

Congress Govt admits to power supply disruption in Warangal's MGM hospital

Hyderabad: The State government on Thursday admitted to a power supply disruption in the MGM Hospital in Warangal on Tuesday. The Health Minister's office issued a statement, admitting the power supply disruption and stating that an enquiry report was called for from the Telangana Medical Services & Infrastructure Development Corporation.

"There was an interruption in the power supply to MGM Hospital on May 21 in the evening at 6.15 pm due to VCB (breakers) between the main HT lines and MGM power lines. The back-up generators at MGM Hospital ensured uninterrupted power supply to the patient care areas, including the Emergency areas. This included the Emergency, ICU, Operation Theatres, Specialty & Super specialty Blocks, Patient wards, Maternal and Child Health Wards," the statement said. "The patients in the Dialysis wing continued their dialysis treatment through battery back-up. By 9 pm, full supply to MGM Hospital through repair of HT lines and defective breakers was resolved by the NPDCL en-

gineering wing," it said.

Officials said in the statement that Health, Medical and Family Welfare Minister C Damodar Rajanarsimha reviewed the situation with the Secretary (Health, Medical and Family Welfare) and Director Medical Education. The Minister instructed the Managing Director, Telangana Medical Services & Infrastructure Development Corporation to submit an enquiry report within 24 hours, fixing responsibility for lapses, if any, they said. The Managing Director was also instructed to deploy his engineers for inspection of all Government Hospitals in the State, on a war footing, and submit a report within a week. They were to assess the functionality of backup power systems, and repair or replace non-functioning generator systems, in view of the upcoming monsoon and to avoid such untoward incidences in future. On Wednesday, BRS working president KT Rama Rao had expressed his dismay over the power outage at MGM Hospital, which he said put the lives of newborns and elderly patients at risk. "It is heartbreaking that MGM Hospi-



tal faced a five-hour power cut, endangering lives from newborns to elderly patients. The Congress government cannot even maintain existing hospitals, let alone build

world-class infrastructure. The Chief Minister and his ministers keep repeating that there are no power cuts. Who will take responsibility for this?" he had asked.

Heart transplant successfully done on 29-year-old woman at NIMS



Hyderabad: The transplant team at Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) on Thursday announced successful donor heart transplantation on a 29-year-old woman Sheikh Shanaz, hailing from Eturnagaram, Mulugu. The donor heart was retrieved from a brain dead victim under Jeevandan organ donation scheme. For the past two-years, Sheikh Shanaz (29) has been suffering from Di-

lated Cardiomyopathy in the left ventricle of the heart, which causes the heart to slow down pumping blood, surgeons said.

Tests revealed that Sheikh needed heart transplantation and her name was registered in Jeevandan as a recipient. As luck would have it, a few days ago, a patient was declared as brain dead at Yashoda Hospital, Secunderabad and with the consent of the brain dead victim's fam-

ily members, under Jeevandan, the donor heart was retrieved and allocated to NIMS for transplantation. Director, NIMS, Dr Nagari Bheerappa congratulated surgeons including Dr Amareswara Rao, Head, CT surgery, NIMS, who led the heart transplant surgery, and Dr Gopal, Dr Narmada and

Dr Archana from Anaesthesia and others for the successful heart transplantation. "The entire surgery was taken-up free of cost under Aarogyasri. In corporate hospitals, such surgery would cost anywhere between Rs 20 lakh and Rs 30 lakh," NIMS, Director, said.

More hot days despite rain forecast in Telangana

Hyderabad: While parts of Hyderabad and other regions in Telangana grappled with rising temperatures, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday issued a five-day yellow alert with a forecast of thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds of 30-40 kmph in multiple districts, including Hyderabad. Despite the forecast of thundershowers, maximum temperatures are expected to hover between 38 and 40 degrees C till the monthend. Scattered intense storms, lightning and high-speed winds are expected in the coming days in a few districts of the State. The IMD-Hyderabad has issued a thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds warning for Adilabad, Nirmal, Kumaram Bheem, Nizamabad, Jagtial, Mancherla, Rajanna Sircilla, Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Kothagudem and Khammam on Thursday. On Friday, a similar thunderstorm forecast has been issued for Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Mahabubnagar, Kamareddy, Sangareddy, Medak, Vikarabad, Malkajgiri, Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Kothagudem and Khammam. Kamareddy, Medak, Vikarabad, Narayanpet, Mahabubnagar, Wanaparthy, Jogulamba Gadwal and Nagarkurnool are expected to witness similar weather conditions. While rainfall is anticipated across the State until the end of the month, temperatures in Telangana are forecasted to soar between 42 and 44 degrees C.

'Clotting due to Covid is perhaps 100 times more than clotting caused by a vaccine': Soumya Swaminathan at Idea Exchange

As former chief scientist of WHO, Dr Soumya Swaminathan was the public face of science and research during the pandemic, demystifying COVID-19. Now, as chairperson of the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, she is closely working on the impact of climate change on every aspect of our lives, particularly health. Her biography, *At The Wheel of Research*, documents her journey to make science the pillar of our public health. She speaks at the Idea Exchange session, moderated by Rinku Ghosh, Senior Associate Editor: Rinku Ghosh: There is collective anxiety over the safety of Covid vaccines, what with AstraZeneca's submission in court that in rare cases, its vaccine resulted in blood clotting. Considering that the same vaccine was used as Covishield in India, what kind of risks are we looking at?

I'm very worried that this is going to have a negative impact on people, their beliefs and confidence in vaccines. When a vaccine is developed, it is tested several times over for its efficacy and safety. If a vaccine or drug is new, regulatory agencies conduct a post-marketing surveillance or a phase IV study. This is to capture rare side effects which might have been missed in clinical trials. For example, clinical trials for Covid vaccines had 30,000 to 40,000 participants. But when you give it to millions of people, then there may be rare things which you can pick up. This is why pharmacovigilance or post-marketing surveillance is important. Vaccines began to be administered by December 2020 as Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca were approved in different countries. By March 2021, we had already heard about these thrombotic events, or Thrombotic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (TTP). At WHO, we were looking very closely at the data, which was coming out of high-income countries with good pharmacovigilance systems. These very rare side effects were mentioned in different reports from different countries, maybe somewhere in the range of four to eight per million vaccines. Every regulatory agency, including the WHO, looked at the safety profile again, assessed the risk-benefit ratio and concluded that the benefits far outweighed the risks. If you vaccinated a million individuals, the number of lives that you would save because of Covid was much more than these side effects. That has remained the same. So there has been no major change in our knowledge about this side effect since. Second, Covid itself damages the lungs, the cardiovascular, brain and nervous systems and triggers clotting. All of us, who have suffered from Covid, now have a higher risk, may be by two to three times, of suffering health conditions related to these systems than ever before. If you have already had other risks — say diabetes or hypertension — then Covid is an add-on risk. The clotting due to Covid is many times, perhaps even a hundred times, more than the clotting due to the vaccine.

