

## Power demand witnessing downward trend in Telangana

Hyderabad: The power demand in the State has been on a downward trend with the arrival of the Southwest monsoon. According to data from the Transmission Corporation of Telangana Limited (TGTRANSCO) website, the power demand in the State which touched 298.19 million units in March and over 280 mu in May, has now dipped sharply to 191 mu in June. In fact, in the last one week, the power demand in the State is hovering between 177 mu and 190 mu. The maximum power demand met on Monday, stood at 9160 MW, way below the highest peak demand of 15,623 MW on March 8. In fact, it was 8019 MW on June 9, one of the lowest in the recent past. Rains and moderate weather in last few days have given a breather to the power transmission system and have led to a decrease in overall load on the system. The power officials are expecting the power demand to further come down in the coming days. "This is mainly on ac-

count of persistent rainfall in the State, which led to minimum power requirement from the farming sector. The requirement of the farming sector generally during Kharif season will be about 45 per cent of total State demand. Also, due to rain the requirement of power from other sectors of consumers also came down," the officials said. Hyderabad city too witnessed a decline in power demand in the last ten days due to rain and cloudy weather. The power consumption which on June 1 recorded 86.15 mu, gradually came down to 72 mu on June 7 and 60.55 mu on June 9.

On June 11 the power consumption in the city stood at 68 mu. The city's average consumption during March stood at 72.02 MU, whereas it was 79.93 MU in April. The highest consumption of 89.71 million units was recorded on May 3 within the GHMC limits. However, during June the power demand in the city is witnessing a downtrend due to rain and cool weather.



The requirement for cooling has also come down for domestic consumers in the State as a result, the demand for power has come down in the State, the officials said.

## New railway line between Manugur and Ramagundam on track



Kothagudem: A railway project which was proposed in 1999 is finally on track towards becoming a reality after 25 years as the Ministry of Railways has recently issued a notification for land acquisition for a new railway line between Manugur and Ramagundam. The proposed 207.80 km long railway line connecting Manugur in Kothagudem district and Ramagundam in Peddapalli district has been taken up as a Special Railway Project. It might be noted that there is an existing railway line connecting both the stations via Kothagudem, Warangal and Kazipet being used for both

coal transportation as well passenger trains. The travel distance between Manugur and Ramagundam railway stations of the existing railway line is approximately 286 km. With the proposed new railway line, the travel distance would be reduced by 78.2 km and brings down the travel time as well, said railway officials. Importantly, the new railway line described as a 'coal corridor' ensures railway connectivity to Mulugu and Jayashankar Bhupalpally districts in erstwhile Warangal district. SCCL produces 67.1 million tonnes (2022-23) of coal an-

nually through its 24 underground and 18 opencast mines in six districts of the State. SCCL CMD N Balram Naik a few days ago informed that the company was going to start coal production at Naini coal block in Odisha soon aiming to produce one million tonnes of coal per year. Similarly, coal production at the VK opencast mine in Kothagudem, Ramagundam coal mine in Ramagundam region, Rompedu opencast mine in Yellandu area, Goleti opencast mine in Bellampalli area would be started this year. The new railway line could reduce expenditure on coal transportation as well. The new railway line between Manugur and Ramagundam could help development of tourist and religious places like Kaleshwaram, Ramappa, Medaram,

Kota Gullu, Mandasa, Laknavaram and Bogatha falls. It might be recalled that, in the year 1999, the construction of a railway line from Raghavapur in Peddapalli mandal of joint Karimnagar district to Manugur via Manthani, Bhupalpally and Mulugu was initiated. But it was put on the backburner then. The Centre reconsidered the project and sanctioned it in the year 2013-14 with a distance of 200 km with a sanctioned cost of Rs.1,112 crore and revised cost of the project now is Rs.3600 crore. The Centre has also proposed a railway line connecting Kothagudem with Malkangiri in Odisha to provide connectivity to mining and industrial areas of Chhattisgarh and Odisha besides connecting interior tribal areas. EOM

## BJP MP Raghunandan Rao claims ED has filed case on KCR

Medak: Medak MP M Raghunandan Rao of the BJP on Thursday claimed that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had registered a case against former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao. Addressing the party cadre in Medak, Raghunandan Rao also claimed that a ED team has reached

Hyderabad on Thursday. However, he did not reveal how he got the information of the ED registering any case. The recently-elected MP went on to say that the road ahead would be tough for Chandrashekhara Rao, T Harish Rao and P Venkatrami Reddy, who had contested against him the recent Parliament elections.



# A Damocles' sword hangs at the Israel-Lebanon border

Since October 8, 2023, Israel and Hezbollah have exchanged near-daily fire at the disputed Israeli-Lebanese border. These exchanges have featured rockets and missiles fired at northern Israeli towns (several of which are now evacuated), and Israeli air and artillery strikes in Hezbollah's bastions in South Lebanon (along with sporadic deeper strikes into the Lebanese hinterland). While this exchange has killed around 400 in Lebanon, it has killed around 20 Israel Defence Forces personnel and 10 civilians. Running parallel to, and because of, the war in Gaza – the steady stream of rocket fire by Hezbollah has allowed the group to work as an active deterrent – one that holds its full arsenal in reserve but maintains kinetic pressure on Israel to halt its Gaza war. Israel itself has mostly remained focused on Gaza, allowing sections of its Golani Brigades and other IDF units to manage the northern border. However, as international pressure on Tel Aviv mounts, along with global criticism of the conduct of its Gaza war, the Hezbollah-Israel calculus has shown signs of potential shifts. While the intensity of the strikes has increased, Israel seems to be preparing for a “limited war” or a ground offensive into South Lebanon. With Benjamin Netanyahu announcing on June 5 that Israel would restore security in the North “one way or the other”, alarm bells have gone off in multiple capitals, including Washington, about an even wider regional war in the Middle East. Key to understanding this change is the question of where the locus of the present conflict lies – in the eyes of either belligerent.

