

## Daughters of bonded laborers from Mahabubnagar clear class 10 exam, aim at brighter future

Mahabubnagar: Despite homelessness and their parents being bonded labourers, two girls from the Motinagar colony in Mahabubnagar district centre have become the first-generation literates of their family by passing Class 10 recently. They have now become a ray of hope for their illiterate parents. Clearing matriculation was a historic milestone as far as Nandini and Anusha were concerned as they broke the shackles of illiteracy and of bonded labor that held their family for quite a long time. While Nandini secured 7.8 GPA, Anusha got 6 GPA, bringing recognition to their family and smiles on the faces of their parents. They both studied from Class VI to SSC at a KGBV in Maheshwaram of Sangareddy district.

The girls' performance holds significance considering the pitiable background of their parents who worked as bonded laborers in a stone quarry in Karnataka from 2017 to 2019. They were rescued and returned to Mahabubnagar in 2020. They were determined to give a bright future for their daughters. Undeterred by poverty,

they refused to let Nandini and Anusha become child laborers. Our parents don't even know their nativity and origins. They moved from one quarry to another in search of livelihood. All their life they spent in the quarry. They never exercised their right to voting because they were not aware of it. However, they did not make us bonded laborers like many parents and extended support to us in continuing studies, facing all odds," Nandini said.

In 2017, the girls' parents took Rs.10,000 as advance from a quarry owner, which pushed them into a debt trap. Each day, they worked for 19 hours in extreme heat and with no protective gear. They were offered meagre wages. Their dire situation continued until 2019, when the police, acting on a social worker's complaint, rescued them and sent them back to Mahabubnagar. Nandini recalled that during schooling, she had the guilt of her inability to help her parents while they toiled to support her education. She recounted that they had struggled for education during the Covid-19 lockdown when



they were unable to get basic study materials.

Unfazed by the challenges, the girls passed in SSC with flying colors and now aspire to pursue higher education. While

Nandini would like to become a teacher, Anusha's ambition is to crack a post of nurse at a government hospital. The gritty girls aim to support their parents and help them lead a happy life in future.

## What is the future of Hyderabad real estate?



Hyderabad: The future of the real estate sector, which is witnessing a lean period in Telangana, especially in Hyderabad, has become a hot topic in different circles following the political developments in the neighbouring State of Andhra Pradesh. With Telugu Desam chief and AP Chief Minister designate N Chandrababu Naidu declaring Amaravathi as the State capital, the buzz over real estate prospects in Hyderabad gathered

steam on Tuesday. Many feel that the current slump could turn worse, with prices here standing a chance to fall. Balaji, an X user said: "Rates in Hyderabad are far beyond the reach for middle class to invest. Correction should happen whereas in AP one can research and get a good deal. Entering with a good price point is the key.." Viswa, another X user said: "People invest in the areas where they can get higher returns for next 2-3 years... Amaravathi area has that opportunity. Ma-

major correction will be there in Hyderabad Real Estate..." Echoing a similar opinion, Abhi, another X user said "Neopolis is heart of the city? The thing is Hyderabad already has many commercial properties in Gachibowli and Nanakramguda, which are ready to occupy but Amaravathi is different.. there will be exponential growth for initial investors, and Hyderabad Real estate is already saturated.." Amidst these speculations and debates, CREDAI however feels Hyderabad would continue to excel in the real estate sector. A CREDAI member said there definitely would be buzz from the neighbouring State. A few Andhra

origin investors would try to liquidate and may make some investments but that should not be a problem, he said "Hyderabad was never a competition to any city, it has its own identity and offers diverse opportunities. When HITEC City was constructed, real estate did not spur overnight, it grew steadily following infrastructure development and other factors," he pointed out. "Irrespective of positive or negative, it will take at least three years for the impact to be felt. Meanwhile, the State government here should ensure Hyderabad's image does not suffer a dent," he added.

## iSprout to unveil Flyers Club for conducting business meetings at GMR Hyderabad airport

Hyderabad: iSprout unveiled its plan to launch the iSprout Flyers Club, a one-stop solution for conducting business initiatives that will cater to corporate travellers at the GMR Hyderabad International Airport. The firm is investing Rs.1 crore for the project, which will be launched in Hyderabad in the next two months, with subsequent plans to expand in other ma-

major airports in New Delhi, Bengaluru and Goa. The vision behind this new-age initiative is to enable corporate travellers to conduct strategic and confidential meetings in secured meeting rooms, workstations, and business centre services in the comfort of exclusive privileges like food and beverage options, a press release said.

# After Gaza, backsliding of counter-terrorism narrative

The world was on the edge of its seat as both Israel and Iran came close to war in the past few days. Iran responded with an aerial attack to avenge Israel's strike on a facility in Damascus, Syria, which killed one of its senior military officials. After a seemingly controlled Israeli retaliation against Iranian military facilities, Tehran did not escalate further. These tensions in West Asia, as the war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas continues, are taking place amidst multiple fissures in the global order. The United States (US), despite playing a critical role in the region, is both, unkeen to being part of another long-drawn military competition, while simultaneously attempting to maintain its hegemonic power structure when the likes of China and Russia are playing spoiler. In the middle, the likes of Hamas, are doubling down on their political power and clout beyond just tactical assaults.

Qatar has hosted the political representation of Hamas since 2012, an office opened with the blessings of both the US and even Israel. Tel Aviv reportedly continued a level of cash flow to Gaza under Hamas control, despite concerns being raised. However, the Qatari leadership is now having second thoughts about continuing to host Hamas at a time when negotiations with the group spearheaded by Doha and Egypt seem to be at an impasse. The Qatari prime minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani is reevaluating his mediation role after increasing criticism against the Gulf State. Simultaneously, the chairman of the political bureau of Hamas in Doha, Ismail Haniyeh, recently visited Turkey as rumours started to make rounds that the group was potentially looking for a new office space. Hamas, proscribed as a terror organisation by the US since 1997, has managed to empower its political office by many folds since the October 7 terror strike against Israel. Utilising the fact that the group's military wing in Gaza still holds dozens of Israeli hostages captive, and not just piggybacking, but manipulating pro-Palestine narratives as pro-Hamas ones, these lines have been significantly blurred by a global pushback against Israeli military action in Gaza and the rising number of civilian casualties.