The third aspect is that the case revolves around the compensation that's being claimed by people who have had these severe side effects. At WHO, when we set up COVAX (COVID-19 Vaccines

Global Access), we had already thought about setting up a no-fault compensation system globally. We took an insurance policy for hundreds of millions of people worldwide in low and middle-income countries, who would be receiving different vaccines. Till the time I was at WHO, there had been no claims. I'm not sure if there has been any claim in the past year. Besides, these side effects occur within a few weeks of taking the vaccine. So people who've taken the vaccine in 2021 or 2022 need not worry today about a clotting disorder. They will not get it because of the vaccine. They could get it because of Covid or an underlying condition that got exacerbated.

Rinku Ghosh: Is communicating science to the masses a big challenge because we lack scientific temperament?

Vaccine hesitancy or anti-science is not directly linked with the level of education. Countries with high vaccine hesitancy generally have high levels of education — western Europe and US. Comparatively India has very small pockets of vaccine hesitancy but those were overcome by officials talking to the communities and so on.

Science is about doing experiments repeatedly because the truth could change when somebody finds something contradictory. That's why there's a need for constant scrutiny. Usually, it's a collective effort — scientists around the world working in a particular discipline will have their own arguments. But during Covid, all of this was playing out in the public domain. So the layman saw scientists arguing and disagreeing, which is a normal scientific practice, but thought they couldn't make up their mind and deduced something was wrong. The anti-vax and anti-science groups took advantage of this gap in understanding. This is the first pandemic that we've had in the social media age. There will be more "infodemics" and we have to teach our children to sift facts. As public health people, we need to give, not hide information. Nobody can deny that any drug or vaccine could have side effects. Even the polio vaccine has had side effects but that hasn't stopped the polio eradication programme. As scientists, we have to communicate in a way that makes information more acceptable. We have to be willing to constantly answer the same questions. Scientists cannot be patronising.

Rinku Ghosh: What are the big takeaways of COVID-19 and have we internalised them enough?

I can tell you the lessons from my perspective. How many governments and people have internalised them and are acting on them is a good question. We can see the push and pull in the negotiations of a global pandemic treaty to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to actually put down on paper the lessons we've learnt and what needs to be done in the future. First, a pandemic is a global issue and needs a global effort, solidarity and cooperation on surveillance, sharing data and R&D. Second is the issue of financing for which the World Bank



has set up a fund. About \$ 2 billion has come in as contribution and the bank has already finished one round of grants. We have to invest in science, be it to tackle climate change or for pathogen X. The third is investing in public health. Countries which had focussed more on public health infrastructure and primary healthcare actually did much better in terms of lowering deaths than first world countries. The US is a good example where the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) public health budget had been cut year after year. So it couldn't do very simple things like contact tracing or scaling up surveillance. In contrast, poorer countries in Africa with a strong cadre of community health workers were able to do much better. Thailand is a prime example of a Southeast Asian country with excellent primary health care services. It was the first country outside China to locate the virus, put in place containment measures and use technology like South Korea did to test almost its entire population. The fourth is countering misinformation and the fifth is strengthening frontline workers. We need to pick up outbreaks quickly and you need an empowered team at the district level that immediately goes to the hotspot, investigates, reports, collects the data and acts on it. Decentralisation of data-based decision-making is the key.

Amitabh Sinha: How did the pandemic go away, what explains the negligible numbers now?

In a majority of countries, 60-70 per cent of the population has been vaccinated. Besides, people acquired immunity through natural infection. So a large part of the world today has cell-mediated as well as antibody-based immunity. And therefore, the virus is no longer able to extract the damage that it did in the early part. But the virus is still mutating and spreading. We're still getting infected but we're not falling sick because our cell immunity kicks in and protects us. May be after four or five years that immunity will wane and we will all need boosters. Or a small infection may actually be boosting our immunity. We need regular studies on our levels of immunity.

Amitabh Sinha: Although we experienced the worst pandemic, none of the

political parties has mentioned healthcare in manifestoes. Your take?

WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus had predicted that we would go through this cycle of panic and neglect. We would panic in the middle of something terrible and ease away when we got a little comfortable. I'm afraid that's happening all over the world. Other priorities have come up now, be it conflicts, trade wars, economic issues. There is no focus on health. I was happy that this time, during the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings, the bank president, Ajay Banga, talked about a liveable planet, a sustainable lifestyle, health and nutrition. I think from the perspective of politicians, it is more rewarding to invest in a facility, which is very visible, because you can get credit from the local population.

Preventive healthcare is completely invisible. It's about making the right policies, laws and implementing them, dealing with lobbies and doing hard work behind the scenes. We have to implement the Rules on the Clinical Establishment Act. That's why private hospitals continue to exploit the patient. And out-of-pocket expenditure in India — though it has come down from 60 per cent to 45 per cent — is still extremely high. I will again quote the example of Thailand, where the government actually invested in an organisation for health promotion and disease prevention. It is funded by taxes on tobacco, alcohol, sugar and unhealthy items. Harish Damodaran: The remit of public health has traditionally been confined to communicable diseases like TB, malaria and viral infection. Now we are seeing lifestyle or non-communicable diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular conditions affecting the poor and lower middle-classes alike. Can we bring these under the public health umbrella? Yes, public health is not just about communicable diseases. The WHO's SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) target 3.4 aims to reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment by 2030. These are increasing rapidly in developing countries because of unhealthy diets and air pollution. The National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) data has shown that only a small fraction of the population is actually consuming a healthy diet.

Conversational Commerce Powered by Gen AI to Spur the Next Wave Growth for Businesses: Bain & Company - Meta Report

As the adoption of conversational messaging platforms accelerates across large and small businesses, the transformative power of generative AI is steering businesses toward conversational commerce. According to the report 'Win with Conversations' by Bain & Company and Meta, released today, 70% of surveyed large enterprises are already engaging with half of their customer base using conversational platforms. Moreover, 60% of the surveyed large enterprises are planning to increase their spending on conversational journeys over the next 3–4 years. The report, based on a survey of end users (consumers) and businesses, shares insights into conversational journeys across enterprises, small businesses, and digital users.

