit in a local court in Sambhal claiming that the Shahi Jama Masjid was built over a Hari Har Mandir that Mughal emperor Babur allegedly demolished in 1529. Within hours, the court ordered the appointment of an advocate commissioner to survey the mosque, which was promptly executed that evening. However, a second round of the survey on November 24 incited violence, resulting in four fatalities.On November 29, 2024, the Supreme Court intervened and directed the trial court to defer proceedings until the Allahabad High Court hears an appeal by the mosque management committee challenging the survey. Meanwhile, two public interest litigations (PILs) remain pending before the High Court, seeking action against police and State officials for their handling of the unrest.In September 2024, a civil suit was instituted by Hindu Sena Chief Vishnu Gupta claiming there was evidence of a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva at the site of the Ajmer Sharif Dargah. He has also sought an ASI-led survey of the site to establish its historical and religious origins. The suit further demands the reconstruction of the Bhagwan Shri Sankatmochan Mahadev temple on the disputed property. On November 27, a Civil Judge in Ajmer West issued notices to the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs, the ASI, and the Ajmer Dargah Committee in connection with the suit.

In September 2022, the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha filed a suit claiming that the Jama Masjid in Badaun is a Neelkanth Mahadev temple that was destroyed and converted into a mosque. The suit claims that the mosque was constructed by Sufi saint Badshah Sahamshuddin Altamash, a 13th-century pre-Mughal Muslim ruler of north India, after demolishing the temple. A fast-track court in Budaun is currently hearing arguments on the maintainability of the suit along with an application seeking a survey of the site. The case will next be heard on December 17.Case title: Swaraj Vahini Association Bhadkhil Tehsil Madiahu Dist Jaunour Jariye Santosh Kumar v Peace Committee Jama Masjid (Atala Masjid) Bajriye Committee Sadar

In May 2024, the Swaraj Vahini Association, and Santosh Kumar Mishra (a local resident) filed a petition in a local court in Jaunpur seeking a declaration that the 14th-century mosque should be recognised as the "Atala Devi Mandir". The petition contends that "followers of the Sanatan religion" have the right to worship at the site. Additionally, the petitioners have requested that the court grant them possession of the property and issue a mandatory injunction to prevent non-Hindus from entering the premises.A survey has been ordered, and the court of civil judge (junior division) in Jaunpur is scheduled to hear a plea to provide security to the surveying authority on December 16. Meanwhile, the management committee of the mosque has moved a petition before the Allahabad High Court challenging the registration of the suit.A writ petition was filed in the Madhya Pradesh High Court seeking the reclamation of the Bhojshala complex for Hindus and requesting the prohibition of Muslim prayers (namaaz) on its premises. The petitioners also submitted an interlocutory application seeking a scientific survey of the site to ascertain its "true character." In March 2024, the High Court ordered the ASI to conduct a "scientific survey" of the complex. On April 1, 2024, the Supreme Court refused to halt the ASI survey stressing that the monument needed to be 'demystified and freed from the shackles of confusion'.In 2020, a suit was filed on behalf of the deity Lord Vishnu, seeking the restoration of Hindu and Jain deities inside the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, located within the Qutub Minar complex in Mehrauli. The petition claimed that 27 Hindu and Jain temples were destroyed to construct the mosque. In 2021, a Civil Judge in Delhi rejected the suit, ruling that it was barred by the provisions of the 1991 Act. A challenge to this order is currently pending before an Additional District Judge.In 2022, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad filed a suit claiming that a "temple-like" structure was discovered beneath the mosque during renovations. The suit requested a survey of the premises to further investigate the findings. On January 31, 2024, the Karnataka High Court directed the trial court to first determine the maintainability of the suits. .

Can an AI tool predict a cancer patient's chances of survival from a single photo?



Researchers at Mass General Brigham, a leading US biomedical research organisation and principal teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School, developed the model, called FAHR-Face (Foundation Artificial Intelligence for Health Recognition), using more than 40 million publicly available facial images. They then developed two complementary tools to estimate biological age and predict survival outcomes in patients with cancer.Biological age reflects how old a person appears, rather than their chronological age. The findings suggest that facial photographs could offer a non-invasive way to assess aspects of a patient's health and help inform treatment decisions. However, the technology requires further validation before it can be used routinely in clinical practice.