Hamas is not the first one to benefit from the empowerment of the political narrative diluting the militant one, and more specifically, being platformed by the realpolitik of Doha. The Taliban in Afghanistan is now in its third year of holding power in Kabul, and the deal which got them to walk in and take control, was signed with the US in Qatar in February 2020. The Taliban's political office in Doha arguably gained significant political clout while the group enacted its militant activities in Afghanistan unabated, mobilising successfully the old proverbial adage which says, "You have the watches, we have the time". Hamas seems to be playing the same deck of cards. Political negotiation with a pro-



scribed extremist group is not a new idea. Interestingly, the group's own appeal and politics often drive decision-making on what level they can be engaged with, if at all. Offhanded and reactionary engagement has dire consequences as well and it potentially legitimises both ideology and the polity. In the post-9/11 and War on Terror (WoT) era, these have consequences. This WoT era, now on its deathbed after wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, allowed many countries to finally define their own terror threats and counter-terror requirements. Multilateralism led by US power came out

with new tools to counter these threats and there was a sense of absolutism on disallowing terrorism and accompanying narratives space or attention. These new tools benefited many, including India. While there is no doubt that despite the mistakes and ills made during the WoT period (such as the Iraq war), there were benefits as well which were more visible for countries that usually did not get space or attention on raising issues of terrorism, India has tried to hold this momentum together within its limited capacities by hosting a session of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism

Committee in 2022 and the subsequent release of the Delhi Declaration specifically concentrating on the use of emerging technologies by terror groups. Global counter-terror narratives are backsliding, and this trend needs to be arrested as a compromise with a section of these groups becomes an acceptable way out. Political empowerment of certain ideologies is myopic deterrence without long-term thinking factored in. A better quality of thinking is required in countering terrorism that goes beyond a level of normalisation for concessionary policies and politics.

## No Israel agreement if Gaza war persists: Hamas

Gaza: A Hamas official has said that the group will not accept any agreement with Israel that does not include a cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip. Sami Abu Zuhri, a senior Hamas official, said in a statement on Sunday that the group "will not accept any agreement that does not include a cessation of war in Gaza", Xinhua news agency reported. Abu Zuhri added that Israel's response, which reached the movement through mediators, is under study, and that it is too early to reach a decision regarding it.

A Hamas delegation is scheduled to visit Cairo on Monday, to deliver the movement's response regarding a ceasefire in Gaza and to negotiate a hostage-for-prisoner swap deal with Israel, according to a source from the movement. The source, who preferred not

to mention his name, added that the delegation is headed by Khalil Al-Hayya, the Hamas deputy chief in Gaza. Earlier in the day, as reported by Israeli public radio, a senior Israeli official described the current development as "decisive moments in the efforts to reach a new hostage deal with Hamas." The official added, "We are awaiting the response of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar," expecting it to be made "within the next 48 hours."

He noted that Israel has expressed readiness to make "very significant concessions" regarding the return of displaced persons to northern Gaza. On Saturday, Hamas announced that it had received Israel's official response to the movement's position on the Gaza ceasefire, which was submitted to the mediators Egypt and Qatar on April 13. At the time, Hamas reit-

erated its demands, including "a permanent ceasefire, the withdrawal of the (Israeli) army from Gaza, the return of the displaced to their areas and places of residence, the increase of relief and aid for the strip, and the start of its reconstruction."

Abu Zuhri noted in the Sunday statement that Hamas would study the new Israeli proposal, and upon completion, it would hand over its response to the mediators. The movement's announcement came after Egyptian Intelligence Chief Abbas Kamel recently arrived in Israel in an effort to broker a ceasefire deal between the conflicting parties. Kamel held a series of meetings with Israeli security officials on the potential military operation in Rafah and the release of detainees, according to Israeli media outlets. Qatar,

# Digital The Most Lucrative Channel for FMCG Brands: Meta Studies

RoI which is the incremental revenue generated per Rupee invested is 1.42 for digital mediums vis-a-vis 0.95 non-digital mediums. Within this, the RoI from Meta is 1.76 for every rupee invested. Kantar study: Meta has been instrumental in driving brand imagery where around 20% of all media led brand growth comes from Meta. Both Meta studies quote investment by FMCG/CPG brands on Meta poses stronger returns indexed to traditional channels across categories like food, household care, personal care, baby care, laundry, and health & hygiene. India, 2024: On the sidelines of Meta Marketing Summit - FMCG edition held in Mumbai, the company announced findings from several Meta commissioned studies with leading market research firms Nielsen and Kantar that show the growing relevance of digital for the country's FMCG sector. Among the key findings, the studies call out digital platforms, especially Meta, a crucial pillar in driving brand imagery, equity, and higher return on investment across categories.

Said Arun Srinivas, Director and Head (India), Ads Business, Meta, "The FMCG industry is a leading contributor to the country's overall ad-ex, and a marked shift in its media consumption patterns is going to be significant for the country's creative ecosystem and the digital economy. The studies with Nielsen and Kantar clearly demonstrate the transformative power of digital channels for the FMCG sector. Catering to such an important industry, we are excited to see Meta platforms not only enhancing brand imagery and mindshare but also delivering exceptional returns on media investments."

The Nielsen study noted that the return on investment (RoI), which is the incremental revenue generated per Rupee invested is 1.42 for digital mediums vis-a-vis 0.95 non-digital mediums. Within this, the RoI from Meta is 1.76 for every rupee invested.

On the other hand, the Kantar study reveals that the digital platforms, especially Meta, contribute significantly in building a brand. Meta has been instrumental in driving brand imagery where around 20% of all media led brand growth comes from Meta. Furthermore, digital media channels led by Meta provide the highest ROI for building mind measures, according to the study. Both the studies highlight that the investment by FMCG/CPG brands on Meta poses stronger returns indexed to traditional channels across categories including food, household care, personal care, baby care, laundry, and health & hygiene.