## Israel's Hezbollah calculus

The Israel-Hezbollah relationship is fundamentally antagonistic. However, both have also proved to be pragmatic actors. Even as the post-October 7 cross-border action has thrown up the highest casualty figures for both sides since their last war in 2006, there has been enough restraint built into the Israel-Hezbollah dynamic. The focus of Israeli action in South Lebanon has been to actively prevent Hezbollah from opening a second front – which in any case is a historically recurring priority for Tel Aviv whenever a skirmish with Hamas in Gaza has been underway. Israeli rhetoric accompanying the constant exchange of strikes with Hezbollah (especially across November and December 2023), has been to warn the group against escalation. The key change, however, has been internal to Israel. Along with rising international pressure for a ceasefire in Gaza and an unprecedented public announcement of a potential three-phased ceasefire deal by the White House, Israel's diplomatic bandwidth is declining. Even as it considers the deal pitched by Washington, Netanyahu has already long been pressured by the far-right allies of his government to cross the red lines being set internationally for Israel – evident especially in Rafah. The Netanyahu government has struggled to reconcile its publicly stated objective of eliminating Hamas in Gaza and its inability to militarily fulfil that objective, even as it prosecutes a war that has killed over 37,000 in Gaza (including at least 12,000 children).

Indeed, a ceasefire will imperil Netanyahu's political position (as well as personal, given long-standing corruption charges) within Israel – making it easier to pander to the far right's current demands.

This logic now extends to the Israel-Lebanon border. While deterring Hezbollah has been an ancillary objective thus far in the crisis, Israeli far-right leaders are now defining new military objectives for the state that necessarily require conventional force-on-force action at the border. For instance, Israel's finance minister Bezalel Smotrich has called for a “military takeover of southern Lebanon” if Hezbollah does not withdraw beyond the Litani River (according to UNSC Resolution 1701). National security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has reiterated this, explicitly calling for war. Already by late February 2024, Israel had moved its largest army division (36 Armored) from Gaza to the Lebanese border – reflecting strategic shifts. Now, making the Israel-Lebanon border an independent area of focus – based on the merits of the historic territorial/political dispute between Israel and Lebanon/Hezbollah rather than the Gaza war – allows Tel Aviv to present South Lebanon as a new locus in the conflict and expand its *casus belli*. Hezbollah's Israel calculus On November 3, 2023, almost a month after Israel's war in Gaza began, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah made his first statement, addressing the conflict. In it, he unleashed the expected hostile rhetoric against Israel and committed to defending Lebanon but stopped short of committing to a wider war. In the last eight months, this characteristic has been constant in Hezbollah's rhetoric (with its intensity waxing and waning). In January 2024, Hezbollah deputy chief Naim Qassem explicitly stated that Hezbollah does not want a wider war with Israel, with the usual caveat of being prepared to respond to Israeli escalation.

Hezbollah's causes for restraint have been both internal and external. Internally, the group has been navigating multiple crises within Lebanon, especially pertaining to its political position and influence, as the Lebanese economy struggles. Among other things, this led the group to exercise more restraint with Israel (even allowing a Lebanon-Israel maritime border agreement in 2022) and focus on improving its internal position, particularly after the 2019 anti-government protests and the 2020 Beirut port explosion. Externally, the group remains Iran's standing deterrent against Israel, even as it shows some streaks of independence (motivated by the desire to rejig its internal image within Lebanon). This means that the group still cannot allow a non-Iran locus (Gaza) to trigger the full use of its personnel and arsenal for a conventional war. The steady exchange of rockets and missiles then, still works best for the group – as it allows Hezbollah to protect its anti-Israel credentials while avoiding a larger war. For Hezbollah, the locus of the conflict remains Gaza as it continues to link its *casus belli* with Israel's continued bombardment of the strip and the need for a ceasefire. In a Feb-



ruary 2024 piece for Foreign Policy, columnist Steve Cook warned that the restraints that theoretically apply to Israel and Hezbollah could change, given the volatility of Middle Eastern politics. This change has now manifested through an evolution of Israel's war aims. The steady intensification of its exchanges with Hezbollah can cumulatively act as its trigger for a wider war, should the political objectives of either side change at any point. Indeed, the rising casualties could drive this change – muddling the difference between cause and effect. For Israel, a second locus would allow it a better national-security/territorial-integrity-based bargaining position when dealing with its allies – at a time when its war in Gaza is turning increasingly unpopular internationally. While Washington itself has warned Israel against war with Hezbollah (arguing that it will necessarily

draw in Iran, and not be a limited conflict), it would be hard-pressed to blindside Tel Aviv, should war break out. Given the logic of the second locus, Israel's incentives to further intensify its response to Hezbollah's attacks only grow. For Hezbollah itself, a full-fledged attack by Israel will arguably allow it to re-consolidate support for itself at home when its domestic image has taken successive hits in recent years. Key to whether this Damocles' sword will fall at the Israeli-Lebanese border, is the degree to which international pressure (both public and private) for a ceasefire is successful. Internally, Israel has enough reason to cut the sword free. 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. The views expressed are personal.

