

Hyderabad enjoys respite with pleasant weather; thunderstorm warning in Telangana for next five days

Hyderabad: Hyderabad experienced much-needed respite from the heat on Wednesday, with most parts of the city recording temperatures between 30°C to 34°C under pleasant, cloudy skies. This brief relief comes as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Hyderabad forecasts thunderstorms across various districts of Telangana over the next five days. On Tuesday, Mulugu recorded the highest rainfall in Telangana, with 96.3 mm. In Hyderabad, Shaikpet received the highest rainfall of 3.5 mm. The IMD has issued a yellow alert, indicating thunderstorms, lightning, and squalls expected until June 23 at various districts in the state.

For today, thunderstorms are anticipated in several districts including Adilabad, Kumaram Bheem, Nirmal, Mancherial, Nizamabad, Jagtial, Peddapalle, Bhupalpally, Karimnagar, Rajanna Sircilla, Hanamkonda, Warangal, Mulugu, Kothagudem, Mahabubabad,

Jangaon, Khammam, Bhuvanagiri, Nalgonda, Malkajgiri, Rangareddy, and Hyderabad. Tomorrow's forecast predicts rainfall for Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Sangareddy, Vikarabad, Narayanpet, Mahabubnagar, Jogulamba Gadwal, Wanaparthy, Nagarkurnool, Nalgonda, Bhupalpally, and Mulugu. Looking ahead to June 21, Adilabad, Kumaram Bheem, Mancherial, J. Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Mahabubabad, B. Kothagudem, Khammam, Sangareddy, and Vikarabad are expected to experience thunderstorms and lightning.

The IMD also forecasts thunderstorms and lightning for northern Telangana districts including Adilabad, Nirmal, Kumaram Bheem, Nizamabad, Jagtial, Mancherial, Kamareddy, Rajanna Sircilla, Karimnagar, Peddapalle, J. Bhupalpally, Medak, Siddipet, Hanamkonda, Warangal, Mulugu, and B. Kothagudem. In Hyderabad, scattered light to moderate



rainfall is forecast until Saturday across all zones, including Charminar, Khairathabad, Kukatpally, LB Nagar, Secunderabad, and Serilingampally.

Four young climbers from Telangana conquer new heights



Hyderabad: Four young explorers from Telangana – Lattupally Lalithya Reddy, Shamin Ramesh Kyatham, Lattupally Srihan Reddy, and Goli Preetham – completed a youth expedition setting new benchmarks for youth involvement in high-altitude expeditions. Along with Jahnvi Mantri and Riya Shridhar from Mumbai, the youth in the age range of 11-16 years, completed the expedition led by mountaineer Satyarup Siddhanta of Winners and Achievers, and I3 foundation of Ranchi. The 14-day expedition began with an arrival in Kathmandu and traversing Lukla, Phakding, Namche Bazaar,

Tengboche, Dingboche, Lobuche, followed by the challenging route from Lobuche to Everest Base Camp (EBC) and then to Gorakshp. The youngsters showcased courage and resilience as they tackled the challenges of the expedition, a press release said. To ensure the safety standards, a comprehensive insurance coverage was arranged, including helicopter evacuation services and the team carried their own oxygen supplies and had a doctor on call to address any medical needs during the journey. Lalithya Reddy said the expedition was a life-changing experience and Ramesh Kyatham said, "climbing these

heights has given me a new perspective on what I can achieve." Srihan Reddy described the journey as tough but extremely

rewarding and Preetham added that the expedition ignited a passion for adventure in him.

TGSRTC to give 'lifetime free' bus pass to girl child born at Karimnagar bus station

Hyderabad: A girl child born at Karimnagar bus station will be given a bus pass that will facilitate free travel in buses for life. The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) management on Wednesday announced a lifetime free bus pass to the girl child, continuing with the previous practise of giving life time free bus pass to children born in RTC buses and bus stations.

On June 16, a pregnant woman, Kumari along with her husband came to Karimnagar bus station for boarding Bhadrachalam bus. At the bus station, she went into labour and noticing this, the RTC staff immediately called an ambulance.

Meanwhile, the RTC women staff came forward and helped in the delivery at the station premises itself. Later, she was taken to the government hospital in the ambulance, where the doctors said that both the mother and baby were healthy. The management congratulated the RTC staff at Karimnagar for their humanitarian act of



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helping the pregnant woman who went into labour deliver the child safely. TGSRTC Managing Director VC Sajjanar along with the officials honoured them. Sajjanar appreciated the services of the staff – Syedamma, Lavanya, Sravanti, Bhavani, Renuka, Rajani Krishna and Anjiah who helped the pregnant woman deliver in an emergency situation.

Tackling the fatty liver disease epidemic

The theme for International Fatty Liver Day this year, an awareness initiative observed annually in June, is 'Act Now, Screen Today'. This theme resonates more urgently today than ever before. Liver diseases were predominantly associated with excessive alcohol use and this remains an important cause of advanced chronic liver disease. However, in recent years, we are seeing the emergence of a silently growing threat to liver health — non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. As our understanding of this condition has evolved, we now know that fatty liver is closely linked to metabolic health, cardiac health, and a risk for developing cancers. This disorder has now been appropriately reclassified and is known as 'Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease' (MASLD). It has also resulted in a paradigm shift in how we approach liver health. The key is to screen, test, and treat.

The trends in fatty liver disease prevalence are alarming. MASH (Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis), a progressive form that causes liver inflammation and scarring, is expected to become the most common cause of chronic liver disease and the leading indication for liver transplantation. The global prevalence of MASLD is estimated at 25-30%. In 2022, a meta-analysis revealed that in India, among adults, the pooled prevalence of fatty liver was 38.6%, while among obese children, it was around 36%. There is a close link between fatty liver disease and metabolic syndrome, including obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and abnormal cholesterol levels. Individuals with these conditions have high MASLD prevalence rates: 55.5%-59.7% for diabetes, 64.6%-95% for obesity, and 73% for severe metabolic syndrome. Consuming excessive carbohydrates, especially refined carbs and sugars, worsens these conditions by causing metabolic problems. When the body has too much glucose, it increases insulin production to help cells absorb the glucose. However, constantly eating too many carbs causes persistently high insulin levels, leading to insulin resistance, where cells become less responsive to insulin.