Sandhya Devanathan, Head and VP, Meta in India, said, "As the adoption of business messaging grows on WhatsApp, we're investing in tools and solutions for businesses to establish a strong presence, connect with the right audience with tailored messaging, and deliver engaging in-thread experiences that convert into higher customer engagement and return on in-

vestment. GenAI will be central to this vision and will empower businesses of all sizes, especially small businesses in India, to leverage its vast potential. The coming decade presents a unique opportunity for technology, particularly generative AI, to revolutionize how businesses of all sizes operate. We're firmly committed to adding more capabilities on our platform that bridge the gap between businesses and their customers, fostering growth and engagement." Arpan Sheth, Partner, Bain & Company said, "While only about 200 million of the 650 million Indians active on social media currently shop online, GenAI-powered conversational messaging platforms have the potential to bring the next 450 million consumers to e-commerce. We are seeing a growing user preference for leveraging conversational platforms for daily tasks, along with increased spending and investment by businesses in Generative AI to enhance end-to-end journeys on these platforms. We expect both small and large businesses to experiment with conversational commerce to redefine customer engagement and gain a competitive advantage." Users have a strong prefer-



ence to leverage conversational commerce India is at an inflection point as most of the future online shoppers and sellers are already within the digital funnel, signaling a large, untapped opportunity. Across both savvy and non-savvy digital users, more than 50% of surveyed users expressed a preference for conducting transactions via conversational journeys, particularly for high-frequency interactions such as accessing bank statements, booking travel, and paying utility bills. Both large and small businesses are increasingly leveraging conversational platforms to enhance customer interactions. With the advent of generative AI-powered assistants and the ease of integration with conversational platforms, businesses are now able to build contextualized conversational journeys and implement them at scale with much faster deployment cycles. Generative AI

emerges as a top-of-mind priority for businesses, with around 95% of surveyed enterprises in India familiar with it, and over 80% plan to invest in generative AI solutions within the next 1–2 years. Most large enterprises are planning to invest in delivering end-to-end journeys through generative AI-powered conversational platforms. About 70% of surveyed large enterprises are already engaging with over 50% of their customer base using conversational platforms, especially in marketing and promotion-centric use cases, followed by customer service and transaction updates. More than 60% of large enterprises are planning to increase spending on conversational platforms over the next 3–4 years. Conversational commerce will thrive in domains characterized by frequent purchases such as grocery shopping, or frequent transactions such as utility bill payments.

IIFL Home Finance becomes India's leading affordable housing finance company with AUM crossing Rs35,000 and PAT increasing by 32% YoY



IIFL
HOME LOAN

IIFL Home Finance Limited (IIFL HFL) has seen its Asset Under Management (AUM) swell from ₹ 28,512 cr in FY23 to ₹ 35,499 cr in FY24, witnessing a 25% YoY growth, making the company India's largest affordable housing finance company with an average ticket size of ₹ 14.26 lac. Basis the exchange reporting on May 6, 2024, the company with over 20% shareholding of Abu Dhabi Investments Authority (ADIA), saw its the revenue from operations rise from ₹ 2,712 cr in FY23 to ₹ 33,17 cr in FY24, recording a 23% YoY growth. The Profit After Tax saw a 32% jump from Rs 768. cr in FY 23 to Rs 1017 cr in FY 24. The NIM's saw an improvement of 80 bps and strengthened from 6.5% in FY 2223 to 7.3% in FY24, with capital adequacy ratio of 42.7%. The Gross NPA also saw over a 60 bps improvement from 2.1% in FY23 to 1.5% in FY24. The Company has the lowest cost to income ratios amongst all affordable housing companies in the country.

Monu Ratra, ED and CEO of IIFL Home Finance, said "IIFL Home Finance remains committed to providing affordable home loans, particularly to EWS and LIG segments, with a focus on first time home buyers and women borrowers/co-borrowers. We have built a strong moat in India's mortgage lending space and our focus on operational excellence and technology led solutions have resulted in not only growth in AUM, increase in NIMs, reduction in credit cost resulting in better profitability but also fetching more customers who believe in us. The active customer base increased from 202885 to 281514 which re-imposes customers faith in the organization and its offerings.

Kranthi Namala, Zonal Sales Head - South, of IIFL Home Finance, said, "In coming years, while we plan to expand our reach with the use of our digital capabilities, we will focus on tapping the deeper geographies of the 17 states we are

present in. We are also working on technological interventions which will help us built customized application process for customers from tier 3 and 4 markets, resulting in smoother customer experience and eventual lesser loan approval time. In

FY24, in alignment with honorable Prime Ministers vision of Housing for All, we disbursed home loans to over 23,000 beneficiary led construction (BLC) households under PMAY in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

Honoring 55 years of enduring bonds with Kamal Watch Co.'s legacy

Hyderabad: Celebrating 55 years of dedication, Kamal Watch Co. stands as a beacon of excellence in the bustling streets of Abids,

Hyderabad. Since its establishment in 1969, this family-owned watch retailer has flourished into one of India's premier destinations for discerning timepiece enthusiasts. With an expansive presence spanning over 50 stores nationwide, Kamal Watch Co. has established itself as a leader in luxury watch retailing. Boasting a diverse collection of over 5,000 models, ranging from renowned brands to niche designers, the brand prides itself on offering customers a meticulously curated selection of high-quality timepieces.

"Our mission has always been to provide our customers with access to the finest timepieces from around the world," remarks Sri Chandmal Totla, Founder and the visionary behind Kamal Watch Co. Through strategic partnerships with leading watchmakers and an unwavering commitment to customer satisfaction, Kamal Watch Co. has garnered the trust and loyalty of generations of patrons. Whether seeking a timeless classic for everyday wear or a bold statement piece for special occasions, customers can rely on Kamal Watch Co. to deliver uncompromising quality and service.

"Our success is rooted in a steadfast dedication to trust and integrity," affirms Sri Chandmal Totla, the driving force behind Kamal Watch Co. "As we celebrate 55 years of excellence, we remain steadfast in our commitment to upholding our legacy and serving our customers with the utmost care and dedication."

Looking ahead, Kamal Watch Co. remains poised to evolve and innovate, with a renewed focus on enhancing the customer experience and pioneering new horizons in luxury watch retailing. As the brand continues to shape the industry's future, it remains committed to delivering unparalleled quality and service to its valued clientele.