## New Haiti Prime Minister Garry Conille hospitalised days after being selected

Port-Au-Prince: Haiti's newly selected Prime Minister Garry Conille was hospitalised late on Saturday in the capital of Port-au-Prince just days after arriving in the country, an official told The Associated Press. It wasn't immediately known why Conille was hospitalised. Louis Gérald Gilles, a member of the transitional presidential council that recently chose Conille as leader of the troubled Caribbean country, said he was en route to the hospital and did not have further information. A spokesman for Conille did not immediately return a message for comment. AP journalists observed high-ranking officials entering the hospital, including Frantz Elbé, Director of Haiti's National Police. Also present was Bruno Maes, UNICEF's representative in Haiti. They both declined to comment. A handful of curious onlookers gathered outside the hospital as authorities blocked the street with tinted-glass SUVs. Conille was chosen as Prime Minister May 28 after a convoluted selection process. He faces an arduous task as Haiti's newest leader, including quelling widespread gang violence as the country pre-

pares for the UN-backed deployment of a Kenyan police force, a move that was delayed in part because Haiti lacked a premier after former Prime Minister Ariel Henry stepped down April 25. Henry was on an official visit to Kenya when gangs launched coordinated attacks on February 29, burning police stations, shooting at the country's main international airport and storming Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates. The violence left Henry locked out of the country and eventually led to his resignation. Conille arrived in Haiti on June 1, having worked outside the country until recently as UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean, a post he assumed in January 2023. He previously served as Haiti's Prime Minister from October 2011 to May 2012 under then President Michel Martelly. Conille has been meeting with multiple officials and visiting various parts of Port-au-Prince since arriving, including climbing into an armoured vehicle wearing a helmet and flak jacket to go along on a patrol with officers from Haiti's National Police.



# Punjab has discarded divisive politics and agendas: Raja Warring

Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), June 13: Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, newly elected MP from Ludhiana and President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee (PPCC), appreciating Punjabis for their positive lifestyle and voting for upliftment, betterment, and development rather than on the basis of religious politics, said that by not giving the BJP an even single seat in the entire state, Punjab has shown that divisive politics and agendas cannot thrive in a community filled with love and goodwill. Warring remarked, "Punjab has set a precedent by not giving the BJP an even single seat in the entire state. Our state has shown that divisive politics and agendas cannot thrive in a community filled with love and goodwill. Punjabis led positive lives and vote for upliftment, betterment, and development rather than on the basis of religious politics. I have always been, and continue to be, proud of the political wisdom in Punjab." While addressing a series of meetings in his Lok Sabha constituency Thursday, Raja Warring toured Ludhiana to thank voters for their overwhelming support in the Lok Sabha Elections, which concluded on June 4. Warring visited the Vidhan Sabha constituencies of Dakha, Gill, Ludhiana Central, Ludhiana South, and Atam Nagar to express his gratitude.

In his speeches, Warring emphasized the significance of the election, calling it a battle for the very existence of Punjab, its farmers, labourers, and the happiness of its people. He stated that Punjab had demonstrated to the nation and the central government its commitment to fighting for its rights. The Congress party's victory in 7 out of 13 seats in the state was a testament to this resolve. He continued, "I thank each and every one of you for the love and support you showed me since the day I started campaigning in Ludhiana. Ludhiana became my home on May 2, during my first roadshow, with the warmth you extended to me and my family. It is my mission to work for our people and address the issues facing every citizen of this city." Warring further pledged, "I have promised myself and the people of Punjab that I will visit every household in the state and work for the betterment of our people. Congress will work tirelessly for Punjab, striving to achieve the goals and objectives to ensure the state's progress. Punjab Congress has raised the issues of Punjab and will continue to do so over the next 2.5 years." Concluding his address, Warring criticized the previous MP for neglecting Ludhiana, saying, "Ludhiana has had to endure an MP who has not worked for the city but had rather been on holiday for the



past 10 years. It is time for real work to be done to benefit every stratum of the city.

Actual progress will finally come to Ludhiana through the efforts of Congress."

## OPPO Introduces F27 Pro+ 5G: India's first IP69-Rated Super-Rugged Monsoon-Ready Phone



OPPO India has introduced the F27 Pro+ 5G – the country's first IP66, IP68 and IP69-rated Super-Rugged, Monsoon-Ready smartphone. The F27 Pro+ will be available in two colours—Dusk Pink and Midnight Navy—and retails at INR 27,999 with 128GB storage and INR 29,999 for the 256GB variant. The smartphone boasts OPPO's full-device protection solution—a damage-proof 360-degree Armour Body—that shields the device from drops and scratches. This is in addition to a four-year durable 5,000mAh battery.

Commenting on the launch, Savio D'Souza, Director of Product Communications at OPPO India, said, "The OPPO F27 Pro+ 5G meets the needs of customers who are always on the move, and demand a durable smartphone that can keep up with them, whether rain or sunshine.

It is the only smartphone to carry all three—the IP66, IP68 and IP69—ratings and meets the highest standards against dust and water damage. Additionally, its 360° Armour Body provides inside-out protection, certified by the Swiss SGS Premium Performance standard and MIL-STD-810H Method 516.8. All that and essentials like a vivid, borderless display, stellar cameras, and a very capable processor are packed into a slim, lightweight, and stylish build

that is sturdy and flaunt-worthy in equal measure."

**Waterproof and Ultimate Durability**

The OPPO F27 Pro+ 5G is the first phone to boast all three ratings of the highest levels of dust ingress and water resistance with IP66, IP68 and IP69; these standards specifically certify that the phone can withstand high-pressure, high-temperature water jets and even water immersion for up to 30 minutes at a time.

The phone's durability goes beyond dust and water ingress protection owing to its damage-proof 360-degree Armour Body protection, which is made possible by internal dampening materials like sponges to enhance drop resistance, a high-strength, high-thermal conductivity aluminium alloy to protect the motherboard, and Corning Gorilla Glass Victus 2 on the screen.

The OPPO F27 Pro+ 5G's focus on endurance is validated by the Swiss SGS Premium Performance 5 Star rating for passing multi-angle drop tests and for its extreme high shock and frequency shock resistance. The smartphone has also passed the MIL-STD-810H Method 516.8 standard that tests for functional shock, transportation shock, fragility, transit drop, and crash hazard shock.