Insulin resistance disrupts normal metabolism and promotes the conversion of excess glucose into fatty acids, which are then stored in the liver. The liver cells fill up with fat, leading to fatty liver. Over time, this continuous damage affects the liver's ability to function properly, progressing from simple fatty liver to more severe conditions like such as steatohepatitis and cirrhosis, which are hallmarks of MASLD, and may require a liver transplant. Despite this growing burden of fatty liver disease, it often goes undetected as there is usually no warning or symptom in the early stages. Diagnosis is usually made at an advanced stage, often when significant liver damage has already occurred. The key to early diagnosis is simple — a comprehensive health screening that includes a thorough history, physical examination, blood tests, and an ultrasound of the abdomen. Physical examination will include height, weight, body mass index (BMI), abdominal girth, and waist-to-hip ratio to assess visceral fat, which is an important marker of metabolic health. Blood tests to cover cardio-metabolic risk factors include a blood count,



sugar profile, blood lipid profile, liver function tests, and kidney tests. In a cohort of 50,000 people screened at Apollo Hospitals, amongst the 33% that had fatty liver, as observed using an ultrasound of the abdomen, only one in 3 had elevated liver enzymes in their blood test. An ultrasound of the abdomen is an important test to screen for liver disease and an important first step to diagnose fatty liver. It is often missed or not included in many health checks, largely because of the limited availability of radiologists as well as stringent regulatory approvals.

Advanced liver tests will include liver fibrosis assessment to look for liver scarring, most accurately done by using newer technologies such as vibration-controlled transient elastography. This is a simple non-invasive tool and it measures liver stiffness to assess early stages of liver fibrosis. It can also be used to regularly monitor the progression and responses to treatment. Together, these tools — ultrasound, comprehensive metabolic screening, and elastography — form an integrated approach to effectively detect and manage liver diseases at an early stage.

Personalisation is the key. The selection of screening tests and the frequency with which they are performed should be personalised. This decision should be based on factors including an individual's risk factors such as family history, lifestyle, and pre-existing health conditions. Clinicians should not make generic assumptions given the patient's age or physical markers alone as we are increasingly witnessing non-communicable diseases break traditional stereotypes and impact very diverse people, including children. Moreover, multiple factors affect liver health, necessitating integrated strategies that combine dietary modifications, regular physical activity, and effective weight management to mitigate liver disease risks. The liver is a 'silent organ' that typically does not exhibit noticeable signs of

damage until it reaches an advanced stage. It is important that we are aware of the impact our lifestyle choices make in the long run. We need to take active control of

our health, be aware of what we consume, and go for frequent screenings because the groundwork for a happy life begins with good health.

US lawmakers grill Microsoft president over China ties, hacks

Microsoft President Brad Smith fielded questions about the tech giant's security practices and ties to China at a House homeland security panel on Thursday, a year after alleged China-linked hackers spied on federal emails by hacking the firm. The hackers accessed 60,000 U.S. State Department emails by breaking into Microsoft's systems last summer, while Russia-linked cybercriminals separately spied on Microsoft's senior staff emails this year, according to the company's disclosures. The congressional hearing comes amid increasing federal scrutiny over Microsoft, the world's biggest software maker, which is also a key vendor to the U.S. government and national security establishment. Microsoft's business accounts for around 3% of the U.S. federal IT budget, Smith said at the hearing. Lawmakers grilled Microsoft for its inability to prevent both the Russian and Chinese hacks, which they said put federal networks at risk despite not using sophisticated means. The company emails Russian hackers accessed also "included correspondence with government officials," Democrat Bennie Thompson said.

"Microsoft is one of the federal government's most important technology and security partners, but we cannot afford to allow the importance of that relationship to enable complacency or interfere with our oversight," he added. Lawmakers drew on the findings of a scathing report in April by the Cyber Safety Review Board (CSRB) - a group of experts formed by U.S. Secre-

tary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas - which slammed Microsoft for its lack of transparency over the China hack, calling it preventable. "We accept responsibility for each and every finding in the CSRB report," Smith said at the hearing, adding that Microsoft had begun acting on a majority of the report's recommendations. "We're dealing with formidable foes in China, Russia, North Korea, Iran, and they're getting better," said Smith. "They're getting more aggressive ... They're waging attacks at an extraordinary rate." Thompson criticised Smith's company for failing to detect the hack, which was discovered instead by the U.S. State Department. Smith responded saying: "That's the way it should work. No one entity in the ecosystem can see everything." But Congressman Thompson was not convinced. "It's not our job to find the culprits. That's what we're paying you for," Thompson said. Panel members also probed Smith for details on Microsoft's business in China, noting that it had invested heavily in setting up research incentives there. "Microsoft's presence in China creates a mix of complex challenges and risks," said Congressman Mark Green from Mississippi, who chaired the panel. Microsoft earns around 1.5% of its revenue from China and is working to reduce its engineering presence there, said Smith. The company has faced heightened criticism from its security industry peers over the past year over the breaches and lack of transparency.

State Level Bankers' Committee, Telangana 41st Quarterly Review Meeting for March 2024 & Launching of Annual Credit Plan of Banks for FY 2024-25



State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC), Telangana has convened its 41st Quarterly Review meeting today i.e on 19.06.2024 to review the performance of the Banks for the quarter ended March 2024 and to launch Annual Credit Plan of Banks for FY 2024-25 IN Telangana State. The meeting was attended by:

1. Shri Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu garu, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister & Minister for Finance & Planning, Energy, Telangana State
2. Sri. Tummala Nageshwara Rao garu, Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture, Marketing, Co-operation, and Handlooms & Textiles, Telangana State
3. Sri K Ramakrishna Rao, IAS, Special Chief Secretary (Finance), Govt. of Telangana
4. Sri Kamal Prasad Patnaik, Regional Director, RBI, Hyderabad
5. Smt Suseela Chintala, CGM, NABARD, Hyderabad
6. Shri Rajesh Kumar, CGM, SBI, Hyderabad Circle
7. Shri Debashish Mitra, GM, SBI & Convener, SLBC and executives from Public Sector Banks, Private Sector Banks, RRBs and senior Officials from the line departments of Govt of Telangana. Sri Rajesh Kumar Chief General Manager, SBI presented the performance of the banks in Telangana during the Financial Year 2023-24 as under: Total Deposits of the banks grew by **Rs.96547** crores during the FY 23-24 and the total deposits were at **Rs.7,79,953.14 crores**. Total Advances with Banks grew by **Rs. 1,65,162.10** crores and the advances of all banks were at **Rs. 9,79,058.54 Crore** CD ratio continues to be above 100 percent and it has gone up