Facial images have emerged as a potential biomarker for health assessment, with studies suggesting that AI can extract health-related information from facial features. "As the population ages, physicians need better ways to estimate physical reserve and frailty before recommending intensive treatments such as radiation, surgery or systemic therapy," said Dr Raymond Mak, a radiation oncologist at the Mass General Brigham Cancer Institute and a faculty member of its Artificial Intelligence in Medicine (AIM) programme. Mak was the study's corresponding author.He said the aim was to make health assessments based on facial photographs more quantitative, consistent and scalable, enabling more personalised treatment decisions without replacing clinical judgement.

Two AI tools assess biological age and survival prospectsThe researchers developed two tools using the FAHR-Face foundation model: FAHR-FaceAge, which estimates biological age, and FAHR-FaceSurvival, which directly predicts survival prospects from a facial photograph. The study found that the difference between a patient's estimated biological age and chronological age was independently associated with survival. The researchers also reported that the models performed robustly across common variations in photographs.The findings build on earlier work by the same team, which published a model called FaceAge last year. The new FAHR-Face model was trained on a much larger collection of more than 40 million publicly available facial photographs, spanning a broader age range and a more diverse population.The researchers evaluated the tools in more than 38,000 cancer patients treated with radiotherapy in the United States. Patients whose estimated biological age was at least five years higher than their chronological age had a 21 per cent higher risk of death during an average follow-up of four years than other patients. Those whose estimated biological age was at least

Two AI tools assess biological age and survival prospectsThe researchers developed two tools using the FAHR-Face foundation model: FAHR-FaceAge

five years lower had a 17 per cent lower risk.

FAHR-FaceSurvival assigned nearly 4,000 patients a risk score ranging from zero to one. Among patients with scores between 0.9 and 1, indicating the highest predicted risk, 53 per cent (64 of 122) died within 90 days. By comparison, 2 per cent (20 of 975) of those with scores between zero and 0.1 died during the same period.The researchers found that combining the two models predicted survival more accurately than using either model alone. "The key technical advance is that FAHR-Face learns a general representation of the face from more than 40 million images, which can then be adapted to distinct health outcomes such as biological age and survival," said Hugo Aerts, co-senior author of the study and director of the AIM programme at Mass General Brigham.The two tools also analyse different facial regions. FAHR-FaceAge focuses on features including the nasolabial folds, forehead and temples, while FAHR-FaceSurvival evaluates areas below the eyes and around the nasal bridge."To our knowledge, this is the first demonstration that an AI model can directly predict cancer survival from a simple photograph," Aerts said.

Smoking linked to older-looking facesThe researchers also examined associations between lifestyle factors and estimated facial ageing. Heavy alcohol use, drug use and smoking were associated with an older estimated biological age.Smoking showed the strongest pattern: current smokers tended to look older than former smokers, who, in turn, tended to look older than people who had never smoked.The findings suggest that a facial photograph could provide a relatively simple and low-cost source of information to complement existing clinical assessments.

Fulfilled almost half of manifesto vows in a year: Bhajan Lal Sharma

Rajasthan CM Bhajan Lal Sharma highlights key achievements of the BJP government in its first year, including tax cuts and anti-corruption efforts.The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Rajasthan, led by chief minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, completed one year in office on Sunday. In an interview with Sachin Saini, CM Sharma reflected on his government's journey so far, listing out some key decisions such as reducing taxes and lowering prices of fuel, as well as efforts made by his government to "restore trust of people" in government machinery. Edited excerpts:

People of Rajasthan voted the BJP in government with great expectations and our government has been working to fulfil them. Relaxing taxes and lowering petrol/diesel prices was a major step to provide immediate relief to the people. However, the state machinery and economy were reeling due to corruption under the Congress regime. Our government took a firm stance against corruption and tried to restore trust of people in government machinery. We made government services more accessible for citizens and ensured that deserving (beneficiaries) are able to receive the benefit of state and central government schemes.In line with the vision of our honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we are making government more efficient and accessible for public. It's delighting that people of Rajasthan displayed their approval through votes in recent by-elections.There are still some vacancies in the cabinet. Is there a reshuffle on the cards soon?We our analysing our efforts and achievements over the last year. Accordingly, necessary decisions will be taken in consultation with senior party leaders.The Centre is likely to bring a bill on One Nation, One Election. Your commentThanks to the strong will of our PM Modi, the One Nation, One Election bill is soon going to be tabled in Parliament. This shall bring down financial expenditure, administrative burden, and other challenges caused due to frequent elections. Our government's functioning also impacted twice in the last one year due to the model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha elections and subsequent assembly bypolls.

How do you see the BJP's performance in the recently held assembly bypolls?

Hard work of our party workers and the charisma of our prime minister earned us the favourable results (the BJP won five of the seven seats that went to bypolls). However, losing Dausa seat marred our victory celebrations; we all feel disappointed. We were confident of victory on the seat as well and party leadership is analysing all probable reasons of the defeat.Your government held the Rising Rajasthan Investment Summit in its very first year, even though such marquee events are usually saved for the final year.Rajasthan is the largest state in terms of size and opportunities. Rising Rajasthan is the foundation of our vision for economic development of the state. Unlike the previous government, we will be here to ensure that the investment commitments get fulfilled.

MoUs worth ?35 lakh crore have been signed in the summit. How will these be implemented on the ground?

The MoUs display potential of Rajasthan. Now that we have a blueprint of the possibilities, we are better prepared to turn them into reality. As Dale Carnegie said, "an hour of planning can save you 10 hours of doing," Rising Rajasthan has given the state economy the much-needed upthrust. We will be following the MoUs and I am sure that the vigilant media of the state will keep reminding us if any major project fells behind the timeline.It is being said that the bureaucracy is dominant in the current government, with even some BJP leaders also making this accusation. Earlier, the BJP used to level this charge against the Congress, what has changed now?Our Constitution wisely defines duties of executive, legislative and judiciary. Unfortunately, the previous government was politically manipulating the executive that shattered morale of public servants and lowered people's confidence in government machinery.

EYE SECRETS

New climate data set for India unveiled by Azim Premji University



The average annual maximum temperature will experience an increase of 1.5 degree Celsius by 2057 under 'the middle of the road' emission scenario while the more extreme 'fossil-fueled development' emission scenario predicts this temperature rise will occur a decade earlier, by 2047.This is one of the many key findings of the Azim Premji University's new climate data set for India, which was unveiled on November 17.

According to the Climate Change Projections for India (2021-40) report, the projections examine two IPCC (Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change) scenarios: SSP2-4.5 (moderate emissions and adaptation) and SSP5-8.5 (high emissions with heavy fossil fuel reliance).In other words, the 'middle of the road' emission scenario assumes that society will take moderate steps to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change, which will lead to moderate effects in the future. The 'fossil-fueled development' emission scenario presumes that society will continue to rely heavily on fossil fuels for energy, leading to a future with very high emissions and severe impacts.

Another finding is that India's average summer maximum temperature will have a 1.5-degree Celsius increase by 2043, according to the 'middle of the road' emission scenario and by 2041 for the 'fossil-fueled development' emission scenario.Under the low emission scenario, 196 districts in India will experience a summer maximum temperature increase of at least one degree, with 70 districts projected to experience a similar annual maximum temperature change."The highest change is expected in Leh at 1.6 degree Celsius for both summer and annual maximum temperatures. The winter minimum temperature is projected to change by 1.5 degree Celsius or more for 139 districts, while 611 districts will see a 1 degree Celsius or more temperature change," the report statesSimilarly, under the high emission scenario, 249 districts will experience an annual maximum temperature change of one degree Celsius or more, and 16 districts, mostly in the Himalayan States, are projected to experience an annual maximum temp change by 1.5 degree Celsius or more with the highest being at Leh at 1.8 degree Celsius."517 districts will experience a summer maximum temperature change of one degree Celsius or more, and 17 districts will experience a summer maximum temperature change of 1.5 degree Celsius or more, with the highest being at Leh at 1.7 degree Celsius.The winter minimum temperature is projected to change by 1.5 degree Celsius or more in 162 districts with the highest being 2.2 degree Celsius in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh," the report added.With regard to change in precipitation patterns (2021-2040), the report said that the western part of India will experience a significant increase in precipitation, compared to most of the eastern and north-eastern parts of the country."Change in precipitation patterns (2021-40), the arid States such as Gujarat and Rajasthan exhibit a higher annual precipitation ranging from 20% to 40% under SSP2-4.5, and a 20% to 50 % change under SSP5-8.5. Under both the scenarios,