# Let's Set the Pace Together: The all-new BMW 1300 GS launched in India.

BMW Motorrad India has launched the all-new BMW 1300 GS in India. This Adventure Motorcycle will be available as a Completely Built-up Unit (CBU) and deliveries will commence from end of June 2024. Mr. Vikram Pawah, President, BMW Group India said, "BMW Motorrad established the new segment of touring enduros more than four decades ago with the R 80 G/S. And the BMW GS with boxer engine has been the undisputed leader of the competitive field ever since. With the all-new BMW R 1300 GS, BMW Motorrad has focused on sharpening the GS even further. It is a perfect combination of power, comfort, and agility, making it the ideal motorcycle for any terrain. With its versatility and appeal, the all-new BMW R 1300 GS will exceed even the highest expectations. Nothing can stop you, especially off-road." The introductory ex-showroom price of the all-new BMW R 1300 GS is as follows: BMW R 1300 GS Pro INR 20,95,000. Three option Styles are also available for individualization – Style Triple Black, Style GS Trophy and 719 Tramuntana.

\*Prices prevailing at the time of invoicing will be applicable. Delivery will be made ex-showroom. Ex-showroom price (inclusive of GST and compensation cess) as applicable but excludes Road Tax, RTO statutory taxes/fees, other local tax/cess levies and insurance. Prices and options are subject to change without prior notice. For further information, please contact your local authorized BMW Motorrad Dealer. The all-new BMW R 1300 GS is available in the following color schemes – Base in Light White metallic, Optional Styles – Triple Black is available in Blackstorm metallic paintwork, GS Trophy is available in the Racing Blue metallic paintwork and the 719 Tramuntana is available in the Aurelius Green metallic paintwork. To enable customers to own BMW Motorrad motorcycles of their choice,



BMW Financial Services India will offer customized and flexible financial solutions. Customers can also get their loans approved before delivery takes place. For complete peace of mind, all BMW Motorrad bikes come with a standard warranty for 'three years, unlimited kilometers', with an option to extend the warranty to fourth and fifth year. Road-Side Assistance, a 24x7 365 days package further ensures prompt services in case of breakdown and towing

situations. The all-new BMW R 1300 GS.

The all-new BMW R 1300 GS features an entirely new design which is based on the traditional GS icons while at the same time reflecting extreme compactness and significant weight reduction. With its significantly flatter tank ramp, the flyline is largely responsible for the very dynamic, light and accessible appearance of this motorcycle. Continuing on through the upholstered centre cover over the aluminium

fuel tank, the seat gives the GS a typically enduro-style silhouette. A striking break with tradition in terms of design are the new LED Matrix Headlights. The integration of high beam and low beam in a single projector unit results in a redesign of the iconic face of the GS headlamp. With "Headlight Pro" available in all option Styles, the beam of the matrix full LED headlamp turns into the bend according to the banking position.

## Karnataka Congress MLAs want party to reconsider guarantees

Hyderabad: With the Congress in Karnataka managing to secure only nine seats in the recent Lok Sabha elections, party MLAs are pressurising the party to reconsider the 'Five Guarantees' promised to the people, citing hindrances to other development works and also paucity of funds. Though the five guarantees are believed to have propelled the Congress to power in the Assembly elections, they apparently did not help the party secure votes in the Lok Sabha elections. While the BJP-led NDA won 19 seats, the ruling Congress managed to win only nine seats out of the 28 Parliament seats in the State. Worried over this, Congress MLA from Bagalkote, JT Patil, urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to reassess the guarantees.

"At many places, guarantees have not worked, so we will appeal to the Chief

Minister to rethink about the guarantees. Simply why? On one side there is no development, and also those beneficiaries did not vote. Then why?" Patil was quoted as saying by India Today. Not just Patil, a few other Congress leaders were also of the similar opinion. Congress leader Lakshaman, who was defeated in the Lok Sabha elections, was also quoted saying that the BJP kept saying that people were being made lazy by giving them the guarantees. It seems like people have backed that thought. People didn't seem to like the guarantees. I, as an individual and a candidate, appeal to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to re-look into the guarantees as people have given mandate against it." Congress MLA Balakrishna also made similar observations. "We go into elections with a weapon. Now, we have realised that it hasn't worked and our opponents too

have been saying that the guarantees haven't really helped us. After elections, we need to reconsider and look at options, but it is upto our leadership," he said.

With the Congress not managing any stellar performance in the Lok Sabha elections in Telangana either, the observations by the Congress MLAs in Karnataka could echo here as well. Considering the fact that Congress won only eight seats and BJP won eight seats, there is every possibility of these appeals resonating in Telangana, party sources say. The Congress government in Telangana is already struggling to implement its Six Guarantees here and are imposing terms and conditions on several of the assurances made to the people so as to bring down the number of beneficiaries and the burden on the exchequer for implementation of its poll promises.



Under the supervision of Senior Professor in Commerce V. Appa Rao garu, Osmania University, P. Manjula, Asst professor in Commerce and Head of department of Commerce, Govt Degree College (W) Hussaini Alam, Hyderabad has done research in "Investment Habits of Women Teachers Working in Colleges -A Study with special reference to Hyderabad " has been awarded with doctorate degree from Osmania University



# Samsung Galaxy AI Super Sale in Big 'C'

Samsung's Galaxy AI Series Mobiles Super Sale will start from June 14th in the showrooms of Samsung, said CM D Sri Balu Chaudhary, founder of Big 'C', the number one mobile retail sales company in Telugu states. Speaking on this occasion, he said that Samsung, the most famous mobile manufacturing company not only in the country but also internationally, will sell the latest Galaxy AI series mobile phones in a super sale in all their showrooms in Telugu states from 14th of this month. He said that the starting price of these AI series mobiles with the most advanced features is Rs.39,999. He stated that these highly advanced Samsung Galaxy AI series smart phones are an epitome of excellent technology. He stated that these Galaxy AI series smart phones, designed with eye-catching colors and designs, not only provide excellent technology but also great experiences to the customers.

## Special Features of AI Series:

Circle to Search, Live Translate Chat Assist, Note Assist. He explained that these Galaxy AI series phones have many advanced features like camera with 50MP adaptive pixel technology, nightography, AI edit camera, gaming, Snapdragon 8 Gen 3. Bigger vapor chamber, 2600 nits adaptive display.