from **119.16%** to **125.53 %** during the FY 2023-24. During the Year, Banks have disbursed Short Term Production Loans amounting to **Rs.64,940** crores achieving **88.42%** of the annual targets. Banks have disbursed **Rs.47,935** crores as Investment Credit to Agri. Allied, Agri. Infra and Agri. Ancillary activities achieving **121.89%** of the targets. Banks have disbursed Educational loans amounting to **Rs.785 Crores** and Housing loans amounting to **Rs.4069 Crores** under Priority Sector during the current financial year. Banks have disbursed **Rs.1,07,483** crores to Micro, Small & Medium enterprises (MSME) segment achieving **197%** of the targets. Under Pradhan Manthri Mudra Yojana Scheme, Banks have sanctioned **Rs.10,905** crores achieving **102%** of the annual targets. Banks together have disbursed an amount of **Rs. 2,28,988** crores to various sections of borrowers under Priority Sector, recording an achievement of **123.56%** of targets.

On the Financial Inclusion front;

- a) As per the information provided by Dept., of Financial Services, there are no Unbanked Rural Centres in the State.
- b) Banks in the State have **117.94 lakh** PMJDY accounts in their books and **95.48 lacs** ie **80.95%** of the PMJDY accounts are seeded with Aadhar. RuPay cards were issued to **86.41 lacs** i.e **73.26%** of the PMJDY accounts.
- c) As far as the social security schemes are concerned, Banks have covered **151.88 lakh** customers under Pradhan Manthri Suraksha Bheema Yojana (PMSBY) and **65.26 lakh** customers under Pradhan Manthri Jeevan Jyothi Beema Yojana (PMJJBY). **19.21 lakh** customers have subscribed for Atal pension

Yojana scheme. Under Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhayan:

d) Under PM Svanidhi Tranche 1, Banks have sanctioned **4,20,902** applications and disbursed loans to **4,17,815** Street Vendors. Under Tranche 2, Banks have sanctioned **2,09,121** applications and disbursed loans to **2,04,453** Street Vendors. Under Tranche 3, Banks have sanctioned **42,761** applications and disbursed **41,823**.

e) Under Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, banks have sanctioned **Rs.2401 crores** against a cumulative target of **Rs.1875** crores for the current FY.

On this occasion, the Annual Credit Plan of Banks in Telangana State for FY 2024-25 was launched by Shri Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister and Shri Tummala Nageswara Rao, Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture, Telangana State. The Highlights of the Annual Credit Plan are presented in the meeting as under: Credit Disbursement for the Financial Year 2024-25 projected at **Rs.633,777.48** cr with an increase of **161.05%**. Disbursals under **Priority Sector Advances** for the Financial Year 2024-25 projected at **Rs.280,550.80** cr with an increase of **51.38%**. Disbursals under **Agricultural Sector** for the Financial Year 2024-25 projected at **Rs.134,138.01** cr with an increase of **18.95%**. **Short Term Production Credit:** An amount of **Rs.81,478.08** cr is projected for disbursals for the year 2024-25 with an increase of **10.95%**. **Investment Credit (Agriculture Term Loans incl. Allied activities):** An amount of **Rs.28,222.75** cr projected under the Credit Plan for the year 2024-25 under Agri. Term Loans with an increase of **57.54%**. **Agriculture Infrastructure:** An

amount of **Rs. 5197.31** cr projected under the Credit Plan for the year 2024-25 with an increase of **13.91%**. **Agriculture Ancillary Activities:** An amount of **Rs. 19,239.87** cr projected under the Credit Plan for the year 2024-25 with an increase of **14.19%**. **Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME):** An amount of **Rs. 129,635.83** cr is projected for disbursals under the sector for the year 2024-25 with an increase of **137.12%** over previous year. **Other Priority Sectors:** An amount of **Rs. 10,768.59** cr is allocated for **Housing sector**. An amount of **Rs. 2,706.53** cr is allocated for **Education Loans**. An amount of **Rs. 3,301.84** cr is allocated for **other sectors**. Speaking on the occasion, Shri Tummala Nageswara Rao, Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture, while appreciating the efforts of Banks in developmental activities even in remotest areas, emphasized the need to focus more on Agriculture and Allied activities, over and above the projected growth of **57%** targeted for FY 2024-25. He further sought the support of Banks in achieving priorities and aims of Government.

He further stressed upon the need to extend more credit by Banks to Oil Palm cultivation, for which State Government is extending all needed support. He also advised Banks to focus more extending credit to set up Food processing Units in the State. Shri Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, while applauding the efforts of Banks in achieving various targets, sought the Banks to be benevolent in focusing more on extending credit to weaker sections and also SHGs. Further, he conveyed that more and more micro enterprises are to be credit linked, which will bring in significant change in scenario.

How the Maratha, Kunbi identities have changed over the course of history

Since September last year, an agitation for Maratha reservation spearheaded by an emaciated, wraith-like 41-year-old activist Manoj Jarange-Patil spread like bushfire in Maharashtra's arid Marathwada region and has been the cause of deep socio-political rumblings in the State. While the demand for a quota in jobs and education for the economically backward Maratha community members has been ongoing since the 1980s, a series of dramatic hunger strikes by Jarange-Patil (the fourth one was withdrawn last week) over the past 10 months has forcefully foregrounded the issue, vexing the ruling Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti government

The Maratha quota agitation has cost the Mahayuti candidates dearly on several parliamentary seats in the Marathwada region, the wellspring of the movement. Among Jarange-Patil's demands is that Marathas be given reservation under the Kunbi category classed as Other Backward Classes (OBCs), a demand which has predictably aggravated social tensions in the State and especially Marathwada. As a counterpoise, OBC politicians and writers have opposed Marathas eating their share of the reservation pie, arguing that the community is already the politically dominant one in the State and that more than 60% of Maharashtra's Chief Ministers — from Y.B. Chavan to Sharad Pawar to Eknath Shinde — have all been Marathas and that nearly 70% of Maharashtra's 288 legislators belonged to the community. At a deeper level, this ongoing conflict has prompted introspection of the complex identities of 'Maratha' and 'Kunbi', and their fascinating and politically fraught histories.