The summit was attended by prominent industry leaders and brands from the FMCG industry that shed light on the evolving consumer landscape and its effects on changing brand strategies, the use of Reels, AI and Business Messaging as new frontiers of marketing, and brands leveraging Meta platforms for enhancing their reach and growth. "In today's fragmented ecosystem, quantifying the effectiveness of media strategies has become a daunting challenge. Cross platform nuances require a laser focused approach to uncover what truly drives performance. Nielsen Market-



ing Mix Modeling (MMM) enables marketers to assess the impact of their investments, understand what is working, and

unlocks several opportunities to increase ROI and drive profit, bringing accuracy and simplicity to an increasingly complex ad-

vertising environment in India," said Abhinav Maheshwari, VP APAC Nielsen, Marketing Effectiveness.

## Manoj Bajpayee says Anurag Kashyap is a 'loner' and a 'recluse'; what do these qualities indicate?

In a recent interview, acclaimed actor Manoj Bajpayee shed light on his long-standing collaboration with filmmaker Anurag Kashyap, describing him as a 'loner' and 'detached' individual. Bajpayee, in an interview with Sushant Sinha on YouTube, shared that Kashyap is very well-read and wise, qualities that he admires and has learned from. But, the former pointed out that the latter can be unpredictable in social situations. "He's a detached person; he's a loner. Actually, he's my junior by several years, but because he's a wise man — he reads a lot — I have learned a lot from him. But he's a recluse; he enjoys his company and doesn't meet too many people. He's the kind of person who can speak to you for two hours, but in the third hour starts hating you," Bajpayee said.

While there's nothing wrong with spending some time alone, the terms 'loner' and 'detached' can be misconstrued sometimes as negative traits. But, is that true?

Gurleen Baruah, organisational psychologist at That Culture Thing says, "It's important to distinguish between loneliness, which is generally negative, and being a loner, which can be a positive personality trait often associated with introversion. Loneliness can occur even in the presence of others if there's a lack of deep,

authentic connections. In contrast, loners prefer their own company, valuing independence and autonomy." Being a loner and detached, she states, can foster increased creativity, independence, focus, and the ability to engage in deep work. Individuals who enjoy solitude, reading, working on their craft, and using alone time to recharge can thrive, enhancing their well-being and personal growth. Drawbacks of being perceived as a 'loner' or 'detached' While being a loner and detached can be positive on a personal level, these traits can be considered differently by the society we live in.

One major drawback is stigma and misjudgment, Baruah stresses. "Society often equates social interaction with well-being, so those who prefer solitude are frequently labeled as lonely, sad, or depressed. This can lead to unfair assumptions about their mental health and happiness, despite many loners thriving in their own company and finding fulfillment in solitary activities." manoj bajpayee, anurag kashyap Loners and introverts can cultivate deep, meaningful relationships. Additionally, loners may face unwarranted pity and social exclusion. People might feel sorry for them, assuming they must be suffering, and exclude them from social events or professional opportunities, believing they lack social skills or are not team players. Furthermore, loners' behaviour

can be misinterpreted as arrogance or aloofness, hindering the formation of meaningful relationships. In professional environments, their preference for working independently may be seen as a lack of engagement, Baruah informs. Ways to cultivate a healthy balance between solitude and social interaction

Here are some ways to achieve this balance and the benefits it brings, according to Baruah: Quality over quantity: Loners and introverts can cultivate deep, meaningful relationships with a few close friends and family members. These connections provide emotional support and a sense of belonging. Scheduled social interactions: Setting aside dedicated time for social activities can help maintain relationships without compromising alone time. Engage in shared interests: Participating in group activities related to their interests, such as book clubs, creative workshops, or hobby groups, allows loners to connect with like-minded people. Balance in professional life: In the workplace, loners can balance solitary tasks with collaborative projects. They can engage in team meetings and brainstorming sessions while also ensuring they have time to work independently. Structured alone time: Scheduling regular alone time helps loners recharge and maintain their well-being. Activities such as reading, writing, meditating, or working on personal projects

# Canon Developing New RF-S7.8mm f/4 STM Dual Lens for EOS R7 Camera for Recording Spatial Video for Apple Vision Pro

Canon Inc. announced on 11 June 2024 that it is developing the RF-S7.8mm f/4 STM Dual lens for its popular EOS R7 camera, enabling users to capture life's most precious moments in spatial video, and then relive those memories on the Apple Vision Pro. The new DUAL lens is the latest addition to Canon's EOS VR System lineup, and will be available later this fall. Canon is the first camera manufacturer to introduce a dedicated, interchangeable lens that enables pro users to capture stunning spatial video to experience on the Apple Vision Pro. With the RF-S7.8mm f/4 STM Dual lens, videographers can record gorgeous spatial video even in the most challenging lighting conditions. After capturing video with the interchangeable lens, the EOS VR Utility app transforms the video captured from the camera to spatial video, which viewers can enjoy on the Apple Vision Pro.