He added that facilities such as zero down payment and 24 months no cost EMI are available at all their showrooms for the purchase of these mobiles. Moreover, on the purchase of these mobiles, Rs. He explained that attractive offers like instant cashback up to Rs 16,000 and exchange bonus up to Rs 18,000 will be available. On this occasion, he wished that all the people of Telugu states should buy these Samsung Galaxy AI series phones and own this latest technology and wonderful pleasures. Yam. Balu Chaudhary Founder & C.Y.M.D.

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# 'Horried' by plight of Sri Lanka's plantation workers, says tribunal



An international tribunal of former judges from the region said it was "horried by the stark realities" of the lives of Sri Lanka's tea and rubber plantation workers, after hearing testimonies from workers and trade unions. Hailing from the island nation's Malaiyaha Tamil community, tens of thousands of workers are engaged in tea and rubber production. They earn vital foreign exchange for the country that

is struggling to rebuild its economy after the dramatic meltdown of 2022. Last year, Sri Lanka's revenue from tea exports totalled \$1.3 billion, while rubber-based exports fetched \$930 million, according to the Export Development Board. Watch | How the economic crisis has hurt Sri Lanka's hill country Tamils

However, the workers who toil in the country's plantations continue to work and

live in abysmal conditions. "It has shocked the conscience of the Tribunal that such practices could continue unabated in the modern civilised world," members said in their findings, echoing concerns that trade unions, local activists, and UN experts have flagged in the past.

Organised by Ceylon Workers Red Flag Union, a trade union based in the island's central Kandy district, the Tribunal

heard eleven workers employed in tea and rubber plantations across central and southern Sri Lanka, as well as three trade union representatives last week. Testifying before the tribunal — with Justice A.P. Shah from India, Justice P.K. Ojha from Nepal and Justice Shiranee Tilakawardane from Sri Lanka as its members — the workers, mostly women, shared the multiple challenges they encounter at work, such as the very demanding targets tied to their daily wage and the absence of basic sanitation facilities. Leech bites and wasp attacks are common, while medical care remains out of reach, more so amid soaring living costs following the country's crisis. Speaking of her family being forced to ration meals to cut down expenses, a worker employed in tea plantations for over 20 years, said: "Let alone having three meals, I have not been able to afford a cup of tea with milk in years. If at all I can, it is plain tea once in a way." In his remarks at the conclusion of the hearing, Justice Shah noted: "they live practically a sub human life, and certainly do not have a life of dignity". Remember our history, recognise our labour, say Sri Lanka's Malaiyaha Tamils On May 1, 2024, President Ranil Wickremesinghe announced an increase in the daily wage of plantation workers from LKR 1,000 to LKR 1,700 (roughly ₹468). Plantation companies vehemently opposed the move and petitioned Sri Lanka's Court of Appeal, seeking an order invalidating the gazette on the wage hike. But the court refused to stay the gazette notification. Workers, however, remain sceptical. From 2021, the workers have been entitled to a daily wage of LKR 1,000, but they rarely earn that amount.



# Maharashtra's Political Shift: How the MVA's campaign toppled the might of the Mahayuti

In June 2023, nearly a year after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena formed the government under the banner of Mahayuti, the alliance released a striking advertisement in prominent regional newspapers. Featuring Eknath Shinde and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis, the ad claimed that the people of Maharashtra had chosen this government, citing the numbers from a recent survey conducted by a media house and a survey agency to gauge the popularity of the BJP led state and central government. The ad aimed to undermine the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, considered one of the most unnatural alliances in the state, comprising Congress, NCP, and Shiv Sena. It silently celebrated the BJP's success in toppling the MVA by engineering one of the biggest splits in Shiv Sena's history in 2022. The tagline was "jantechya charni maatha, garja Maharashtra majha" (our heads lie at the feet of the people, hail my Maharashtra!). Ironically, less than a year later, the people of Maharashtra voted in one of the most decisive elections in recent years, leaving the BJP-led Mahayuti shattered and changing the political equations in Maharashtra, a state often seen as a microcosm of national political trends.

As the results of the eighteenth Lok Sabha elections were declared on June 4 (Tuesday), the BJP-led NDA, despite crossing the majority mark, suffered a severe setback. The INDIA bloc, mainly led by Congress and its various national and regional allies, recorded thumping victories across the country, totalling 233 seats, just 59 short of the NDA's 292. In Maharashtra, the BJP-led Mahayuti managed to win only 17 seats (BJP-9, Shiv Sena-7, NCP (Ajit Pawar)-1). In contrast, Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) won 30 seats (Congress-13, NCP (Sharad Pawar)-8, Shiv Sena (UBT)-9), highlighting a major shift in voter mandate against the BJP despite its previous successes in 2014 and 2019. This piece examines the reasons for these shifting tides and what these results hint at for the future of these two alliances.

People's agendas and issues took centerstage. Electoral campaigning and the results showed that people across Maharashtra, both urban and rural, largely preferred parties and candidates who addressed their issues and agendas. The BJP and its allies campaigned on parochial issues such as the Ram Temple construction and promises to keep minorities at bay, alongside promises of big-ticket projects like the bullet train. However, in rural Maharashtra, voters resonated more with the MVA's grounded campaign, which focused on addressing the ongoing agrarian crisis, providing solutions to unemployment, and improving healthcare and education. The election results indicate that Maharashtra's voters unequivocally set their agenda, demanding solutions to real problems. They questioned the candidates who came for campaigning and made tall promises, asking tough questions about the BJP's promise of depositing Rs. 15 lakhs in beneficiaries' accounts or providing Minimum Support Price (MSP) to