On identity formation Any attempt to understand the meanings of these two charged terms must begin with a study of English civil servant R. E. Enthoven's magisterial three-volume *Tribes and Castes of Bombay* (1922) — a mammoth and enduring classic which is a landmark in Indian anthropology. "There is probably no difference in origin between the landholding and warrior section, the Marathas proper, and cultivators, the Maratha kunbis," said Enthoven, noting the fluidity of the terms.

One of the most scrupulous and closest observers of western Indian society, Enthoven noted that the rise of the Maratha power under the warrior chieftain Shivaji Bhosale in the 17th century had induced the fighting classes and landholders to claim for themselves the Kshatriya rank, which was why they considered themselves superior to Kunbis, who tilled the land. While observing that Kunbi denoted a status and not a caste and that Marathas and Kunbis are used synonymously in many cases, Enthoven distinguishes between Konkani kunbis who claim neither to be Marathas nor Kshatriyas. It is no wonder that Marathas in the Konkan today vehemently oppose Jarange-Patil's agitation and categorically refuse to accept reservation under the OBC Kunbi category, as



they fear becoming *déclassé*. But when and how did the term 'Maratha' originate? Rosalind O' Hanlon's now-classic study of the process of identity formation in Maharashtra titled *Caste, Conflict and Ideology* (1985) is an essential masterwork in understanding this concept as well as turning the light on the Maratha-Kunbi cluster of castes. At the simplest level, 'Maratha' denotes all Marathi speakers and those who had fought under Shivaji Bhosale's banner and later in the 18th Century under the Peshwas until the decline of their power and British paramountcy in 1818 following the Third Anglo-Maratha War. Around this time, to European observers, the term was not caste-specific and all Marathi speakers be it Brahmin priests, soldiers, cultivators, artisans were indiscriminately called 'Marathas.' Unconsciously, it implied mastery over land and military prowess with early European writers assumed the existence of a strong regional identity focus on their heroic qualities, notes o' Hanlon. And yet, this term was applied in a narrower, caste-specific way. Within the larger complex of Maratha peasant castes, families who called themselves 'Marathas' represented a small social elite, claiming a varna status of Kshatriya appropriate to rulers, while the Kunbis accepted the lower Shudra varna. The emergence of the term must be understood in the context of Alaud-din Khalji's ferocious raids in the Deccan in the 1290s and the eventual extinction of the Marathi-speaking Yadava dynasty that ruled from the fortress-citadel of Devgiri. In Stewart Gordon's *The Marathas* (1993), part of the New Cambridge History of India series) scholar-travellers like Al-Beruni (1020 C.E.) mention 'Marhat Des' as the people who lived south of the Narmada while Ibn Batuta (in 1340

C.E.) said that the people who lived around Daulatabad were Marathas. The crystallisation of the term 'Maratha' probably occurred between 1400 and 1600 C.E. to describe a newly emerging service elite — the chiefs who brought bands of followers to serve the Bahamani kingdom and its five successor states which arose after the kingdom's fragmentation, says Gordon. As certain Maratha families (including the Bhosales) gained prominence for their military service with the Bahamani successor states, their domestic and social practices differed from that of the Kunbis owing to their close association with the Muslim courts of Ahmednagar and Bijapur. Besides aspiring to a Kshatriya status and being invested with the sacred thread, these families followed the Islamic practice of secluding their women, as well as the habit of eating from a single-dish with their caste-fellows, notes o' Hanlon. These distinctive social practices led to the coining of the term 'Marathmola' (translated as 'ways and practices peculiar to the genuine Maratha'), as given by lexicographer James Molesworth in his classic Marathi-English dictionary (1847). In their striving for an elite status, even Shivaji Bhosale's coronation as 'Chhatrapati' (June 6, 1674) was not without controversy as he had to be declared a 'pure' Kshatriya and admitted formally into the varna of rulers and kings. Strenuous efforts were made to persuade Brahmins and demonstrate the Bhosale family's genealogical linkages with ancient Rajput families like the Sisodias of Udaipur. After Shivaji's death, the later Chhatrapatis after Shahu (Shivaji's grandson) became puppets in the hands of the Brahmin Peshwas who ruled from Pune and expanded the Maratha power. A pivotal moment came after Bajirao II's defeat of

Elphinstone and East India Company's forces, which installed Pratapsinh Bhosale, the nominal successor of the House of Shivaji, as the Chhatrapati in Satara. This period of Pratapsinh's rule (until his dethronement in 1839) would have momentous consequences in the debate over the Kshatriya, the tensions between Marathas and Chitpavan Brahmins, and the Maratha-Kunbi complex of castes. Pratapsinh was ever suspicious of his Brahmin administrator Balajipant Natu, who had been assigned to him by the British who wanted to rein in the Maratha raja. The atmosphere of intense hostility seemed to confirm Pratapsinh's suspicions that the Peshwas had undermined the rule of Chhatrapati. When James Grant Duff, who, as resident of Satara (1818-23) was 'monitoring' Pratapsinh, wrote his three-volume *History of the Mahrattas* (1828) — the first attempt to document the exploits of Shivaji and the foundation of the Maratha state until its decline and dissolution — Pratapsinh eagerly endorsed it and had it translated in Marathi. This work, along with the conflicts and debates between the Satara ruler and Brahmins, would lead to the wide diffusion of the term 'Maratha' in western Indian society in the 1860s and 70s, when more and more Kunbis aspired to be called Marathas as a mark of social mobility. As o' Hanlon observes in her book, from the 1860s onwards the term 'Maratha' gained significance until it became a new identity that was applied to the whole Maratha-Kunbi grouping to the specific exclusion of Brahmins. O'Hanlon observes that the upward social mobility of many Kunbi families who aspired to gain acceptance in elite Maratha circles, was neatly summed up in the proverb *kunbi majhala Maratha zhala* (when a Kunbi prospers, he becomes a Maratha).