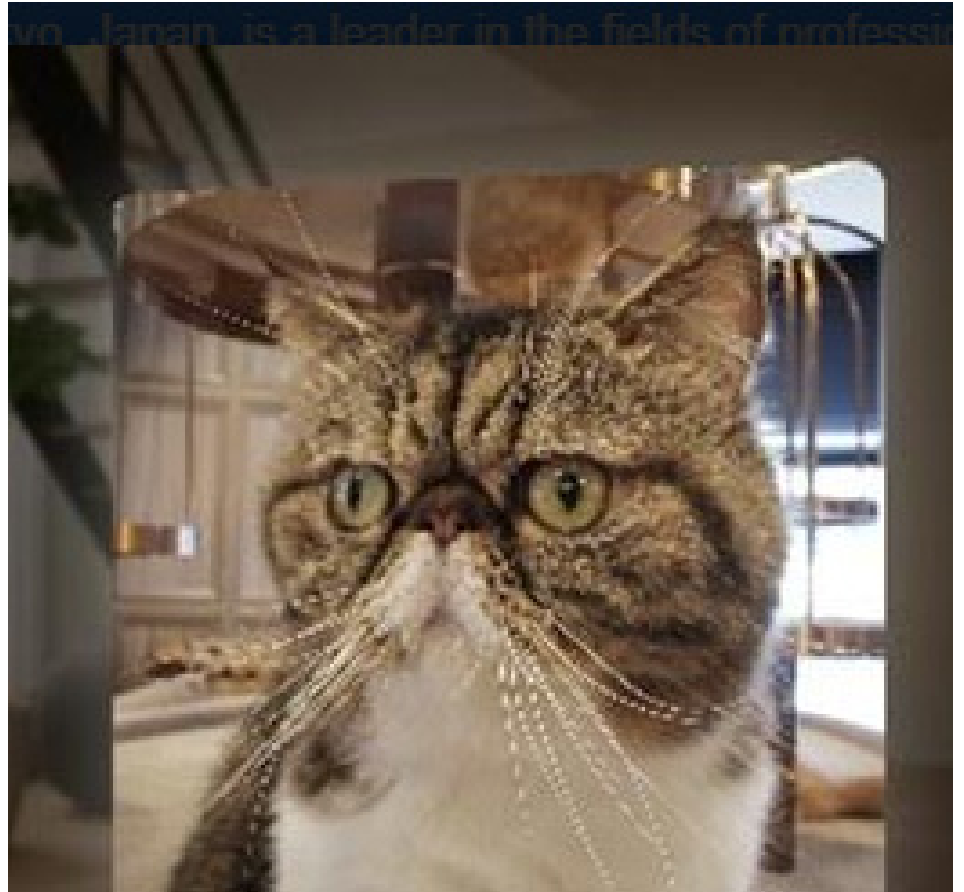
The RF-S7.8mm f/4 STM Dual lens features a field angle that is similar to a person's field of view, which enables videographers to naturally capture memorable moments. The lens is also equipped with a high-speed autofocus mechanism, so users of all levels can record amazing spatial video.

Canon launched the EOS VR System for capturing immersive and VR video in 2021, and since then has met the needs for video production in diverse fields including entertainment, tourism, and education. The EOS VR System features dual lenses and utilizes the left and right lenses

to produce beautiful content with incredible depth and dimension. To streamline the video production workflow, the light entering from the respective lenses is recorded on a single CMOS sensor, which eliminates the need for camera position adjustments or synchronization prior to shooting, or the need for piecing together footage after filming.

The RF-S7.8mm f/4 STM Dual lens is the latest example of how Canon is continuing to meet the creative needs of pro users who strive to produce stunning immersive video as they explore new ways of storytelling. About Canon Inc.

Canon Inc. (NYSE: CAJ), headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, is a leader in the fields of professional and consumer imaging equipment, industrial equipment, and information systems. Canon's extensive range of products includes production printers, multifunction office systems, inkjet and laser printers, cameras, video and cinematography equipment, network cameras, medical systems and semiconductor-manufacturing equipment. Originally established in 1937 as Precision Optical Industry, Co., Ltd., a camera manufacturer, Canon has successfully diversified and globalized to become a worldwide industry leader in professional and consumer imaging systems and solutions. With approximately 180,775 employees worldwide, the Canon Group includes manufacturing and marketing subsidiaries in Japan, the Americas, Europe, Asia and Oceania; and a global R&D network with companies based in the



United States, Europe, Asia and Australia. Canon's consolidated net sales for fiscal 2022 (ended December 31, 2022) totaled \$30.31 billion (at an exchange rate of ¥133=U.S. \$1). Visit the Canon Inc. website at: [global.canon](http://global.canon)

# Telangana employee bags gold medal at national level

Shri Pradeep Kumar made it true that people become sages with hard work and perseverance. Pradeep, who is working as an Assistant Accounts Officer in Rachakonda Commissionerate, has achieved a gold medal in powerlifting at the national level and inspired the youth passionate about sports.... In the National Level Power Lifting competitions held in New Delhi, from 07.06.2024 to 10.06.2024, he lifted a total weight of 170 kg dead lift in the weight category of 83 kg and won the gold medal along with the first position. On this occasion Rachakonda Police Commissioner Dr. Shri. Tarun Joshi congratulated Pradeep Kumar for inspiring youth by achieving medals even at this age, and participating in state, national and world level competitions with a passion for sports. CP specially commended for keeping the name of Telangana state at the world level and wished him more success in the future. Chief Accounts Officer Suguna Garu, Junior Accounts Officer Venkateswara Rao and Senior Accountant Abhinav participated in this program.



# Xiaomi 14 CIVI Launches in India: Co-engineered with Leica, This Camera-Centric Powerhouse Enhances the Xiaomi 14 Series

Xiaomi, a global leader in technology and innovation, unveils the Xiaomi 14 CIVI, a stunning addition to the acclaimed Xiaomi 14 Series. Co-engineered with Leica, Xiaomi 14 CIVI takes forward Xiaomi's legacy in mobile imaging and smartphone photography. The Xiaomi 14 CIVI doubles-down on camera performance while seamlessly inheriting the iconic design language of the Xiaomi 14 Series, marking a significant evolution in the flagship segment. This demonstrates Xiaomi's ongoing commitment to making cutting-edge innovations available to everyone.

"Building on the phenomenal success of the Xiaomi 14 Series, co-engineered with Leica, we're excited to announce the latest addition of the Xiaomi 14 CIVI to the line-up", says Anuj Sharma, Chief Marketing Officer, Xiaomi India. "The Xiaomi 14 Series pushed the boundaries of smartphone photography, innovative design and unmatched performance. Our aim was to expand these latest innovations to a wider audience. With the launch of Xiaomi 14 CIVI, we are rewriting the rules of innovation and redefining what a smartphone in this segment can offer. It delivers a complete flagship experience, from its stunning design to its everyday performance that surpasses benchmarks, all equipped with the best cameras we are offering in this segment. The Xiaomi 14 CIVI isn't just a phone; it's a statement."

## A Symphony of Design and Comfort

The Xiaomi 14 Series has redefined mobile excellence with its captivating design and cutting-edge technology. With the Xiaomi 14 CIVI, Xiaomi seamlessly integrates with the series' design language while carving its own unique path.