Speciality Fashion Brand Big Hello Makes a Mega Hyderabad Splash, Launches Four New Retail Experience Stores

Big Hello, a specialty fashion brand for plus-sized people, today announced its retail experience store launch in Hyderabad with the opening of four new stores. The Big Hello stores in Kukatpally, Upperpally, Miyapur, and Panjagutta neighbourhoods will offer stylish and high-quality fashion clothing and accessories for the plus-sized men and women living in the twin-cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The Hyderabad stores are designed as 'Experience Stores' and feature vibrant interiors with dancing mannequin and excellent and engaging customer service, representing the lively and happy spirit of the brand. Big Hello is the first brand in India to provide a dedicated lounge for its customers to sit and shop comfortably, enhancing their retail shopping experience.

With this launch, Big Hello has taken the total number of its physical retail stores to 11, spread across Bangalore, Chennai, Vijayawada, and Hyderabad. The brand also runs an e-commerce store and plans to open eight additional stores in Hyderabad by the end of this financial year. Big Hello is owned by Absolute Brands and Retail Private Limited (ABRPL), a fast-growing fashion retailing company founded by Vishnu Prasad. "Hyderabadis love to express their personality through truly stylish and well-fitting clothes, but for a large number of plus-sized people, finding such clothes has always been an uphill battle. Big Hello's launch in Hyderabad solves this problem and brings local



people ready access to world-class fashion and fits without compromise," said Vishnu Prasad, Founder and CEO of Absolute Brands and Retail Pvt Ltd (ABRPL).

Big Hello offers western and Indian ethnic wear for men and women with highly technical and perfect fits and finish for every body type, occasion, mood and mo-

ment. The range includes shirts and t-shirts, trousers, jeans, chinos, shorts, blazers, kurtas, ethnic bottom-wear, and bandhgallas. The brand also offers a wide range of accessories including belts, tummy tucker, scarves, ties, pocket squares, and suspenders. Mr. Prasad said that Big Hello will soon expand and open more stores in

Telangana and other southern states. "We are establishing Big Hello to be the go-to destination for plus-size fashion across India.

The brand offers stylish, high-quality garments that are exquisitely crafted to fit the unique curves and contours of plus-sized bodies," he added.

How joblessness in India has hurt all communities over the last 8 years, with none better off in 2023-24

In April this year, CSDS-Lokniti, a leading research organisation tracking the behaviour of India's voters for decades, came out with the results of its pre-poll survey. It found that the single most important issue for voters in 2024 is unemployment. As many as 29% of the people surveyed said unemployment will be the biggest factor as they decide their vote. The second biggest issue was price rise; as many as 23% of the people surveyed said it was the biggest factor. Taken together, these two issues were quoted as the most important ones by 52% of the people surveyed. In other words, regardless of one's voting preference, there is a growing unanimity that two of the biggest policy challenges facing Indians are joblessness and higher prices. Regular readers of ExplainSpeaking would recall that these are the two most common topics that this column has tracked since its inception. The Lok Sabha election campaign has been shrill, and the narrative is more focused on dividing voters into religious and caste identities. But little is said about how unemployment and price rise affect different sections.

On price rise, which stays the same for all communities, ExplainSpeaking had found a simple formula to help readers fig-

ure out whether or not their salary beat the inflation rate in the Modi years. Read this detailed explainer. But simply put, if your salary or income has not increased by at least 32% since 2019 and at least 64% since 2014, then you are worse off than before the start of the Modi years (2014 to 2024).

However, even though inflation does hit the poor more than the rich, it does not, thankfully, directly differentiate between religion and caste. Joblessness has also hurt all, but to varying degrees. Data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) provides a good understanding of how employment-related metrics diverge among different religious groups as well as different caste groups. CMIE has data for eight years, from 2016-17 to 2023-24. As such, it provides a good understanding of who was the worst hit in the employment-related problems. But before looking at the data, here is some basic conceptual understanding. The seven data tables that follow provide information on the following four variables:

1. The working-age population: This is simply the total population over the age of 15 years.

2. Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR): The LFPR is the percentage of the

working-age population that is demanding a job. As such, it excludes people like a 35-year-old married woman who is not actively looking for a job or a 22-year-old who is busy pursuing higher education or a 65-year-old who no longer wants to work. Thus the LFPR represents the demand for jobs in an economy.

3. Unemployment Rate (UER): The UER is the percentage of people looking for a job but are as yet unemployed. The UER is expressed as a percentage of the labour force. All over the world, the UER is often the most widely used metric to assess the health of the labour market.

However, it is important to note that in India it can often give misleading results. That's because India's LFPR has been falling. Often this can happen if people who have been unemployed for a long time decide to stop looking for (demanding) a job. In such a case, the UER falls not because the economy has created more jobs but because fewer people are demanding them. As such, it is best to read the UER movement in conjunction with the LFPR movement. 4. The Employment Rate (ER): The ER is often considered the best metric to assess the health of employment in the Indian context. That's because it is simply the ratio of the total number of employed

people and the total size of the working-age population. By definition, it circumvents the analytical problem posed by reading UER in an economy where the LFPR rises or falls substantially over time. The ER provides a neat, single-shot number that best captures the health of employment in any economy. If it is going up, it implies more and more people (as a percentage of the total working-age population) are getting jobs and if it falls it shows that the percentage of people with jobs is falling. Lastly, data here only takes into account the main religions and the main castes.

Working-age population As Table 1 shows, India's working-age population grew 18.1% or 17.4 crore (or 170 million) from 96.45 crore in 2016-17 to 113.86 crore in 2023-24 (which ended March 31). Around 86% of this 17.4 crore increase is accounted for by Hindus, who also make up 86% of the working age population. Table 1. Table 1. While the Hindu working age population grew by 18% during the period, Muslim working-age population has risen by just 13.5%. Muslims account for 9.54% of the working age population. The Christian population, even though much smaller in absolute numbers (just 1.41% of working age population), has grown 48%, the highest, during the period.