Ancient genomes reveal legacies of human sacrifice and medieval epidemics

People's practice of burying human remains throughout modern history echoes diverse cultural, spiritual, and social beliefs, and is often considered to be a line in the sands of time between modern and ancient humans. Studying burial practices is a complex endeavour, however: it's hard to say if some prehistoric cave burials are intentional commemorations or remains covered by sediment over time, for example. Nevertheless, researchers have recorded the practice of burying since the time of our now-extinct Neanderthal ancestors. The oldest intentional modern human burial dates to more than 100,000 years ago, in a cave in Israel. This timeline overlaps with the discovery of the skeletal remains of a roughly three-year-old child buried in Kenya some 80,000 years ago. Burial practices evolved with advancing human civilisations, with the construction of elaborate mausoleums (that continue to date). The pyramids of Egypt were monumental tombs for the pharaohs; the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan commissioned the Taj Mahal in Agra as a mausoleum for his wife. These structures reflect an enduring human desire to honour the dead and remember them.

The handful of well-preserved skeletal remains at ancient burial sites also open a window into the dietary habits, environmental adaptations, microevolutionary characteristics, biological kinship, sex, and genetic history of the respective population. These sites, spread worldwide, have thus been sites of intense scientific investigation as well. Some famous examples include the Tollund Man Bog Bodies in Denmark and the Thebes Tombs in Egypt. Studies of these sites have accelerated in the last decade thanks to rapid technological advances in genome-sequencing and medical genetics, which have expanded to seed the new fields of archaeogenetics and evolutionary medicine. Of late, researchers have used the tools and concepts therein to understand the origins of the bubonic plague pandemic, the evolution of malarial parasites, the spread of the mpox virus, and even the occurrence of Down's syndrome in ancient genomes. Chichén Itzá is an ancient Mayan city located in modern-day Mexico. It is known for its grand architecture and iconic ceremonial temples, built around 800-1000 AD. The temples are also infamous for having been the site of human sacrifices made as ritual offerings, and have been under constant archaeological investigation for more than a century. The offerings were deposited in an enormous sinkhole or a subterranean cistern called the 'Sacred Cenote'. In Mayan culture, these subterranean features were often associated with water and rain. The Sacred Cenote in Chichén Itzá holds the skeletal remains of more than 200 ritually sacrificed individuals, many of them children or adolescents. But we don't know much about the lives of these individuals or their biological relationship (if any) with contemporary inhabitants of the region. European colonists used to believe these children/adolescents were 'obtained' by kidnapping, purchase, or through the exchange of gifts with other nations. In a recent scientific report pub-



lished in Nature, a team of archaeologists and scientists from Germany, Mexico, Spain, the U.K., and the U.S. sequenced genetic material obtained from the human remains. They read the results along with bio-archaeological evidence collected at the site to launch an extensive investigation of the remains of 64 sub-adults from the Sacred Cenote and compared them to modern-day individuals of Mayan origin. Their studies revealed that all sub-adults in the cenote were genetically male and closely related to each other. The findings go against 20th century colonial accounts that claimed young women had been sacrificed here.

The study also identified two pairs of monozygotic twins among the remains. Twins held significance in Mayan spiritual life and were linked to the underworld, so their presence in the cenote wasn't surprising. The researchers also used isotopic studies to establish that all the related individuals in the cenote had similar diets, suggesting they all belonged to the same household. The similarities also suggested they were selected for a specific purpose. It is widely believed the Mayans organised ritual sacrifices to ensure the bountiful growth of maize and to appease rain gods. Genetic studies comparing the skeletal remains with present-day Maya people showed the latter are direct genetic descendants of the populations involved in the ritual sacrifices. This long-term continuity within the Mayan population opens doors for additional investigations on microevolutionary studies and genomic adaptations over the years, with implications for the study of population health. Legacy of colonial epidemics The ceaseless wars, famine, and epidemics wrought by colonial invaders decimated the Mexican population, bringing it from 10-20 million to 2 million by the end of the 16th century. In this period, infectious diseases such as small-

pox, measles, influenza, typhus, typhoid, and enteric fever spread among the people, resulting in a genetic bottleneck. (The rapid decline of a population also shrinks the genetic variations therein. Future populations will be based on this smaller pool, and will thus be at greater risk of disease.) Such events can leave long-lasting genetic footprints in the population. Studying them, in turn, researchers may be able to identify genes that have been subjected to genetic selection. By comparing the ancient and the modern genomes from Mexico, the researchers found evidence of positive selection in genes related to immunity, espe-

cially those associated with resistance to enteric fever caused by Salmonella enterica Paratyphi C, a pathogen serotype previously identified with the 16th century cocoliztli epidemic in Mexico. In this way, the study of the ancient genomes and their modern counterparts allows us to resolve old mysteries, dispel old hypotheses, and gain new insights from the past to light the way for the future. The authors are senior consultants at the Vishwanath Cancer Care Foundation, Adjunct Professors at Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur and Dr. DY Patil Medical College, Hospital and Research Center, Pune.

Google's Gemini now available as an app for android smartphone users in India

New Delhi: Google on Tuesday said its AI assistant Gemini is now available as an app for Android smartphone users in India with support for English, Hindi and eight other Indian languages. For iPhone users, access to Gemini will be rolled out through the Google app over the next few weeks, according to a blog post by Amar Subramanya, Vice President, Engineering, Gemini Experiences. "Gemini, your AI assistant from Google, has had an exciting first year in India... From students to developers and many other curious minds, people in India are embracing Gemini's capabilities to enhance their productivity, learning, and creativity in everyday life," Subramanya wrote.

Additionally, users of Gemini Advanced in India will now be able to access features of Gemini 1.5 Pro, Google's latest next-gen AI (Artificial Intelligence) model. The expanded capacity of Gemini Advanced will allow users to upload mul-

tiple large documents and emails for quick summaries, feedback, and actionable insights.

"As always, privacy is a top priority. Gemini keeps your files private to you, and they're not used to train our models," Subramanya added. Google said the Gemini feature will also be added in Google Messages on select devices. The generative AI platform faced controversies earlier this year, over its "fascist Modi" responses, and anti-white bias. In February this year, a journalist had shared a screenshot in which a question was asked to Gemini about Modi. In response, Gemini made uncharitable comments about him but was circumspect when the same query was posed about Trump and Zelenskyy. Google had then said it worked quickly to address the issue and conceded that the chatbot "may not always be reliable" in responding to certain prompts related to current events and political topics.

The message in the RSS chief's speech



Is the much talked about strategic and statesman-like address made by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat akin to the recent example of a juvenile justice board in Pune asking a minor offender to write a 300-word essay on road accidents as a part of his bail conditions? But in this case, who is meant to write the essay?