With 45 years to go, how sustainable is India's road to net-zero? | Explained



Every year, climate action draws significant attention in the months leading up to the United Nations' annual meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COPs). But the outcome of the 2024 U.S. presidential election will likely have a greater impact on the planet's climate future than COP29 itself, illustrating an important challenge in combating climate change: operationalising global cooperation towards a common cause even when national interests don't align with it.For example, an economically developed country with sufficient resources per capita may not find it necessary to change course — whereas a populous and developing country like India will. A few COPs ago, India committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. Since then, it has implemented several policies while others are in the works to support this transition. It is widely acknowledged that this journey will not be without challenges, especially financial ones. However, other resource constraints such as land or water availability also matter, limiting the choices available for a sustainable long-term pathway for India.

Why net-zero at all?With each passing day, climate change is becoming more evident. The scientific consensus is that to avoid devastating and irreversible consequences, the world must keep the global average annual surface temperature rise to within 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. The current increase is at least 1.1 °C over that in 1880.The Sixth Assessment Report of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimated that from 2020, the remaining (cumulative) global carbon budget for a 50-67% chance of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 °C is 400-500 billion tonnes (Gt) of CO2. Currently, annual global emissions are around 40 GtCO2.This means net global emissions must drop drastically to stay within the carbon budget. Several countries have announced net-zero targets, but we also really need a sharp decline in total emissions.

Is net-zero equitable?

The developed world, having caused the problem of climate change in the first place, is expected to lead this transition and reach net-zero emissions well before 2050, allowing more time for developing countries to balance their development goals with climate action. These expectations aren't being met, however.Developed countries are also expected to help finance climate action, but this hasn't materialised at the required scale either. Developing countries, especially those that are small islands, are bearing more than their fair share of the brunt of climate change.So overall, neither climate change nor climate action is currently equitable. COP29 is expected to build consensus on the level of financing required.India's per-capita emissions are among the lowest in the world. However, according to the World Inequality Database, the per-capita emissions of the richest 10% are 20-times greater than that of the poorest 10% and in absolute terms almost half of the country's total. Climate change more severely affects the economically weaker sections.India's size and diversity mean it's a country of countries, and some of them are more polluting than others vis-à-vis the climate. Importantly, India lacks the carrying capacity to support the developed world's lifestyle standards for its entire population. If it should, India will run into significant food shortage due to groundwater depletion by the 2040s, extreme heat stress in urban areas due to the ever-increasing vehicular pollution and AC use, irreversible biodiversity loss due to non-ideal land-use changes encroaching on habitats, etc.India's lifestyle aspirations could easily become unsustainable in the long run, jeopardising our access to basic needs.A new consumption corridor