farmers. Setback to the BJP and resurgence of Congress

The election results signify a major setback for the BJP, viewed by many as the primary architect behind Maharashtra's political turmoil. The BJP's role in engineering splits within the Shiv Sena and the NCP not only destabilised the state government but also eroded the party's credibility among voters. This perception overshadowed its developmental agenda, leading to a significant decline in voter support. Despite showing confidence in winning Maharashtra with the largest number of seats, the BJP was reduced to single-digit seats, struggling to keep afloat in the state despite securing a majority at the centre. Since 2019, a silent wave has been brewing against the BJP in Maharashtra. The party's role in engineering splits and its lack of appeal due to poor governance were crucial factors in this swing. The results also highlighted the BJP's poor planning and management despite having strong leaders like Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar in the alliance. In contrast, the Congress, regarded as the underdog, worked consistently on reviving itself at the local and national levels. Welfare schemes like NYAY and Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra resonated strongly among ordinary voters in the state. Local leaders and organic campaigns. The MVA successfully leveraged local leaders and grassroots campaigns to resonate with the electorate. Unlike the BJP-led Mahayuti, which relied heavily on the star power of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, the MVA's approach was more grounded. The BJP's grand displays of strength, characterized by high-profile rallies and media spectacles, failed to match the MVA's organic and community-centred outreach. Voters responded more positively to the MVA's focus on local issues and personal connections, which ap-

peared more genuine and impactful. Local leaders across the three MVA parties worked tirelessly to build confidence in the alliance throughout the state.

A key feature of Indian elections, particularly true in Maharashtra, is that voter choices are often determined by affinity and confidence in a candidate or their endorser. The MVA's grassroots cadre and the reach commanded by Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharad Pawar) were significant advantages. Congress also utilized its local leadership, which worked silently on the ground and had a good understanding of local issues and sentiments. While the Mahayuti's campaigns were big-budget spectacles, the MVA's campaigns were vibrant, bolstered by substantial local support. Sympathy for Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar was evident as large crowds attended MVA rallies. This local affinity helped MVA candidates, while prominent Mahayuti candidates like Sunetra Pawar, Pankaja Munde, and Raosaheb Danave lost despite significant campaigns. At the local level, karyakartas popularised phrases like "ab ki baar, tadipar" (this time we will expel them), a play on the BJP's "abki baar, 400 paar" (this time, over 400 seats). Shiv Sena (UBT), starting from scratch after the vertical split, popularised the narrative of "gaddars" (traitors) against those who crossed over to the BJP-led Mahayuti and highlighted corruption charges against such leaders. The Election Commission's phased election schedule favoured the MVA, giving it enough time to popularize these narratives locally. Despite newly allotted symbols and party names, grassroots-level messaging helped the MVA inch towards victory. Rural distress, agrarian crisis, and social engineering

Maharashtra's agrarian crisis, marked by farmer suicides, crop failures, and inadequate governmental support, has been

persistent for many years. The recent changing climate and drought-like conditions, especially in Vidarbha and Marathwada, have worsened the crisis for voters dependent on agriculture. The MVA's focus on agrarian issues resonated deeply with the rural electorate, who felt neglected by the central BJP-led government. Election results suggest that constituencies from Vidarbha, Marathwada, North Maharashtra, and Western Maharashtra, dealing with long-standing agrarian distress, strongly resisted the Mahayuti, giving a major setback to the BJP and placing their faith in INC and NCP (SP). A large number of Marathas in these regions, pushing for reservations in the state, were left disillusioned by the BJP's inaction despite promises, and they supported the MVA. In Marathwada, the epicentre of Maratha politics for several years, the Mahayuti lost 7 of the 8 seats contested. The BJP lost all 4 seats from Marathwada, which it had won in the previous election. A standout strategy of the MVA's campaign was its masterful social engineering. The alliance built an inclusive coalition spanning various age groups, caste groups, and communities, including Dalits, Muslims, Adivasis, and Marathas. This inclusive rhetoric contrasted sharply with the BJP's strategy of religious polarization and majoritarianism. The MVA also effectively championed the local Marathi mannos, criticising the BJP for its Gujarat appeasement. This strategy proved a masterstroke, securing widespread support across Maharashtra. The future of alliances. The Lok Sabha election results will set the stage for upcoming elections to Maharashtra's legislative assemblies and local bodies. The future of the two alliances will significantly influence electoral outcomes. The current mood favours the MVA, whose partners need to stick together for the greater good and consolidate their support base in areas where they have not made a significant impact.



# Keeping children safe on social media: What parents should know to protect their kids

At what age should kids be on social media? Should they be on it at all? If they aren't, will they be social pariahs? Should parents monitor their conversations? Do parental controls work? Navigating social media as a parent — not to mention a child — is not easy. Using social media platforms is still the default for most American teenagers, with the Pew Research Center reporting that 58% of teens are daily users of TikTok, including 17% who describe their TikTok use as almost constant. About half of teens use Snapchat and Instagram daily, with near-constant use at 14% and 8% for each, respectively. But parents — and even some teens themselves — are growing increasingly concerned about the effects of social media use on young people. Lawmakers have taken notice and have held multiple congressional hearings on child online safety. But even with apparent bipartisan unity, making laws and regulating companies takes time. So far, no regulation has passed. What are parents — and teens — supposed to do in the meantime? Here are some tips on staying safe, communicating and setting limits on social media — for kids as well as their parents.

There's already, technically, a rule that prohibits kids under 13 from using platforms that advertise to them without parental consent: The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act that went into effect in 2000, before today's teenagers were even born. The goal was to protect kids' online privacy by requiring websites and online services to disclose clear privacy policies and get parents' consent before gathering personal information on their kids, among other things. To comply, social media companies have generally banned kids under 13 from signing up for their services. But times have changed, and online privacy is no longer the only concern when it comes to kids being online. There's bullying, harassment, the risk of developing eating disorders, suicidal thoughts or worse. For years, there has been a push among parents, educators and tech experts to wait to give children phones — and access to social media — until they are older, such as the "Wait Until 8th" pledge that has parents sign a pledge not to give their kids a smartphone until the 8th grade, or about age 13 or 14. Some wait even later, like 16 or 17. But neither social media companies nor the government have done anything concrete to increase the age limit.