In a brilliant speech (not the first brilliant speech that the RSS chief has made), Mr. Bhagwat has virtually laid out a road map for the new (old) government and prescribed a model code of conduct, something that people expected the Election Commission of India (ECI) to enforce during the 2024 general election. The similarity between the two lies in what remains unsaid. The ECI put the party on notice; the RSS supremo delivered a sermon to 'whomsoever it may concern'. Mr. Bhagwat's message is loud and clear whereas the ECI's was muted and manicured. Both messages have the potential to hit the target without exposing it. The ECI examined complaints made to it, asked the political parties concerned for an explanation and then issued a mild reprimand — either convinced by the merit in the complaint or because it was convulsed by adverse public opinion and wanted to salvage its position. The bitterness in its pill was hidden in a multi-layered coat of saccharine. It could have rejected the complaints, as done in 2019, but it attempted to deliver even-handed justice that might have displeased all. In the process it risked denting its image of impartiality which it perhaps believes has been partially repaired by the efficient conduct of the 2024

general election. Possibly, it is the verdict that may have bailed it out and not just the smooth completion of the process. Mr. Bhagwat's message, just after the verdict in the general election, is in the nature of a post mortem, needed only when an 'unnatural' cause leads to a mishap. Hence, the admission of a 'mishap' due to something 'unnatural' is implicit in his telling address. The 'mishap' could mean losing majority and the 'unnatural cause' identified by him could be the violation of decorum in the frenzy of election campaigning. For good measure he said this was done by "both sides" — by the party in power and the Opposition — thereby enlarging the scope of his reach and the onus of the breach, à la the ECI. The key words, their import

The words that stood out in Mr. Bhagwat's speech were 'maryada' and 'ahankar'. He said "Jo vaastavik sevak hai, ... woh maryada se chalta hai. Uss maryada ka paalan karke jo chalta hai, woh karm karta hai lekin karmon mein lipt nahi hota. Usme ahankar nahin aata ki maine kiya (A true worker maintains dignity and does not violate the limits set by tradition while working. He does not have the arrogance to claim credit for himself for the work done)". 'Maryada' is an adjective associated with Lord Ram. To the best of my knowledge, Ram is the only Hindu god with whom this attribute is linked as 'maryada' relates to the conduct of a person, and not to his thought. Lord Ram represents the right conduct according to the general perception of duty. Being god, he does what he thinks and vice-versa, and is, therefore, a true amalgam of ideal thought and ac-

tion. In a mundane sense, that is what the model code of conduct is all about. 'Ahankar' is borne out of self-belief and is reflected in both deed and thought. It may be impossible for a person to be arrogant in action unless he is arrogant in thought. 'Style is the man' and arrogance will seep out in utterance if it exists in the mind. It is a leak that springs in a wall, creating damp spots even if the wall is strong. The RSS's website, on a page, "Vision and Mission", uses an effective metaphor: "Great oaks from little acorns grow". Although this refers to the growth of the organisation that boasts of the number of the shakhas (branches) of the Sangh crossing 57,000, it equally applies to the swayamsevaks (volunteers) who are exhorted to be humble. No acorn should think it is the oak even if an oak is inherent in every acorn. The dynamics of political contest

The other object lesson in Mr. Bhagwat's message is how to treat one's opponents in a contest. They are opponents only as long as they are in competition (spardha). Once the contest is over, they should be treated as people occupying the benches earmarked for those who did not qualify to sit on the Treasury benches. Where you sit depends on where you belong, and belonging is only circumscribed by the law of defection; not defined by commitment to an ideology. Be that as it may, together they constitute Parliament. Therefore, all opposition is subsumed in the House, where all members are honourable constituents. Mr. Bhagwat has coined an endearing term for the Opposition — 'pratipaksh', that is those who rep-

resent the 'other' side (pehlu), which is the essence of any democratic governance. An elected government is expected to treat the Opposition with the respect and the consideration that it deserves as it represents almost two-thirds of those who voted but did not choose the ruling party as it felt that it did not have the right to govern the country. No principle of democratic governance allows those in authority to ignore the will of those who favoured someone else, those who did not or could not vote, and those who do not yet have the right to vote. It is not 272 (the threshold of majority) or 294 (the tally of the BJP and allies, in early June) representatives versus 116 crore Indians. Mr. Bhagwat's plea is for inclusivity and a call for building consensus (sahmati), the onus of which lies on those who have the responsibility to govern the country. India's diversity cannot be wished away. Inclusivity, however, is not about an absence of differences. India has been, is and will continue to be a land of diversity. Caste, community, creed, religion, and regions are a part of this diversity. Just as the burden of building consensus is on the ruling party, the onus of diminishing the divisions in society is on those who are in power. It will always be the responsibility of those in the majority to alleviate the apprehensions of those in the minority. Fear is a two-way transaction — those who are scared and those who cause a scare. A democratically-elected government should never support the latter and sharpen existing divisions or exploit them for narrow political gains. Communities have survived in our society due to mutual dependence despite differences.

Dakshina Pradesh, an agglomeration of southern States, remained a non-starter



Early this month, the tenth anniversary of the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh and the creation of Telangana was observed. The idea of Dakshina Pradesh — comprising the States of Madras, Travancore-Cochin, and Mysore (with the addition of Kannada-speaking areas of Hyderabad and Bombay States) — emerged when the States Reorganisation Commission was winding up its work in 1955 and the formation of two more States (Karnataka and Kerala), on linguistic lines, was in sight. Even when the proposal was in its initial stage, some leaders had reportedly claimed that the Dravidar Kazhagam, led by E.V. Ramasami (EVR), also known as Periyar, favoured it. But, in the middle of September 1955, EVR issued a statement of denial. At a meeting he organised on the Marina beach to condemn the idea, he said the Congress would break its promise to establish States on linguistic lines, if it tried to constitute Dakshina Pradesh. “Such a step would also be detrimental to the economic progress of Tamil Nadu and development of Tamil language and culture,” he said, as reported by *The Hindu* on September 19, 1955.