In a scenario where consumption rises unchecked and India electrifies all end-use applications, the power demand could increase nine- to tenfold by 2070. Meeting it entirely via renewable energy will require more than 5,500 GW of solar and 1,500 GW of wind, up from the current 70 GW and and 47 GW, respectively.This target is achievable if India's only priority is to expand renewable energy generation capacity. But if India is to maintain food and nutritional security, increase forest cover, and preserve biodiversity as well, these energy targets will become very challenging. By modelling land-use change dynamics over time, the authors have found going beyond 3,500 GW solar and 900 GW wind will demand considerable land trade-offs.In sum, India has a tough balancing act to pull off: availing good quality of life to a large share of its population (which has significant material and energy implications) while working towards its climate adaptation and mitigation goals.To this end, it is important to recognise the pitfalls of economic models. For example, the environmental Kuznets curve hypothesises that beyond a threshold, economic growth can be decoupled from carbon emissions. In reality, even the richest countries haven't achieved this decoupling (other than by shifting their emissions to poorer countries). This is why it is in our best interest to not aspire to achieve the lifestyle standards of the west.Instead, we need to envisage a long-term strategy incorporating 'sufficiency consumption corridors', with a floor well suited to meeting our developmental goals and a ceiling of excess that will help avoid unsustainable growth. Equally, if not more, important are demand-side measures to help maintain this corridor of consumption that will keep us on a sustainable pathway. Our power consumption here could increase six- or sevenfold by 2070.Demand and supply measuresSome of these demand-side measures include the use of better construction materials and passive design elements to provide thermal comfort that doesn't require air-conditioning, energy-efficient appliances, public and/or non-motorised transport within urban areas and railways for intercity travel, local products to reduce the demand for long-haul freight, mindful dietary choices, and alternative fuels in industries in addition to some electrification.On the supply side as well, India needs to further decentralise energy production (including by the use of rooftop solar cells and of solar pumps for agriculture). Finally, it should continue to expand its nuclear power generation capacity to diversify its energy mix and to complement a grid becoming more dependent on intermittent energy sources. Nuclear power could also offer a precious low-carbon baseload energy and help the government effectively phase out the national economy's dependence on fossil fuels.As the world trundles towards its net-zero and other climate-related targets, the leeway for governments to miss some of them or postpone their achievement also shrinks.

Why countries struggle to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies | Explained

Fossil fuels are the leading driver of climate change, yet they are still heavily subsidised by governments around the world.Although many countries have explicitly promised to reduce fossil fuel subsidies to combat climate change, this has proven difficult to accomplish. As a result, fossil fuels remain relatively inexpensive, and their use and greenhouse gas emissions continue to grow.I work in environmental and energy law and have studied the fossil fuel sector for years. Here's how fossil fuel subsidies work and why they're so stubborn.

What is a subsidy?

A subsidy is a financial benefit given by a government to an entity or industry. Some subsidies are relatively obvious, such as publicly funded crop insurance or research grants to help pharmaceutical companies develop new drugs.Others are less visible. A tariff on an imported product, for example, can subsidise domestic manufacturers of that product. More controversially, some would argue that when a government fails to make an industry pay for damage it causes, such as air or water pollution, that also amounts to a subsidy.Subsidies, especially in this broader sense, are widespread throughout the global economy. Many industries receive benefits through public policies that are denied to other industries in the same jurisdiction, such as tax breaks, relaxed regulations or trade supports.Governments employ subsidies for political and practical reasons. Politically, subsidies are useful for striking bargains or shoring up political support. In democracies, they can mollify constituencies otherwise unwilling to agree to a policy change. The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, for example, squeaked through Congress by subsidizing both renewable energy and oil and gas production.Practically, subsidies can boost a promising young industry such as electric vehicles, attract business to a community or help a mature sector survive an economic downturn, as the auto industry bailout did in 2008. Of course, policies can outlive their original purpose; some of today's petroleum subsidies can be traced to the Great Depression.

How are fossil fuels subsidised?

Fossil fuel subsidies take many forms around the world. For example: In Saudi Arabia, fuel prices are set by the government rather than the market; price ceilings subsidise the price citizens pay for gasoline. The cost to state-owned oil producers there is offset by oil exports, which dwarf domestic consumption Indonesia also caps energy prices, then compensates state-owned energy companies for the losses they bear. In the United States, oil companies can take a tax deduction for a large portion of their drilling costs. Other subsidies are less direct, such as when governments under-price permits to mine or drill for fossil fuels or fail to collect all the taxes owed by fossil fuel producers. Estimates of the total value of global fossil fuel subsidies vary considerably depending on whether analysts use a broad or narrow definition. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD, calculated the annual total to be about US$1.5 trillion in 2022. Tche International Monetary Fund reported a number over four times higher, about $7 trillion.