### 1. Matcha Green: Embracing Nature's Tranquillity

Inspired by nature, Matcha Green features high-end Nano tech vegan leather for exceptional wear resistance, skin-friendly feel, and easy cleaning. It inherits the Xiaomi 14 Ultra's anti-yellowing and anti-peeling properties for lasting beauty. A revolutionary 64% bio-based carbon material derived from sustainable sources, creates a unique parquet pattern on each phone, making every Xiaomi 14 CIVI Matcha Green one-of-a-kind.

### 2. Cruise Blue: A Breathtaking Blend of Blues

The Cruise Blue embodies the awe-inspiring beauty of two distinct bodies of water merging into a mesmerizing blue. Xiaomi has meticulously crafted the underlying patterns beneath the glass, ensuring a smooth surface while maintaining the visual depth. An exceptional Anti-glare glass completes the package, effectively resisting fingerprints and smudges for a pristine look.

### 3. Shadow Black: Understated Elegance with a Stellar Twist

For those who appreciate sophisticated simplicity, the Shadow Black offers a timeless masterpiece. This features a smooth-to-the-touch Anti-glare glass with a sophisticated matte effect, resisting fingerprints and smudges. All three variants



## Xiaomi doubles-down on camera prowess, design & performance, delivering a complete 2024 flagship smartphone

of the Xiaomi 14 CIVI boast color-matched metal frames for a unified and premium look.

Beyond aesthetics, the 14 CIVI prioritizes user comfort. By leveraging its unique materials, Xiaomi has achieved an incredibly lightweight design at just 177 grams and 7.4 mm thickness. The phone's unique quad-curved body finish makes it one of the most comfortable phones to hold. In

fact, it's the sleekest device in its segment.

### A Flagship Display Experience

Xiaomi 14 CIVI boasts a groundbreaking floating Quad-curve display, inherited from the Xiaomi 14 Ultra. This innovative design seamlessly merges aesthetics with practicality, achieving a perfect balance between stunning visuals and comfortable use. It's one of the first dis-

plays of its kind in this segment, offering a truly immersive viewing experience. The display features a smooth 120Hz refresh rate for seamless scrolling, while Dolby Vision® certification and support for a staggering 68+ billion colors support a cinematic viewing experience. Xiaomi 14 CIVI is also equipped with Gorilla® Glass Victus® 2 for the screen that has added heightened durability for long-term use.

# Govt betrayed farmers, says Niranjana Reddy

Hyderabad: Voicing concern over the worsening plight of the farming community in the State, BRS leader and former Agriculture Minister S Niranjana Reddy said on Wednesday that the Congress party would pay a high price for betraying the farmers on all counts. Addressing a news conference at Telangana Bhavan, he said the Congress government had won the polls making false promises to the farmers, tenant farmers and farm workers. Farmers all over the State were gearing up for the

Vanakalam agriculture activity following the onset of monsoon. The government had failed to extend any kind of crop investment support so far. Farmers had pinned high hopes on the promise of Rs.15000 per acre assured by the government under Rythu Bharosa. But the government had failed to finalise the modalities of the scheme so far. He demanded the government to implement what it had assured to the farmers under Rythu Bharosa without any cuts in the benefits due to them. He demanded the Chief Minister to convene

the cabinet meeting immediately to discuss key issues pertaining to the farming community such as Rythu Bharosa, Rythu Bima, the loan waiver up to Rs.2 lakh and Rs 500 per quintal bonus promised to paddy growers. Farmers were quite uncertain of the government support under the Rythu Bharosa in the wake of reports that it would be restricted to small and marginal farmers only. The government should spell out whether it would be fulfilling its promise of financial support to the tenant farmers and farm workers or not, he said.

# Managing longevity challenges

The initiative has also started a large-scale clinical study that will involve researchers from multiple IISc departments, clinicians, industry, philanthropists and civil society. According to the IISc statement, this initiative seeks to enhance the understanding of ageing through both fundamental and applied research and to develop solutions that can improve quality of life. It brings together a multidisciplinary team of experts from academia, industry, and healthcare to address complex challenges related to ageing. The initiative will leverage advanced research to develop interventions that can help manage age-related diseases more effectively, with an emphasis on promoting healthy ageing across India. "There is an urgent need for diverse stakeholders from academia, healthcare and industry to come together, and nurture technology development and deep research on healthy ageing," said Govindan Rangarajan, director, IISc. "Many research groups at IISc have already been working on ageing and associated challenges for years. We are optimistic that this timely initiative will have a significant impact on tackling the growing burden of ageing in the country." India may currently be a young country but there is a need for the government to think of, and take steps, for the future. Aware of the bur-

den of an ageing population that India will inevitably see in years to come, the central government launched a study in 2016. It is the world's largest study on the elderly - The Longitudinal Ageing Study (LASI) — to track ageing patterns and diseases affecting India's 103 million older people over 60 years. As part of the study, experts are tracking 60,000 persons across states and union territories every two years over the next 25 years.

With people living longer, the global share of older people aged 60 years and above has increased from 9.2% in 1990 to 11.7% in 2013 and will reach 21.1% by 2050, according to government data. The number of older people is projected to exceed the number of children for the first time in 2047. With 65% of India's population under 35 years old, there will be 350 million people above 60 years by 2050. "The numbers are enough to tell us that there is a strong need to think of ways to ensure this ageing population lives comfortably and not in misery," said a senior official in the central government, who is a part of the study, requesting anonymity. Prashanth Prakash, founding partner, Accel India, one of the stakeholders in the IISc study, said: "The Longevity India Initiative challenges the notion that



ageing is an inevitable fate. As we study the complexities of ageing, we recognise the importance of considering diverse factors that shape it, including lifestyle, culture, genetics, and environment.

With India's unique demographic landscape, existing longevity research may not suffice. This initiative is an attempt to bring together multiple stakeholders working in the space, and explore the subject

factoring in India's specific and diverse needs.