The idea gained momentum after the Congress Working Committee, at its meeting in New Delhi in January 1955, welcomed the understanding between West Bengal Chief Minister B.C. Roy and his Bihar counterpart Sri Krishna Sinha on merger of the States. In fact, the seeds for Dakshina Pradesh were sown in August 1955 by Madras Mayor M.A. Chidambaram

at a civic reception for Mysore Chief Minister K. Hanumanthaiah, according to *The Hindu* dated February 2, 1956. The visiting dignitary was guarded in his response: all south Indian States were working with team spirit and people of these States were all citizens of one country, which was divided into different States for administrative convenience. By this time, Madras, the lower-riparian State of the Cauvery basin, began suffering from the diminished flows on account of the Krishnaraja Sagar Dam.

C. Subramaniam, Finance Minister and No. 2 in the Kamaraj Cabinet, in his memoir (*Hand of Destiny*, Volume I), credits Roy with taking the initiative of consulting leaders and coming up with a proposal that instead of linguistic States, the country be divided into five or six large States. C. Rajagopalachari, or Rajaji, who had all along opposed the concept of States on linguistic lines, contended that the “mix of languages and cultures” had been Madras’s strength and if divided on the basis of language, the province, “once so big and important and progressive, will hereafter grow narrow-minded and intensely anti-culture”, according to *The Rajaji Story* (1937-72) by Rajmohan Gandhi. In Rajaji’s scheme, Dakshina Pradesh included Telugu-speaking areas too.

However, as pointed out in *Anna* (a biography of C.N. Annadurai), authored by R. Kannan, EVR and Annadurai criticised the idea and called it a “mixture”. Having been identified in those years as a mem-

ber of the Rajaji camp, Subramaniam was one of the votaries of the concept. He had even seconded a resolution, proposed by G.B. Pant, at a session of the All India Congress Committee. According to Subramaniam, Kamaraj, though not impressed with the idea, told him that he had no objection to his seconding the resolution. Apart from Hanumanthaiah, Subramaniam contacted P. Govinda Menon, the Chief Minister of Travancore-Cochin, and both “showed a keen interest”. He also had a “detailed discussion” with Kamaraj and Union Minister T.T. Krishnamachari, perceived to be a member of the Kamaraj camp. His impression was that Kamaraj too had favoured the idea later. But, Kamaraj: Oru Sagaptham, a biography written by Congress leader A. Gopanna, says Kamaraj’s Cabinet Ministers R. Venkataraman and M. Bakhavatsalam opposed the concept. “A solution to disputes’ At the same time, Congress leaders of Mysore M.V. Krishnappa, who was the Deputy Minister of Food in the Union government (who later became the Revenue Minister of Karnataka), and H.C. Dasappa, a Rajya Sabha member, supported the idea and explained its benefits. They did point out that inter-State disputes would “automatically solve themselves”, according to a report of *The Hindu* on January 31, 1956. For two days in February 1956, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru met the Chief Ministers of Madras, Mysore, and Travancore-Cochin and held discussions in Bengaluru. His Cabinet col-

leagues Krishnamachari and K.C. Reddy and Congress general secretary K.P. Madhavan Nair, too, took part in the deliberations. In addition to Kamaraj, Madras was represented by Subramaniam and Bakhavatsalam. Krishnamachari hosted a party for the participants at the Bangalore Palace. Even at the party, Nehru, said to be keen on the proposal, had discussed the matter with Kamaraj and Madhavan Nair. A telegram from EVR while the Madras Chief Minister was in Bengaluru, he received a telegram from EVR, which said, “Dakshina Pradesh formation a life and death matter for Tamilians. It will be also a suicide for you and all.” Eventually, no consensus was reached. Apparently, even on the first day of the negotiations, Subramaniam was quick enough to understand the irreconcilable positions of leaders. When a reporter asked him whether the talks would continue for the second day, he shot back, “talks about what?” reported *The Hindu* on February 2, 1956. Ten days later, the AICC met in Amritsar and “unanimously” adopted a resolution, supporting the formation of bilingual States wherever possible and stating that unilingualism should not be made a fetish, said a report in *The Hindu* on February 13, 1956. In the meantime, a general strike was called by opponents of the concept in Tamil Nadu. Kamaraj assured the people that his government did not commit itself to any scheme of integration. He also dismissed the concept, saying public opinion in the State was “not in its favour”.

Everest, everywhere, all at once: What the peak is teaching us about attitudes and altitudes

The climbers boarded a second-class train compartment to Gorakhpur, crossed the border with Nepal by road, and caught a bus to Kathmandu. After a short trek to acclimatise to altitude, another long drive brought them to the base camp in Tibet. It had been three weeks since they set out. Even for a private expedition with such a grand mission, gathering funds was a challenge. An attempt on the world's highest peak from the north would be less expensive, and a lot more satisfying, since it was less commercial than the route via the South Col-South East ridge in Nepal.

The 13-member Independence Golden Jubilee Everest Expedition team, led by Hrishikesh Yadav, featured seven climbing members and a team of Sherpas from Nepal. Surendra Chavan was the first to summit Everest that season, on May 18; a day later, his teammate Love Raj Singh Dharmshaktu made it to the top. "Back then, an expedition was deemed successful if even one member reached the summit. So we decided to climb on different days to maximise our chances of success," says Chavan, 63. "We had a lot of tasks to attend to on the mountain. It was a really demanding experience for all members. Once all camps were set up, we had a meeting to decide who would attempt the summit. The Sherpas had an equal say since they had seen us operating on the mountain." Until Advance Base Camp, most of the gear had been carried by yaks. Here on, loads were ferried to the higher camps to stock them for the summit push. They also carried ropes and hardware that would be needed to secure the tricky sections on the mountain. Conditions were similar when Bachendri Pal and Rita Gombu Marwah arrived at Everest in 1993, as part of an all-woman team. Both women had attempted to summit previously; Pal had succeeded, becoming the first Indian woman at the peak in 1984. She was now leading the team, with Marwah as her deputy. (They did not make summit attempts this time, but were instead responsible for the planning of the climb.)