ELGi EG PM "Permanent Magnet" oil-lubricated screw compressors to deliver class-leading lifecycle value

Re-affirming ELGi's commitment to delivering advanced, compressed air solutions to meet the evolving needs of the global manufacturing sector

Elgi Equipments (BSE: 522074 NSE: ELGIEQUIP), one of the world's leading air compressor manufacturers, has announced an upgrade to the EG Series range with the introduction of the EG PM (Permanent Magnet) oil-lubricated screw air compressors available from 11- 45 kW. The state-of-the-art EG PM is poised to deliver up to 15% improved efficiency gains, aside from an incremental FAD or free air delivery of 16% for every customer. The EG PM series is tailored to deliver superior performance and energy efficiency, providing unmatched life cycle value across varying load capacities, even at 100% load conditions, unlike many compressors that operate below 80% load capacity. The EG PM Series offers customers a range of intelligent features engineered to minimise energy consumption and, as a result, reduce environmental impact. The high-efficiency drive system incorporates a proprietary ultra-efficient IE5+ permanent magnet synchronous motor tailored specifically for ELGi airends. The motor efficiencies between 96.5% and 97.6% are well above the IE5* levels, resulting in maximised energy efficiency and carbon footprint reduction. The directly coupled system offers optimized lower motor and airend speeds, ensuring synchronous operation and optimal performance, which is particularly effective in variable speed applications. An intelligent thermal valve with an ambient temperature sensor maintains oil at ideal operating temperatures, preventing excessive heating in colder months and result-



ing in improved energy efficiency. The Neuron 4 controller offers a comprehensive solution for superior and reliable compressor operation. Equipped with an industrial-grade 7-inch touchscreen interface and intelligent algorithms, the Neuron 4 is designed to optimize energy usage, enhance overall operational efficiency, ensure safe and controlled operations, and facilitate proactive maintenance."At ELGi,

our commitment to 'Always Better' drives us to constantly improve our products, maximizing efficiency and dependability to lower lifecycle expenses and lessen the environmental footprint of our customers' operations," stated Bhavesh Karia, President ISAAME and SEA, Elgi Equipments Ltd. "Designed for a broad section of the manufacturing industry, the EG PM Series

spans the 11 to 45 kW range, offering significant energy savings and decreased carbon emissions right away."The new EG PM range comes with ELGi's superior warranty* package, which includes a 10-year warranty on the airend, five years on other compressor components, three years on the VFD, and one year on electrical and rubber parts.

Telangana Education Fair to Showcase Diverse Academic Opportunities at Shilparamam

Telangana Vidya Samithi is set to host the Telangana Education Fair on May 25-26, 2024, at Uppal Shilparamam. Vem Narender Reddy, the Chief Adviser of Telangana State, has been invited to participate as the Chief Guest to event. Telangana Vidya Samithi President Pendem Tarak Goud expressed their willingness to host this fair, which will feature colleges and universities from different states, along with career guidance experts. Students and their parents are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity and participate in large numbers."

The Telangana Education Fair is an essential platform for students to explore diverse academic opportunities and make informed decisions about their future," said Tarak Goud. "We are honored to have Vem Narender Reddy join us as the Chief Guest, and we look forward to welcoming students and families from across the state."

The two-day event, open to visitors from 10 am to 4 pm on both days, will be free of charge. Participating in the organizing committee are IAS Sarath Naik and Telangana Public Prosecutor Palle

Nageswarao, along with Career Ashok and Vice President Ramesh Naidu. Established in 2008, the Telangana Vidya Samithi is dedicated to simplifying the education landscape for students across Telangana. The organization collaborates with numerous universities, medical colleges, engineering institutions, and management schools, providing comprehensive guidance and assistance to students.



The history of Supreme Court orders against illegal mining in Sariska reserve

The Supreme Court has ordered the Rajasthan government to shutter 68 mines operating within a 1-kilometre periphery of the critical tiger habitat (CTH) of the Sariska reserve. The order, passed on May 15, is the latest of many attempts by the country's top court since the 1990s to halt the mining of marble, dolomite, and limestone in Sariska in violation of laws.

In May 2005, the SC ordered the CBI to investigate the disappearance of tigers from the reserve in the Aravalli roughly halfway between Delhi and Jaipur. That was almost a decade and a half after the court first took up the issue of illegal mining in Sariska. In October 1991, in a PIL filed by a local NGO, the SC issued an interim order that "no mining operation of any nature shall be carried on in the protected area" of Sariska, and set up a fact-finding committee under the chairmanship of Justice M L Jain, a retired judge of the High Court. Based on a "traced map provided by the Forest Department," the Jain Committee found in 1992 that the protected areas covered "about 800 sq km". In April 1993, the SC ordered the closure of 262 mines within that area. Ten years later, the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of the SC submitted a damning report on mining around the Jamua Ramgarh Sanctuary which is part of the Sariska tiger reserve. The following year, the NGO Goa Foundation approached the SC with a complaint about a similar situation in Goa. Mining at Sariska's Jamua Ramgarh sanctuary. Mining at Sariska's Jamua Ramgarh sanctuary. (Express photo by Jay Mazoomdaar) In September 2005, the SC laid down rules for issuing temporary mining permits in forest areas. In August 2006, it said, "as an interim measure, one-kilometre safety zone shall be maintained subject to the orders that may be made...regarding Jamua Ramgarh Sanctuary".

But the mines were back in business in 2008 after the Rajasthan government claimed that the sanctuary boundary had been demarcated, and allowed quarries outside the 100-metre periphery of the sanctuary. The state stuck to the 100-metre regulation in its draft Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) notification for Sariska in 2011. Meanwhile, in January 2002, the Indian (now National) Board for Wildlife had proposed to notify areas within 10 km of national parks and sanctuaries as ESZs. But after several state governments expressed concerns, the Board had asked them, in May 2005, to identify suitable areas and submit proposals for site-specific ESZs. After many states failed to respond, the SC intervened in December 2006. The court warned that if the states failed to respond within four weeks, it might have to consider the original plan of ESZs of 10-km width. In September 2012, the CEC submitted a report on ESZs that went beyond Sariska. In January 2013, it followed up with a supplementary note on the "inordinate delay" in notifying the safety zones. The SC put its foot down in April 2014. Its judgment in the Goa Foundation case underlined that the August 2006 order "has not been varied subsequently nor any orders made regarding

Jamua Ramgarh", and that "the order...saying that there will be no mining activity within one-kilometre safety zone...has to be enforced". But it took another four years for the SC to act on its 2006 order. In December 2018, noting that 21 of the country's 662 national parks and sanctuaries were yet to submit ESZ proposals even 12 years after the deadline had passed, the court ordered that 10-km belts around them be declared ESZs. After the 2003 CEC report, several miners joined the case concerning Sariska's Jamua Ramgarh sanctuary. The apex court finally ruled on the matter in June 2022. It ordered ESZs of a minimum width of 1 km for all national parks and sanctuaries, but limited it to 500 metres for Jamua Ramgarh sanctuary as a "special case" with some leniency. After multiple objections to this one-size-fits-all approach, however, the SC modified the 2022 order in April 2023. The modified order left the specifics of ESZs to the Centre and the state, and focussed on mining — prohibiting it within 1 km of national parks and sanctuaries. On May 15, the SC criticised the Rajasthan government for misinterpreting this order as being not applicable to tiger reserves. The court clarified that the 2023 direction applied to tiger reserves which "stand on a higher pedestal".