Why do estimates of fossil fuel subsidies vary dramatically?

Analysts disagree about whether subsidy tabulations should include environmental damage from the extraction and use of fossil fuels that is not incorporated into the fuel's price. The IMF treats the costs of global warming, local air pollution and even traffic congestion and road damage as implicit subsidies because fossil fuel



companies don't pay to remedy these problems. The OECD omits these implicit benefits.But whichever definition is applied, the combined effect of national policies on fossil fuel prices paid by consumers is dramatic.Oil, for example, is traded on a global market, but the price per gallon of petrol varies enormously around the world, from about 10 cents in Iran, Libya and Venezuela – where it is heavily subsidised – to over $7 in Hong Kong, the Netherlands and much of Scandinavia, where fuel taxes counteract subsidies.

What is the world doing about fossil fuel subsidies?

Global leaders have acknowledged that subsidies for fossil fuels undermine efforts to address climate change because they make fossil fuels cheaper than they would be otherwise.In 2009, the heads of the G20, which includes many of the world's largest economies, issued a statement resolving to "rationalise and phase out over the medium term inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption." Later that same year, the governments of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, or APEC, made an identical pledge.In 2010, 10 other countries, including the Netherlands and New Zealand, formed the Friends of Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform group to "build political consensus on the importance of fossil fuel subsidy reform."Yet these commitments have scarcely moved the needle. A major study of 157 countries between 2003 and 2015 found that governments "collectively made little or no progress" toward reducing subsidies. In fact, the OECD found that total global subsidies nearly doubled in both 2021 and 2022.

So why are fossil fuel subsidies hard to eliminate?

There are various reasons fossil fuel subsidies are hard to eliminate. Many subsidies directly affect the costs that fossil fuel producers face, so reducing subsidies tends to increase prices for consumers. Because fossil fuels touch nearly every economic sector, rising fuel costs elevate prices for countless goods and services.Subsidy reform tends to be broadly felt and pervasively inflationary. And unless carefully designed, subsidy reductions can be regressive, forcing low-income residents to spend a larger percentage of their income on energy.So, even in countries where there is widespread support for robust climate policies, reducing subsidies can be deeply unpopular and may even cause public unrest.The 2021-22 spike in fossil fuel subsidies is illustrative. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, energy prices surged throughout Europe. Governments were quick to provide aid for their citizens, resulting in their largest fossil fuel subsidies ever. Forced to choose between climate goals and affordable energy, Europe overwhelmingly chose the latter.Of course, economists note that increasing the price of fossil fuels can lower demand, reducing emissions that are driving climate change and harming the environment and human health. Seen in that light, price spikes present an opportunity for reform.

India's race to eliminate dog-mediated rabies by 2030: experts stress the need for a 'One Health' approach

India has made significant strides in reducing human rabies deaths over the past two decades. However, achieving the goal of eliminating dog-mediated rabies by 2030 will require accelerated efforts and a focused, 'One Health' approach, experts say.The One Health strategy highlights integrating human and animal health measures to address rabies at its roots. Key steps identified include strengthening both human and animal surveillance systems, ensuring timely and complete administration of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for those exposed to the virus, and scaling up dog vaccination efforts across the country. While rabies cases have declined, experts warn that without these integrated actions, India may struggle to meet the 2030 target.

A recent study published in The Lancet highlights the public health challenge of rabies in India. Using a nationwide, community-based cross-sectional survey, researchers gathered data from 3.37 lakh individuals residing in 78,807 households across 60 districts in 15 states. The survey results estimated that India experiences approximately 9.1 million animal bites annually, with 76.8% attributed to dogs. The annual dog-bite incidence was calculated at 5.6 per 1,000 people.Significant gaps in post-bite care were noted, as 20.5% of dog-bite victims received no anti-rabies vaccination (ARV), and among those who did receive ARV, nearly half of the 1,253 people who started the vaccination course did not complete it. This lapse in vaccination adherence poses severe health risks, as the study estimates around 5,726 human rabies deaths each year, despite an overall reduction in deaths over recent decades."To make rabies a disease of the past in India, it is essential to prioritise prevention, awareness, and vaccination efforts," says Ranga Reddy Burri, president of the Infection Control Academy of India. "Although human rabies deaths have declined, achieving the goal of eliminating dog-mediated cases by 2030 requires accelerated action. A robust One Health approach, combining human-animal surveillance, timely post-exposure prophylaxis, and extensive dog vaccination is vital. With the increase in pet ownership, responsible pet care and vaccination are also critical to this mission," Dr. Burri adds.