"There was a lot of talk that Everest had lost its value since women were now climbing. It was quite disturbing. But we set it all aside to do a job better than the men. We scrutinised around 100 applicants and picked our team. Every member was involved in the load ferry. These were really fit women who deserved the success of seven summits that the mission achieved," says Marwah, 66. Expeditions to Everest picked up as commercial climbing took off in the 1990s, and things started to change. The first thing to change was the numbers; the second were the facilities, to allow those large numbers of people with varied skills to dream of making it to the top of what had once been one of the world's most forbidding peaks. In 1990, less than 40 years after the first-ever summit, by Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary, in May 1953, there were 10 expeditions. There were 56 in 2000; 81 in 2010; and 92 in 2019. According to the Himalayan Database, 1,080 Indians have climbed Everest, the third-highest tally by a single country (the first two are the US and the UK). More

than half of these, 537, were Indians who signed up between 2011 and 2019. It has simply become easier and more convenient. Hence the snaking queues, this spring, and in turn, a few casualties as well. So, what's changed? Dharmshaktu, who has attempted Everest via three different routes, made his second successful ascent via the south side in 2006. On his last visit to Everest Base Camp, in 2021, he says he was taken aback by what he saw. "There were people going from Base Camp to Camp 2 in a helicopter, climbing to the summit, descending to Camp 2 and flying straight to Kathmandu. This is what Everest has been reduced to," he says. "A successful climb was from Base Camp to the summit and back. And that rule is no different today." The helicopter service has made the south side vastly more popular. Nepal, whose economy depends heavily on Everest tourism, and tourism in general, is flexible when it comes to the norms. There were once rules that stated one had to have summited a smaller mountain before attempting an 8,000-metre one. Recently, Nepal's Supreme Court ordered the regulation of climbers going to Everest. The impact of the overcrowding has been notable in Sagarmatha National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, where Everest is located, with piles of accumulated garbage, contaminated water sources and in the extent of disruption to the sensitive biosphere. So far, the numbers show no signs of abating. This spring, Nepal's tourism department handed out 421 permits for the mountain, generating \$4.5 million in royalties on the permits alone. For a little perspective, all of Nepal's seven other 8,000ers — Annapurna I, Dhaulagiri, Kangchenjunga, Makalu, Lhotse, Manaslu and Cho Oyu — received a combined total of 313 permits, fetching about \$558,000 in revenue.

The trash left behind by hundreds of people has handed Everest the infamy of being the world's highest garbage dump. Dharmshaktu has led clean-up expeditions that have collected tonnes of trash from the higher camps. "But bringing down trash left behind by others requires huge amounts of manpower, especially from Camp 4, the highest camp, where people simply abandon what they don't need," says Satyadeep Gupta, who was on the mountain this season. "Perhaps bigger drones could help address this situation..." For other ways to address the situation, one could look to measures enforced by the China Tibet Mountaineering Association (CTMA). For starters, it costs about \$10,000 more per person to climb Everest from Tibet. That automatically means fewer takers, but it also does guarantee them a better experience. "There were just three teams on the mountain in May. That's 30 to 40 people, with each team assigned their own summit day. It's definitely better climbing from Tibet," says Kuntal Joisher, who has summited Everest from both sides, Nepal and Tibet, in different years. "When I was there in 2019, the most I had in front of me at any point were three climbers." Then again, he adds, China doesn't depend on tourism revenue as heavily. "They'll be fine even if they halt climbing completely, un-



like Nepal," he says. So, amid the endless supplies of oxygen and the comforts at camp, all provided by a high-altitude guide, an immensely skilful Sherpa in all likelihood, what is the real Everest on Everest today?

There are routes that have still seen only a handful of successful summits, and a few that still remain unclimbed. These require technical climbing skills, the ability to forge a way up the mountain, the physical strength to operate in inclement weather conditions and the acceptance that even after weeks of trying, the summit may continue to be elusive. It's a world of a difference from how most approach Everest — and other commercial climbs — today, where a team of Sherpas called Icefall Doctors paves a way through the Khumbu Icefall, and another team opens the route to the summit, before the floodgates open for the rest to follow. Honest climbers call themselves high-altitude tourists, rather than mountaineers. "It's really a guided trip," Joisher says. "The journey though is still transformative. And the hope is to share the experience and inspire others to find their own Everest." That phrase has perhaps done more damage, through the decades, than it was intended to do, especially on the high mountains. But climbing Everest can still change lives. Soon after his summits in 1998 and 1999, Dharmshaktu was hired by the Border Security Force and went on to lead a number of expeditions in the high mountains that earned him a Padma Shri in 2014. Chavan, who also summited as part of the jubilee team, found mention in school textbooks in Maharashtra, and had a chowk named after him in his hometown of Dapoli. "We were welcomed with a dhol tasha performance inside the Mumbai airport, then taken all around Pune in a jeep. After that, my life didn't change much," he says, "simply because I didn't want it to change." On the one hand, there was the glory of being the first Indian woman to scale Everest. On the other, the weather had turned over the

last hour, bringing strong winds that were now pushing them back. One of her climbing partners, Phu Dorjee, had set off on his own, while the other, Ang Dorje, was slowing down behind her. "Ang Dorje's feet had gone cold, since he didn't have a sleeping bag at South Col the previous night. He was apprehensive about continuing the climb," she says. It was 1984. The Indian Mountaineering Foundation had sent a mixed team to Everest, at the suggestion of then prime minister Indira Gandhi, who felt it was time for an Indian woman to stand at the summit. At the time, Marwah worked with Air India as a traffic assistant at Palam Airport, but she was also a trained climber, from a family of mountaineers. Her father, Nawang Gombu, was the first man to scale Everest twice; Tenzing Norgay was her grand-uncle. To make the cut for the expedition, Marwah scaled Kabru Dome in Sikkim in 1982 and made an attempt on Mana the following year. "That was some hard climbing. We were competing with the men and were picked based on speed and stamina," she says. There were only two teams climbing Everest that spring. Each member carried their own gear to the higher camps to get ready for the summit push. "The summit teams were picked based on how each climber had performed during these rotations. I was part of the first team, and we had done well on the journey to South Col," Marwah says. Now, she was torn between pushing on and retreating. She asked Ang Dorje how far the summit was. "He told me, 'You'll make it there, but won't come back alive.'" This was an experienced climber who had summited Everest before. "I was disappointed, but this was no do-or-die mission for me," Marwah says. She abandoned the attempt. Two weeks later, her teammate Bachendri Pal made history as the first Indian woman, and fifth woman overall, to summit Everest. "Back home, the newsreader announced how I was the first Indian woman to climb over 8,000 metres. They also mentioned my feat in Parliament. I was quite happy with just that.