"Advancing ageing-related scientific research is key and we believe research-based interventions can pave the way for healthy ageing in India," Prakash added. Rhythma Kaul, national deputy editor, health, analyses the impact of the most significant piece of news this week in the health sector

## Fight the rising tide of hunger



With food insecurity worsening, the Sustainable Development Goal of zero-hunger by 2030 seems all but abandoned. The Food Security Information Network (FSIN)—an alliance between the United Nations (UN) and several development groups—reports that 282 million people around the world faced acute hunger in 2023, largely because of conflict and the climate crisis. That this was the fifth consecutive year of a rise in the number of people facing acute hunger is evidence of a deeply skewed food availability and access dynamic, given large surpluses in some economies and near-absolute deprivation in some regions.

Conflict has played a major role in the upswing of hunger since 2016-17. The FSIN report makes particular mention of the conflict in Gaza and Sudan, where the food crisis is raging in step with violence. Conflict becomes a multipronged attack on

food security by pulling down food production in impacted areas, disrupting food supply chains with the destruction of key storage infrastructure, extreme escalations in logistics cost, and the risk to life and limb in delivery, and fuelling desperation which, in turn, stokes further conflict. And now, the weaponisation of hunger by warring parties through the blocking of international aid and relief operations, as was seen in Gaza and Ukraine, has added another dimension. Against this backdrop, and the portents of the climate crisis compounding, nations need to act in a concerted manner. First, warring parties must ensure unimpeded food supply to conflict-affected regions (Israel can't be allowed to "punish" Gaza through a man-made famine). Second, national climate-coping strategies must make climate-resilient agriculture a leading part of adaptation efforts, with a focus on the cultivation of hardy crops,

weaning away from water-intensive grains, bio-fortification to lessen nutritional insecurity, and closing the production gap, among others. To address the skewed dynamic of surplus and wastage in some

economies and deprivation in others, tariff and non-tariff barriers for agri trade must be lowered for easier flow of food to destinations that need it. Only then can the zero-hunger aim be revived.

## Secunderabad Club hosts "Chromatic Conversation"



Hyderabad: Secunderabad Club on Sunday hosted a confluence of creativity and color with the National Art Show, "Chromatic Conversation." Organized by Artiste Culture, this distinguished event featured over 30 artists from across the nation, presenting more than 60 exquisite artworks.

Among the featured artists,

Hyderabad-based Krishnendu Halder captivated attendees with seven of his water-color paintings. Halder's works depict various locales across India, from the ghats of Varanasi and the streets of Hyderabad. His realistic portrayals of mechanics at work and the bustling streets are noted for their depth and emotive power, making them standout highlights of the exhibition. "

# What a history of hostage swaps can tell us about a potential deal in Gaza

Back in the later months of 2011, Israel released 1,027 (mostly Arab/Palestinian) prisoners, of whom 280 were serving life sentences. In return, Hamas released one captured Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldier, Gilad Shalit. This exchange remains the highest number of prisoners that the state of Israel has ever released in return for a single soldier. The hostage-prisoner swap teaches both parties different lessons each time and contributes to what either party considers as incentives in the following instance. It determines whether to push for or walk away from the deal, which almost always has served as a precursor to a ceasefire. Back in the later months of 2011, Israel released 1,027 (mostly Arab/Palestinian) prisoners, of whom 280 were serving life sentences. In return, Hamas released one captured Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldier, Gilad Shalit. This exchange remains the highest number of prisoners that the state of Israel has ever released in return for a single soldier. The hostage-prisoner swap teaches both parties different lessons each time and contributes to what either party considers as incentives in the following instance. It determines whether to push for or walk away from the deal, which almost always has served as a precursor to a ceasefire.

As Israel's large-scale bombing of Gaza continues and mediators press both the Netanyahu-led Israeli war cabinet and Hamas leadership to accept a deal, around 130 Israeli hostages remain in Hamas captivity. While mediators (Egypt, Qatar, USA) grow increasingly critical of Israel's intransigence vis-a-vis past proposals for an exchange deal and seek a ceasefire prior to the beginning of Ramzan (March 10th), a look at Israel's past shines more light on its current priorities.

Since its inception, Israel has had a long history of engaging in deals to exchange Israeli captives for Arab prisoners. A Times of Israel report outlines the most prominent instances: In 1955, it exchanged 40 Syrian soldiers for four IDF soldiers (three of whom were alive at the time of the exchange); in 1983, 4,700 Arabs were being held by the Palestine Liberation Organization were exchanged for six Israeli prisoners; two years later, Israel released 1,150 Palestinians (including those charged with murder) for three IDF soldiers being held by the Syria-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Moreover, in 2004 and 2008, Israel released a further 400 Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners as part of its deals with Hezbollah (at a time when Israel was just exiting the 2006 Lebanese War).

Implemented under a hardline Benjamin Netanyahu as premier, there was already significant push-back within Israel to such a deal. Its Supreme Court had to dispense with multiple petitions seeking to block the exchange. In any case, the Shalit exchange was the last of its kind. For

Netanyahu himself, a key incentive for the Shalit exchange was a lack of intelligence on the hostage's location, rather than an innate belief in the strategic efficacy of the swap as a method that meets Israel's national interests. Indeed, in a 1986 book that he edited titled *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*, Netanyahu argued for "a policy that in effect tells the terrorists that we will not give in to your demands. We insist that you free the hostages. If you do not do so peaceably, we are ready to use force." While the lopsided nature of the exchange reduced Netanyahu's appetite for a similar deal in the future, critics had argued that it would incentivise Hamas to attempt similar kidnappings in the future to secure more concessions from Israel. As it so happened, two years following the 2014 Gaza war, Hamas admitted to holding two Israeli civilians in captivity along with the bodies of two IDF soldiers killed in the 2014 Gaza war, with negotiations for a swap with prisoners extending into 2021 and ending in a deadlock.

Moreover, the November 2023 swap as part of the humanitarian pause in the current war, featured a less skewed hostage-to-prisoner ratio than in the past: 50 Israeli hostages for 150 Palestinian prisoners. Among the prisoners released, Israel has reportedly even re-arrested at least 11 Palestinians, reflecting Tel Aviv's lack of faith in the strength of Hamas' bargaining position and hence its reduced incentives to uphold its own commitments.