Local people in Sariska have repeatedly demanded the demarcation of forest boundaries on the ground. Villagers have alleged that soft boundaries allow illegal mines to operate legally on paper by showing their locations outside the reserve. Also, to make up for the areas lost to such concessions, revenue villages are alleged to have been arbitrarily included in the tiger reserve, impinging on the rights of residents. A decade after Sariska became a tiger reserve in 1978, Rajasthan issued mining leases inside the reserve to many who had obtained no-objection certificates (NOCs) from the then field director of Sariska, even though he did not have any authority to issue such NOCs. In 1993, Rajasthan's proposal to compensate for these illegal mines by adding 5 sq km of revenue land to the reserve was rejected by the SC. But the 'swap' happened anyway, according to two retired forest officials who have served in the Alwar district.

The area statement records submitted to the SC in 1993 did not tally with the accompanying map. The discrepancies were so glaring that the surveyor was constrained to add a face-saver on the map: "Prepared by me as per the direction of FD (Forest Department), PT (Project Tiger), Sariska." In 1999, the Sariska management claimed to have lost several land records. The forest bosses in Jaipur then borrowed the said records from the Revenue Department, which in 2003 claimed these documents were never returned. In August 2008, when Rajasthan approached the Survey of India to undertake the demarcation work in Sariska, the then state forest head wrote in a letter that "the exact boundary, including the location of pillars, is not known". Survey of India backed out of the job because Rajasthan failed to provide reliable



maps and records. In the absence of demarcated boundaries, Sariska's Tiger Conservation Plan could not be finalised until 2014-15 when the state finally prepared a map for "management purposes" with a disclaimer against its legal authenticity. Another opportunity

official in the Rajasthan Forest Department said the latest SC order was yet another opportunity to thwart illegal mining in the state. "Whatever mistakes were made in the past can be set right by demarcating the no-go zones around Sariska and also other mining-affected reserves of the state," he said. The case comes up again in July.

Seven listed Adani Group companies received SEBI notices in FY24

Seven of the 10 listed entities of Adani Group have said that they received show cause notices from the markets regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), in the previous fiscal for violations of certain regulations, including non-compliance of listing and related party transaction norms. The companies, however, said that there were "no material consequential effect" of the showcause notices on their financial statements.

The Adani Group's flagship company, Adani Enterprises, Adani Green Energy, Adani Power, Adani Energy Solutions, Adani Total Gas and Adani Wilmar received the SEBI notices in the Q4 FY2024, for violations of certain norms, the companies said in separate filings to stock exchanges. Adani Ports and Logistics said it received the notice in FY24.

"During the quarter ended March 31, 2024, the Company has received two show cause notices (SCNs) from the SEBI alleging non-compliance of provisions of the Listing Agreement and LODR Regulations pertaining to related party transactions in respect of certain transactions with third parties and validity of peer review certificates of statutory auditors with respect to earlier years," Adani Enterprises informed exchanges recently.

It said the management believes that there was no material consequential effect of the SEBI notices to relevant financial statements and no material non-compli-

ance of applicable laws and regulations. None of the seven companies gave further details of the violations of SEBI norms mentioned in the show cause notices. Adani Green Energy said it got a notice from SEBI relating to the validity of Peer Review Certificate (PRC) of one of the joint auditors in earlier financial years, which it responded to. In January 2023, the US-based short seller Hindenburg Research in a report accused the Adani Group of brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud, which the company denied.

Later, writ petitions were filed with the Supreme Court seeking independent investigation of the allegations in Hindenburg's report. In March 2023, the apex court formed an expert committee, headed by its former judge Justice A M Sapre, to investigate whether there was a regulatory failure in dealing with the alleged contravention of laws pertaining to the securities market by the Adani Group or other group companies. As per the status report of the Supreme Court, dated August 25, 2023, the SEBI also concluded its investigations in twenty-two of the twenty-four matters. In January this year, the SC disposed-off all matters in various petitions including those relating to separate independent investigations into the allegations in the Hindenburg Report and directed SEBI to complete the pending two investigations, within three months, and take its investigations (including 22 already completed) to their logical conclusion.

What the upswing in J-K voter turnout could mean for PoK

If you stand back and view the contrasts emerging from the post-election scenario in Pakistan and the ongoing electoral exercise in India, it proves helpful in drawing conclusions. More so if you leave aside everything else and just focus on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) where the first of the five phases of the general election ended a few days ago. The 38 per cent turnout of the Srinagar electorate was a definite surge from the abysmal 14.4 per cent in 2019. In 1996, it was 41 per cent, pointing to the downward spiral of terrorist and separatist violence after the initial spurt in 1989-90; in fact, the graph of foreign terrorists from Afghanistan had reached a low that year before rising sharply because of the presence of terrorists, mainly from Pakistan.

The Srinagar constituency comprises many of the known badlands of Budgam, Pulwama and Shopian where radical influence prevented electoral participation. From grenade blasts to the kidnapping of political workers, all kinds of deterrence were used to stop people from voting. This was particularly true for the parliamentary polls. In the case of assembly elections, panchayat and municipal polls, the reluctance to vote was always much lower, given its association with local issues and development. From 2008 onwards, however, it was in these very areas that stone-throwing became a popular pastime. Separatist sentiments brought hordes onto the streets to express their pushback against India. There is a sea change now, with tourism, the inflow of investment funds, rising youth aspirations and not even a single call for a "bandh". In the five years since the amendment to Article 370, a whole new chapter has begun in J&K.

Hopefully, the Srinagar narrative will play out in other constituencies, too. With Uri, Tangdhar, Machil and other areas which have traditionally been pro-India and returned figures of 70 per cent and more turnout in the past, Kashmir may well have an average 50 per cent voter turnout for the first time in years. There has been no threat of violence or intimidation either. With Jammu expectedly bringing in good figures, democracy would be the winner, cementing a process begun long ago but given shape, substance, leadership and polish from August 5, 2019, onwards. Not everyone will agree with the deductions that good voting figures signal support for India. However, by not fielding its candidates in the Valley constituencies, the BJP, in many ways, has also signalled its willingness to work with some or all of the local parties, expressing a level of trust in them. The real test will, of course, be the assembly polls which could take place before the end of September. That said, I can hardly recall an incident-free parliamentary election in the Valley before this.