In answer to a question in the Lok Sabha on July 30, 2024 on the stray dog menace in the country, Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh said that in 2023, India reported a total of 30.43 lakh dog bite cases, with 286 fatalities linked to these incidents. This data was gathered under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. "According to the National Centre for Disease Control, 46,54,398 anti-rabies vaccinations were administered to individuals who sustained dog bites throughout the year," the Minister said.The Minister also said that the government had introduced a rabies helpline (15400) in five States, with plans to expand it nationally. Additionally, the Rabies-Free Cities Initiative was launched to create rabies-free zones in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities, with a structured rabies prevention and action plan.Shailaja Tetali, dean of research at the Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH) Hyderabad, however noted that while the National Rabies Control Programme (NRCP) has successfully reduced rabies cases, addressing dog bites requires a comprehensive One Health approach. "To tackle dog bites effectively, we need coordinated efforts across surveillance, resources, training, collaboration, and public awareness," she explains.She highlighted the need for enhanced surveillance of dog bites across both public and private facilities, especially in remote areas. "Every case should be recorded, as data is critical to tackle the issue in underserved regions," she said. Dr. Tetali also stressed on stockpiling anti-rabies vaccines (ARV) to avoid shortages, and filling gaps in veterinary resources to support humane dog population control.Specialised training for para-veterinary staff is essential, as many are often shifted into animal care without preparation. Collaboration among animal welfare boards, municipalities, NGOs, and resident associations is also necessary for effective dog population management. Dr. Tetali added that public awareness is also vital. "People need to respect animals' space and understand the importance of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) after contact with potentially rabies-carrying animal's," she advised, noting that these measures can reduce rabies and dog bite incidents significantly.Awareness remains lowAccording to information in India's National Action Plan for Dog-Mediated Rabies Elimination (NAPRE) booklet, in India, rabies is transmitted commonly by dogs and cats (~97%), followed by wild animals (2%) such as mongoose, foxes, jackals, and wild dogs, and occasionally by horses, donkeys, monkeys, cows, goats, sheep, and pigs. Rodents, rats and bandicoots, squirrels, rabbits, birds, and bats are generally not known to transmit rabies. The presence of unvaccinated free-roaming dogs (FRD) or street dogs, amidst human settlements is a major contributor to the high incidence of rabies in India, which is endemic. Apart from humans, rabies also causes significant mortality among livestock animals such as bovine, cattle and small animals. Kiran Madhala, professor of critical care medicine at Gandhi Medical College, Secunderabad, highlighted key findings from the multicentric rabies survey conducted by World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the Association for Prevention and Control of Rabies in India (APCRI) in 2017 and 2018. "According to the study, almost 40% of participants had never even heard of rabies, which is alarming for a country aiming to control this disease," Dr. Kiran said.

United States reports surge in chikungunya cases among travellers from Telangana, issues advisory

Following a spike in chikungunya cases in Telangana, the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued a 'Level 2' travel advisory for U.S. travellers returning from Telangana. "[The] CDC has identified a higher-than-expected number of chikungunya cases among U.S. travellers returning from ... Telangana," the notice said.The advisory, issued earlier this month on November 8, urges travellers to exercise enhanced precautions. This is the second CDC travel advisory for India this year, following a similar alert in August regarding a Zika virus outbreak in Maharashtra.The CDC's travel advisory system categorises risks into four levels. Level 1 advises travellers to practise usual precautions, while Level 2 (as applied to Telangana now) calls for enhanced precautions. Level 3 urges reconsideration of non-essential travel and Level 4 recommends avoiding all travel.

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