"There is not necessarily a magical age," said Christine Elgersma, a social media expert at the nonprofit Common Sense Media. But, she added, "13 is probably not the best age for kids to get on social media." The laws currently being proposed include blanket bans on the under-13 set when it comes to social media. The problem? There's no easy way to verify a person's age when they sign up for apps and online services. And the apps popular with teens today were created for adults first. Companies have added some safeguards over the years, Elgersma noted, but these are piecemeal changes, not fundamental rethinks of the services. "Developers need to start building apps with kids in mind," she said. Some tech executives, ce-

lebrities such as Jennifer Garner and parents from all walks of life have resorted to banning their kids from social media altogether. While the decision is a personal one that depends on each child and parent, some experts say this could lead to isolating kids, who could be left out of activities and discussions with friends that take place on social media or chat services. Another hurdle — kids who have never been on social media may find themselves ill-equipped to navigate the platforms when they are suddenly allowed rein the day they turn 18. A more realistic and effective approach to social media, experts say, is a slow, deliberate onboarding that gives children the tools and information they need to navigate a world in which places like TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat are almost impossible to escape. "You cannot just expect that the kids will jump into the world of social media, learn how to swim on their own," said Natalie Bazarova, a professor of communications and director of the Cornell Social Media Lab. "They need to have instruction." Start early, earlier than you think. Elgersma suggests that parents go through their own social media feeds with their children before they are old enough to be online and have open discussions on what they see. How would your child handle a situation where a friend of a friend asks them to send a photo? Or if they see an article that makes them so angry they just want to share it right away?

For older kids, Elgersma says to approach them with curiosity and interest, "asking about what their friends are doing or just not asking direct questions like, 'What are you doing on Instagram?'" but rather, "Hey, I heard this influencer is really popular." And even if your kid rolled their eyes it could be a window. "Don't say things like 'Turn that thing off!' when your kid has been scrolling for a long time, says Jean Rogers, the director of the nonprofit Fairplay's Screen Time Action Network. "That's not respectful," Rogers said. "It doesn't respect that they have a whole life and a whole world in that device." Instead, Rogers suggests asking them questions about what they do on their phone, and see what your child is willing to share. Kids are also likely to respond to parents and educators "pulling back the curtains" on social media and the sometimes insidious tools companies use to keep people online and engaged, Elgersma said. Watch a documentary like "The Social Dilemma" that explores algorithms, dark patterns and dopamine feedback cycles of social media. Or read up with them how Facebook and TikTok make money. "Kids love to be in the know about these things, and it will give them a sense of power," she said. Rogers says most parents have success with taking their kids' phones overnight to limit their scrolling. Occasionally kids might try to sneak the phone back, but it's a strategy that tends to work because kids need a break from the screen. "They need to have an excuse with their peers to not be on their phone at night," Rogers said. "They can blame their parents." Parents may need their own lim-



its on phone use. Rogers said it's helpful to explain what you are doing when you do have a phone in hand around your child so they understand you are not aimlessly scrolling through sites like Instagram. Tell your child that you're checking work email, looking up a recipe for dinner or paying a bill so they understand you're not on there just for fun. Then tell them when you plan to put the phone down. Social media platforms that cater to children have added an ever-growing array of parental controls as they face increasing scrutiny over child safety. For instance, Meta unveiled parental supervision tools last year that lets parents set time limits, see who their kid follows or is followed by, and allows them to track how much time the minor spends on Instagram. It does not let parents see message content. But as with similar tools on other platforms such as TikTok, the feature is optional, and both kids and parents have to agree to use it. In order to nudge kids

toward agreeing to set up the controls, Instagram sends a notice to teens after they block someone, encouraging them to let their parents "supervise" their account. The idea is to grab kids' attention when they might be more open to parental guidance. By making the feature optional, Meta says it is trying to "balance teen safety and autonomy" as well as prompt conversations between parents and their children. Such features can be useful for families in which parents are already involved in their child's online life and activities. Experts say that's not the reality for many people. U.S. Surgeon General Murthy said last year it's unfair to expect parents to manage what their children do with rapidly evolving technology that "fundamentally changes how their kids think about themselves, how they build friendships, how they experience the world — and technology, by the way, that prior generations never had to manage."

## WhatsApp to revamp its calling screen: Report



WhatsApp is working on a tweaked interface for the calling screen, WABETAINFO reported. The beta update version 2.24.7.19 introduces a new interface that seems to have been designed to enhance user navigation and intuitiveness during calls by replacing the back shortcut with a new minimise button.

This change addresses a common

issue where users mistakenly perceived the back button as ending the call. Some beta testers now have access to this new interface, which updates the call bar and enlarges the profile photo. Earlier updates focused on redesigning the top part of the screen, adding a semi-transparent background to improve button visibility and distinguishability.



# A startup in Berkeley is decarbonising air to solve global warming

Carbon dioxide in our atmosphere drives global warming by trapping heat. Take the excessive CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere and we can limit rising temperatures. It's the perfect idea to build a device, right? But when it comes down to doing it, it's quite difficult to implement. Though CO<sub>2</sub> is pervasive and is created by all things we create or consume, CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere as of 2023 is 419ppm – or 0.04% of air – that's causing our earth to overheat. To capture this 0.04% of air, you've to use a lot of energy to push a lot of atmospheric air through liquid or solid chemical compounds for it to react. For every ton of CO<sub>2</sub>, you've to push at least 5000 tons of air. And once you capture the CO<sub>2</sub> molecules, you need to store them somewhere. It's expensive and inefficient. It's a technological feat called Direct Air Capture (DAC) and it is a moonshot of engineering. About 60-odd startups around the world are attempting to build a DAC machine to capture CO<sub>2</sub>. Berkeley-based AirMyne is one of them. "We don't shy away from the fact that it's difficult," said Sudip Mukhopadhyay, co-founder of AirMyne.