Implications for the current war Prior to the current war, holding Israeli captives was more means than objective. For Hamas, the historically lopsided numbers in the prisoners-to-hostage ratio yielded greater confidence in using Israeli hostages as a low-investment, high-return instrument to garner concessions from Tel Aviv. It also acted as a hedge against Israel's conventional military advantage; Hamas arguably took a page out of Hezbollah's tactic of ambushes combined with kidnappings to secure new means of leverage. October seventh, however, while being the same in nature, was significantly different in scale. Hamas' high casualty terror attack fulfilled a shock-and-awe objective while a high number of hostages worked as a tried and tested hedging tool that would eventually draw Israel to the negotiating table, or act as leverage to dampen the intensity of Israel's response. Except, the scale of the October 7th attack as well as Netanyahu's progressively worsening internal political position meant that Israel's response too would break new records in scale. Essentially, for Netanyahu at least, the context is vastly different than that of Gilad Shalit. The increased scale of the conflict counter-intuitively reduces the Israeli incentive to even match the 2011 number of prisoners. Rather, the much higher number of Israeli hostages allows it more rationale to adopt a kinetic approach (a better *casus belli*/ justification for war),



along with indirect negotiations. Hence, even if Israel concedes a higher number of prisoners in return for a lower number of hostages eventually, its hyper-kinetic response targeting Hamas in Gaza (and killing over 30,000) would have already

served the hardline objective, acting as a better cushion for an eventual swap. Bashir Ali Abbas is a research associate at the Council for Strategic and Defense Research, New Delhi, and a South Asia Visiting Fellow at the Stimson Center, Washington DC.

## India gets serious about stopping exotic wildlife trafficking across borders

Last month, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) director Praveen Sood highlighted the grave challenge of exotic wildlife trafficking in India during a regional investigative and analytical case meeting. This event, jointly hosted by the CBI and Interpol, brought together domain experts from India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand, aiming to forge a united front against this illicit trade. The Indian delegation comprised officers from the CBI, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence. The WCCB is India's apex body to deal with wildlife crime. Exotic species traded

Exotic species are non-native animals or plants introduced in new environments, often causing ecological, economic, or health impacts on their adopted ecosystems. Exotic animals, both trafficked from and to India, include a diverse range of species, ranging from birds of vivid plumage to reptiles with ancient lineage, and mammals.

Jose Louies, joint director and chief of wildlife crime control, Wildlife Trust of India explained the rationale behind the trade. "Exotic pet trade is all about getting what is non-native and rare into a country where the owner can show off with the animal. These animals become collectors' prized properties. Some exotics will lose their charm over a period of time as people will breed them and the animal will become more common in the regional market. Then the suppliers will look for another species which is more rare, and the cycle continues."

Sometimes, the trade could also be driven by a demand for specific body parts of exotic animals, Dr Neil D'Cruze, head of wildlife research at global non-profit World Animal Protection said. "In many cases escalating illegal exotic trade is largely driven by lucrative market demands from beyond India's borders, with a growing focus on the trade in both live animals and their body parts. There are a variety of drivers involved, wildlife is in hot demand for luxury use as pets, decoration, entertainment, and traditional medicine."

Exotic wildlife species caught in the web of illegal trade to and from India

Meanwhile, the smuggling of native species of India going to other countries include mostly turtles and tortoises, the WCCB maintains. "The Indian Star Tortoise, which is listed under Schedule IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and Appendix II of CITES, and native to India, is notably the most trafficked species in this illegal trade," HV Girisha, director, WCCB, said.

According to WCCB's official list, the illegal trade of species entering India ranges from a variety of animals, from the unique Albino Porcupine and Sugar Glider, the Ball Python, to the endangered Aldabra Tortoise and the charismatic Marmoset Monkey. The list extends to include a spectrum of iguanas (blue, green and hyacinth iguanas), the Spotted Cuscus (a kind of marsupial), as well as the elusive Golden-headed Lion Tamarin (a marmoset) and the diminutive Pygmy Marmoset, among others.

# America's \$61bn aid package buys Ukraine time

This week, however, after months of dithering, Congress approved \$40bn of such assistance, a sum roughly equivalent to all America's military aid to Ukraine since the war began. (There was also some humanitarian aid and help for Israel and Taiwan.) Joe Biden, America's president, signed the bill into law on April 24th and ordered the immediate dispatch of the first \$1bn of supplies, to arrive in days. It comes just in time. In March Emmanuel Macron warned the heads of French political parties that Russia might break through Ukrainian lines and advance towards Kharkiv or Odessa. On April 18th Bill Burns, the director of the CIA, warned that Ukraine would be in a "dire" position if Congress did not approve the aid package. "There is a very real risk that the Ukrainians could lose on the battlefield by the end of 2024, or at least put Putin in a position where he could essentially dictate the terms of a political settlement." Such a calamity has now been averted. With the assistance Congress has approved, Mr Burns has said that Ukrainian forces should be able to "hold their own" on the battlefield this year and dispel the "arrogant view" of Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, "that time is on his side". The new aid should include around a year's worth of shells, reckons Michael Kofman of the Carnegie Endowment, a think-tank. But the imbalance in firepower of recent months has already had grim consequences. Russia's advantage in artillery has provided cover for its troops to advance. Worse, it has forced Ukraine to repel assaults using infantry armed with grenades and small arms, rather than its own artillery. This has led to more Ukrainian casualties and fewer Russian ones than would otherwise have been the case (though Russian losses are still appallingly high: about 1,000 killed and wounded a day during offensives, Western officials reckon).

What is more, even the fresh infusion of weaponry will not wholly eliminate Russia's advantage in terms of firepower. With its huge population and oil wealth, Russia also finds it easier to drum up new recruits. Ukraine is therefore likely to remain on the back foot, unable to mount new offensives. And uncertainty about Western aid will not go away: America may become much less friendly to Ukraine after presidential and congressional elections in November.