Poll time was one occasion when certain elements used to have a field day, targeting booths and people. The Army would invariably be chasing terrorists in south Kashmir. All these did not occur this time

as the people exercised their franchise. That is the element of change, although one interpretation continues to harp on the notion that a large turnout is actually a pushback — it signifies a vote against abrogation. But this is not in keeping with local strategies exercised in the past. There is change also occurring just across the LoC, in PoK. Economic stress can bring out the worst in a nation and Pakistan may consider itself fortunate that its weak civil society has, thus far, neither questioned the obviously rigged polls that led to the setting up of a government of convenience for the Pakistan Army, nor come out on the streets to protest the mismanagement of the national economy.

Protests in PoK that have broken out a few days ago, however, indicate a spark. As the past has shown, all "spring movements" invariably commence with a spark — recall the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in December 2010 which triggered Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution. In PoK, the exorbitant electricity bills for a region which provides much of it to the national grid, and the skyrocketing price of wheat flour have hit the common man like never before. In a region where there are many families divided by the border, modern-day social media and communication



lead to frequent information exchange. The stark difference in the quality of lives, the degree of freedom symbolised by the free and fair electoral exercise underway in J&K, opportunities due to rising figures of tourism, investments, and a quiet "feel good" factor that the people of J&K enjoy, have the potential of creating a storm in PoK, due to inevitable comparisons. The Pakistan government's relationship with PoK has always been uneasy and discriminatory. A temporary reprieve may have been achieved with some fire-fighting measures by the current government but it does not take long for a subjugated populace to erupt once it realises that a highly negative future looms for the people. The emotions are even stronger if a sunshine situation exists among the same people, sepa-

rated artificially. It may be unwise to speak of the obvious at this juncture. However, most pragmatists in India who know J&K well, have always expressed the belief that the dream of integrating J&K and PoK would eventually happen through the socio-economic route when the people of PoK themselves demand it.

For the last few years, many luminaries in India have expressed a sentiment to see an integrated J&K, which includes PoK. Some years ago, I wrote that this would eventually happen but a peaceful re-integration based on the strength of India's democratic and developmental approach would obviously be the best option. Can the current electoral exercise and the assembly elections thereafter be the harbinger of the "PoK Spring"?

India, UK reaffirm FTA commitment at Strategic Dialogue

India and Britain have reaffirmed their commitment to conclude a mutually beneficial free trade agreement (FTA) at the annual UK-India Strategic Dialogue here, as the two sides reflected the "good progress" on the 2030 Roadmap since the last review. Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra, who is on a visit to the UK, held discussions with his counterpart, Sir Philip Barton, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) on Friday. After their meeting, the FCDO said the two leaders reviewed the progress made on the UK-India 2030 Roadmap since the last strategic dialogue in January last year and looked ahead to the next phase of bilateral cooperation. "The two reflected on good progress on the 2030 Roadmap since the last review, noting key areas where the UK and India have worked together to tackle some of the world's biggest challenges," the FCDO said in a statement. "This included collaborating on the world's first malaria vaccine, working closely on India's successful G20 Presidency and increasing opportunities for students and entrepreneurs under the Migration and Mobility Partnership," the statement said. "Alongside celebrating the milestones since the last review, this year's dialogue included the ongoing commitment to negotiate a mutu-



ally beneficial free trade agreement (FTA) and enhance defence cooperation," it added. Earlier, the High Commission of India in London said Kwatra also had a "fruitful meeting" with UK Minister of State for Defence Procurement James Cartledge, during which they discussed ongoing India-UK defence capability cooperation initiatives and avenues for future collaboration. "We are delighted to host Indian Foreign Secretary Kwatra in London to underline the UK's commitment to deepening cooperation with India," said Lord Tariq Ahmad, FCDO Minister for South

Asia, after his meeting with the Foreign Secretary, which his office said covered the FTA, migration and the Commonwealth. "I look forward to our relationship going from strength to strength, working together on trade, defence, climate, and health," he added. The 2030 Roadmap was clinched between India and the UK in 2021 and includes commitments to deepen cooperation on health, climate, trade, education, science and technology, and defence by 2030. India and the UK have held 13 rounds of talks on the FTA. The 14th round started in January.

Redemption for Ahmedabad's key Ashram Road, but at a snail's pace

The city's history written all over, the arterial Ashram Road links the Satyagraha Ashram that Mahatma Gandhi founded in 1915 in Kochrab, a suburb in the southern end of Ahmedabad, to the ashram he moved into in 1917 in Sabarmati, a suburb in the north end. Over the years, the 64-year old commercial artery has become the address for not just the Gujarat Vidyapith, founded by Mahatma Gandhi in October 1920, the MJ Library for which he donated books, but also the Gujarat High Court and several single-screen cinemas. It already had along its path a 15-century mosque and the iconic Le Corbusier-designed Mill Owners' Building.

Running along the Sabarmati river, the Ashram Road remained the Central Business District (CBD) till the redevelopment of the Chimanlal Girdharlal Road or the CG Road in the early 1990s. This road that runs parallel to the Ashram Road is today symbolic of the affluent western Ahmedabad. Due to congestion and parking issues, many public buildings began to move out to the far western Ahmedabad, like the High Court that moved to Sola, nearly 6 kms away, on the SG Road in 1999. Gradually the single screen cinemas Natraj and Dipali closed down, to make way for commercial complexes. "The road which was once known for being the most happening in terms of movie theatres, has lost its sheen over the years as these closed down. Today smaller malls have movie screens taking away the business from the traditional cinema halls," says Manubhai Patel, President, Multiplex Association of Gujarat. However, after the inauguration of the Sabarmati Riverfront – built by reclaiming land on the banks of the river – in 2012, the Ashram Road was back in the spotlight with multinational food joints opening outlets here. Another big reason for the focus on Ashram Road is the fact that it is the only way to access the river from the western side of the city. Besides two younger political parties, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have their state offices on this road.