It's a bright and windy day in West Berkeley, and we're at a rather noisy intersection having a cup of coffee at Lama Beans – a Hispanic-owned independent cafe in the area. "Building climate tech is an existence issue and DAC is one of the most challenging problems to solve as an engineer, so we decided to pursue it."

Mukhopadhyay, who grew up in a farming village about 100 km from Kolkata, is an unusual startup founder. He was reluctant to give me an interview until I categorically explained that I wanted to visit AirMyne's warehouse and meet the team before I wrote this. Since then, he's been more welcoming and open about his concepts and his startup. He also uses a term I've not heard before – software CEO – to describe most founders who live across the bay from Berkeley – in San Francisco, Palo Alto, Stanford and the South Bay. Software CEOs, according to him, develop software that changes the way we interact online or through our smartphones. He is engineering a deep tech technology to solve global warming. Mukhopadhyay landed in Berkeley in 2000 to pursue a postdoc in chemical engineering and never left. For 16 years he worked at Honeywell, an aerospace and materials conglomerate on different engineering problems. He improved solar panel efficiency, developed cockpit displays, ran a drone startup project, and collected over 47 patents. His biggest achievement at the company was in co-creating the world's first low global warming refrigerant (HFO-1234yf) which became an industry norm in vehicles and continues to generate billions of revenues for Honeywell.

During the pandemic, Mukhopadhyay became an advisor to Finnish deep-tech startups. It was while he was in this job that he reconnected with an ex-colleague of his, Mark Cyffka – who Mukhopadhyay calls 'my brother'. Cyffka wanted them to work on a deep tech startup in the carbon capture space. "Silicon Valley is a unique place," says Mukhopadhyay, "You find re-



sources, talent as well as money for big ideas. If not here, then where? And if not now, then when?" Within a year, they had both left their jobs and joined YCombinator, one of the most well-known accelerators in the Valley (where I first found their name). They launched AirMyne in 2022 with an angel funding of \$6.7 million. The aim was to prototype a plant to directly capture CO<sub>2</sub> from the air. They started with four employees building small-sized DAC prototypes – capturing 1kg of CO<sub>2</sub>. In the last 15 months, the now 20-employee team has built 37 prototypes from scratch.

Every day small choices make their prototype more efficient and effective – using liquid instead of solid to get maximum kinetics, using low-temperature heat instead of electricity, and using cheap interfacial structures to blow the air through. Most of their materials are sourced from Home Depot, a home improvement retail chain in the USA, or created in-house with the seven 3D printers they own. "We want to extract high volume CO<sub>2</sub> at a lower price," explains Cyffka, adding that right now, they are already at a cost of \$250-300 per ton of carbon capture, down from \$34,000 per ton when they started. "All these little decisions will become a crucial key to scaling to prototype plants in the future," agreed Mukhopadhyay.

But the going is never smooth. As they move towards scale, they face new challenges that need to be solved – through reaction engineering, aerodynamics, fluid dynamics, material science, robotics, physics, chemistry, sensing and automation. That's where Mukhopadhyay's connections with the deep tech community in Silicon Valley and various departments at the University of Berkeley and Stanford University come in handy. Energised with coffee, we walk down the block to enter a five-story building. The AirMyne office is West

Berkeley's industrial Gilman district is surrounded by car repair shops and beer breweries. Much of their office, which is more of a warehouse, is filled up with earlier prototypes of their devices. The sizes range from suitcase-sized small contraptions to those the size of a car. It's chaotic but in a good way. Scattered wires, haphazardly kept 3D printed materials, tubes, racks, containers, and makeshift working desks interspersed with a few employees. Most of the employees are recent graduates from Berkeley and Stanford and have worked in robotics, automation, sensing, aerospace and chemistry. They're all here for the same reason: To create something cutting-edge that saves the world. One of them, a chemist Sophia Sperman, is the niece of a woman who owns a car repair shop next door. The moment she heard there were scientists

doing climate tech, she walked in, interviewed, and got a job doing analytical chemistry. Cynthia Cao, their mechanical engineer, comes with a PhD in robotics and finds climate-tech's experimental robotics way more challenging than mainstream robotics. The phrase 'change the world' has been oft used by startups in the Valley, but here, even to a dystopia-writing novelist like me, it feels real. If they can make machines that can pull out carbon from our air and do it faster than we produce it, we've resolved climate change and literally saved the world. Shweta Taneja is an author and journalist based in the Bay Area. Her fortnightly column will reflect on how emerging tech and science is reshaping society in the Silicon Valley and beyond. Find her online with @shwetawrites. The views expressed are personal.

## Vivo launches its first foldable phone X Fold3 Pro in India

Vivo on Thursday launched its first foldable smartphone, X Fold3 Pro, in India. The uber luxury foldable phone will compete against Samsung's Fold and OnePlus Open. This is among the first phones in India to run Google's Gemini Pro in-built. The Vivo X Fold3 Pro has a 6.53 inch cover display along with an 8.03 inch of the main display. Both the AMOLED displays support 120Hz refresh rate and 4,500 nits of peak brightness. The phone weighs 236 grams and is 11.2 mm thick in folded state. The cover display is protected by Armor Glass. Vivo has added a 5,700mAh battery in X Fold3 Pro which is being supported by a 100W fast charger. The Vivo X

Fold3 Pro uses Snapdragon 8 Gen 3 processor and comes in single variant of 12GB LPDDR5X RAM and UFS 4.0 512GB of internal storage. It operates on FunTouch 14 based on Android 14. The X Fold3 Pro continues the collaboration with Vivo and ZEISS and features a main 50MP main camera with OIS, a 50MP ultrawide sensor and a 64MP telephoto lens with OIS and 3x zoom

.Both, the front camera on cover and main screen are of 32MP resolution. The Vivo X Fold3 Pro will sell at ₹1,59,999 in Celestial Black colour, starting June 13 across Flipkart, Vivo e-stores and offline retail partners.