The fiercest fighting at the moment is in Chasiv Yar, a town just to the west of Bakhmut, the city Russia captured a year ago after nine months of trying. For Russia, seizing Chasiv Yar would open a path towards bigger cities in Donetsk province. Donetsk and neighbouring Luhansk (almost all of which is already in Russian hands) form the Donbas region, which Russia has annexed in theory and would like to do so in practice (see map). For Ukraine, Chasiv Yar is a strategic stronghold, on high

ground and shielded by a canal, trenches and other recently strengthened fortifications. Russian forces have reportedly been ordered to advance as far as they can before May 9th, Victory Day, which commemorates the end of the Second World War and is an occasion for bombastic military parades and jingoistic speeches. Colonel Pavlo Fedosenko, who leads a brigade defending the city, says Ukrainian forces maintain a substantial degree of control there. During the past month of all-out fighting, Russia has shown it "lacks the strength and means" to advance. In the meantime, Ukraine has inflicted serious losses, destroying around 100 armoured vehicles in a month in this section of the front alone. Now, he says, the Russians are "largely attacking on off-road motorcycles, buggies and quad bikes". Surveillance drones allow Ukrainian forces to detect movement as much as 10km away and react promptly. But Russian attack drones torment Ukrainian forces: stay at any point in the city for more than a few minutes and they begin to rain down. Although news of the new aid package was greeted with cheers in the local command room, Colonel Fedosenko says, he and others suspect Chasiv Yar will fall eventually.

The infusion of arms should, however, put Ukraine in a stronger position to fend off a bigger Russian offensive that Kyrylo Budanov, the head of Ukraine's military intelligence service, has said he expects in May. Ukrainian forces predict a push in the east to capture more of Donbas. They have also noticed an increase in Russian reconnaissance farther north, around Kharkiv, Ukraine's second city. Capturing such an important place would be a huge psychological victory, but Russia almost certainly lacks both the troops and sufficient mechanised vehicles for a decisive attack. Defending Ukraine's skies will also be hard. Russia has hammered Ukraine's defence industry and power grid with barrages of drones and missiles. Ukraine tries to defend against these assaults with a hotch-potch of American, European and Soviet-era anti-missile systems. But as with its artillery, its stock of ammunition has dwindled. Videos published on social media in recent weeks show Russian Su-25 jets flying at relatively low altitudes in the east, providing close support to troops. Russian reconnaissance drones have also penetrated as far as 40km behind the front lines without being shot down. Such incidents suggest that Ukraine is running short of interceptor missiles.

The erosion of Ukraine's air defence has several malign effects. On the front lines, the shortage of interceptor missiles has given more freedom of manoeuvre to Russian jets and guided aerial bombs, which have been flying in at a rate of 100-130 a day. The worst-case scenario is that Russia achieves air superiority, allowing it to bomb the front lines at will, as it did in the



city of Mariupol in the first months of the war. That would make it vastly harder for Ukraine to hold its current lines. Many possible steps back

There is also damage to infrastructure away from the front. On April 16th a Ukrainian official said that Russia had destroyed seven gigawatts (GW) of power-generation capacity in previous weeks, leaving just 10GW or so operational. Ukraine is now almost entirely reliant on nuclear plants. Although Russia is unlikely to bomb those, it may well strike transmission lines. Kyiv is already suffering from rolling blackouts, which sap morale. Small wonder, then, that Ukraine is desperate for more air defence systems. America's new aid is likely to include some missiles. Ukraine also needs launchers. It has between five and ten Patriot batteries, which protect against longer-range and faster-moving ballistic missiles. But these are defending cities, which leaves infrastructure and the front lines exposed. Ukraine is hoping Poland and Spain, among others, will donate more. The catch is that they are in high demand elsewhere, as Iran's drone and missile barrage against Israel on April 13th underscored. Even before any ammunition arrives, America's latest aid provides Ukraine's weary forces with a psychological boost. Mr Putin might have hoped that a well-timed offensive over the summer would capitalise on Ukraine's shell shortage and make great headway. That, in turn, might have heightened doubts within NATO and among American politicians about the long-term viability of Ukraine's resistance. If Mr Putin could show that Russia's war machine was unstoppable and Ukraine was a lost cause, he might have hoped to strike an advantageous deal with Donald Trump, were he to become America's president again in January, and so force a Ukrainian surrender on humiliating terms. The approval of the aid bill may change his calculations. In the very short term, it may spur Mr Putin to intensify assaults on places like Chasiv Yar, to try to make gains before much new ammunition arrives. But if Ukraine is prop-

erly armed in the coming months, any offensive is likely to peter out or make only marginal gains at eye-watering cost in lives and equipment—exactly as happened to Russia in early 2023 and, to a lesser extent, to Ukraine in its own unsuccessful counter-offensive in the summer and autumn of that year. If so, that would be a heavy blow. Mr Putin's war machine cannot maintain its current pace indefinitely. Russia's artillery is keeping up such a heavy barrage that the barrels of the guns are wearing out. It is likely to run very low on replacements next year, requiring it to use more rockets instead. But artillery rockets need five times as much explosive material, which is also in short supply. By the same token, Russia is thought to have lost around 3,000 armoured vehicles in the year to February, according to data collected by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a think-tank in London, and around 9,000 since the start of the war. It has replaced them from Soviet-era stockpiles, but those are expected to run out in about two years. "Russian defence industrial capacity maxes out in 2025," says a Western official. The capacity of Ukraine's allies, meanwhile, is growing. The bill Congress has just passed includes investments to increase the rate of ammunition production. Annual output of PAC-3 interceptors, the missiles fired by Patriot launchers, could rise by about a fifth over the coming year, from the current 500 or so. America's annual production of shells should rise to about 1.2m next year. Add to that European shells—1.4m this year and 2m next—and Ukraine's allies should soon be able to match Russian production. In the long run, Ukraine's biggest shortage is not likely to be munitions, but manpower. On April 3rd Volodymyr Zelensky, the president, signed a long-delayed bill lowering the conscription age from 27 to 25. The bill also requires all military-age men to register on a new database, potentially bringing many previously overlooked candidates to draft officers' attention. The armed forces had lobbied for these steps for months; Mr Zelensky had resisted, concerned about the political and economic fallout.