A year ago, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) took up the Ashram Road redevelopment project, called the 'Gaurav Path'. This road covers a length of 10.5 km from Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) on the Vasna-Paldi crossroads at the southern end, through Usmanpura-Vadaj junction. It is likely to end just after the RTO, to enable the Gandhi Ashram Memorial and the Precinct Redevelopment Project to consolidate the spaces along the two sides of the road. Gujarat, Gujarat development work, Gujarat development pace, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad's commercial artery, Mahatma Gandhi ashrams, Sabarmati Riverfront, arterial Ashram Road links, Satyagraha Ashram, Gujarat Vidyapith, gujarat news, indian express news A view of Ashram road in Ahmedabad. (Express Photo by Nirmal Harindran)

The AMC invited bidders for the project, but found no takers despite inviting bids thrice in the last one year. "We

quoted the project cost as per government approved prices, but the feedback received points at lack of financial viability. We hoped for some response while bidding the third time over, but unfortunately that too did not happen," a senior AMC official told The Indian Express.

The last date to apply for the third time tender process was March 14. With the Model Code of Conduct in place, a decision in this regard is expected only after the results of Lok Sabha elections are declared on June 4. "We are planning to club this project with two or three other similar projects increasing the project cost from Rs 35 crore to around Rs 200 crore," the official said. According to the official, the Ashram Road project would be offered along with a similar project in other parts of Ahmedabad to a single bidder, as per the plan. The project with an estimated total cost of around Rs 35 crore has two phases, the first stretch from Paldi cross road to Dandi Kooch circle (around 5.2 km) is slated to have heritage pathways showcasing Ahmedabad's past, replicas of Gandhian heritage and symbols of Ahmedabad's textile heritage. The second phase would extend up to the Regional Transport Office (RTO) on the north end with the same features, including a larger share of space for the pedestrian. Stressing on the preference for greenfield (fresh) projects over brownfield (expansion) ones, Prof Rutul Joshi from CEPT University said, "The focus has been on the outer peripheral new areas rather than redeveloping the old ones. Gujarat, Gujarat development work, Gujarat development pace, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad's commercial artery, Mahatma Gandhi ashrams, Sabarmati Riverfront, arterial Ashram Road links, Satyagraha Ashram, Gujarat Vidyapith, gujarat news, indian express news M J Library at Ashram Rd in Ahmedabad. (Express photo by Nirmal Harindran)

Barely 5-6 new buildings have come up in the last ten years as everyone wants to build outside the city. We need to redevelop large tracts of land with defunct use and allow systematic redevelopment. People prefer buying houses in peripheral areas like Gota, Vaishno Devi, Bopal, Shela. This is a complex problem seen in cities like Bengaluru and Pune." More lights, walkways, green spaces. The project envisages themed illuminated landscape, including beautification of the street with thematic plantation, lawn development including ornamental and flowering shrubs between the property line and proposed pedestrian walkway all along the stretch.

A focus on pedestrian movement forms the core of this project. With a minimum clear footpath 3 meters wide on both side of the Ashram Road, kerb ramps of standard gradient, tactile pavers (width of 300 mm) guiding the pedestrians with vision impairment and a pedestrian walkway to be raised 150 mm from the proposed adjoining service road are a part of the redevelopment design. Elaborating on the importance of Ashram Road, Manvita Baradi, Founder and Director, Urban Man-



agement Centre, Ahmedabad, who also serves as a member of the Heritage Conservation Cell of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, says, "Buildings like the RBI, ATMA (Ahmedabad Textile Mill Owners' Association), Gujarat Vidyapith, Navjivan should be notified and conserved in their context and then redevelopment should be planned around so that these buildings are not lost." "You needed a spine parallel to Sabarmati River that was Ashram Road. Listing and grading of buildings outside the walled city is important for heritage that should be conserved and preserved. These are the knowledge points of evolution of concrete material, architectural knowledge, the bungalow typology that was never Indian but taken from the West, the housing typology that got established, we have to guard and conserve these. The 1920s style bungalows will not be there in the coming years anymore," said Baradi. Among the iconic structures that moved out are the Gujarat High Court. A major landmark on the Ashram road — the Old RBI building opposite the ATMA House was brought down recently with its operations shifting to the RBI building on the Gandhi Bridge side of the Ashram Road. Among the iconic buildings to return is the Patang Hotel, which reopened last October. The 'Eye of Ahmedabad' that came up in 1987 after three years of construction work, was relaunched in October 2023 as Patang Re-evolve, the city's only revolving restaurant originally designed by the famous Hasmukh Chandulal Patel, the founder of the Ahmedabad-based architecture firm HCP Design Planning and Management Private Limited, now run by his son Bimal Patel. Gujarat, Gujarat development work, Gujarat development pace, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad's commercial artery, Mahatma Gandhi ashrams, Sabarmati Riverfront, arterial Ashram Road links, Satyagraha Ashram, Gujarat Vidyapith, gujarat news, indian express news Members and supporters of Gandhinagar Queer Pride foundation painting a wall near IIM crossing, Vastrapur with rainbow colours to make the city more queer friendly on Sunday. (Express photo

by Nirmal Harindran) "When the entire city is trying to move out to the SG Highway, SP Ring Road, we decided to bring Ahmedabad's icon back to the heart of the city. To cater to people who live on this side of the city, too. Built at a time when most structures in Ahmedabad were not more than four storeys, Patang Hotel with its 22-storey revolving restaurant, was ahead of its time," said Neel Thakkar, director of Patang Hotel. Inspired by the 'Chabutaro', a traditional tower-like structure where birds are fed, it rotates 221 feet above the ground, on the banks of the Sabarmati River, while offering a panoramic view of both the old and the new Ahmedabad. "This will be the first building to have a project mapping where Patang's exterior will be used as a surface to showcase. We have roped in the experts who have done this for Burj Khalifa," Thakkar says, talking about the future plans for the property. "A lot of corporate houses are showing interest in the area. With the kind of high-end office space, there will be different clientele on the road with national presence too. Cities can keep moving but we cannot ignore the heritage. SG Highway of SBR may be the finest development but the old city heritage will never lose its charm," says Thakkar. Though the retail businesses have shifted out from Ashram Road, corporate entities are still holding on. Citing the redevelopment of Srinagar's Lal Chowk and Polo View market, Keshav Varma, Chairman of the Sabarmati Riverfront Development Corporation Ltd, told this paper that the revival of the core city serves economic logic for any area.

Stressing on pedestrian spaces and movement, Varma, who also chairs the Centre's High Level Committee Urban Planners constituted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs said, "Initially, we had plans to develop Ashram Road to be like Delhi's Connaught Place with covered areas. As a historic street of our country, the spine of Ahmedabad, it has to be driven by pedestrians and not cars which is the case across the world where central business districts are pedestrian oriented. Unencumbered pedestrian movement has to be done."