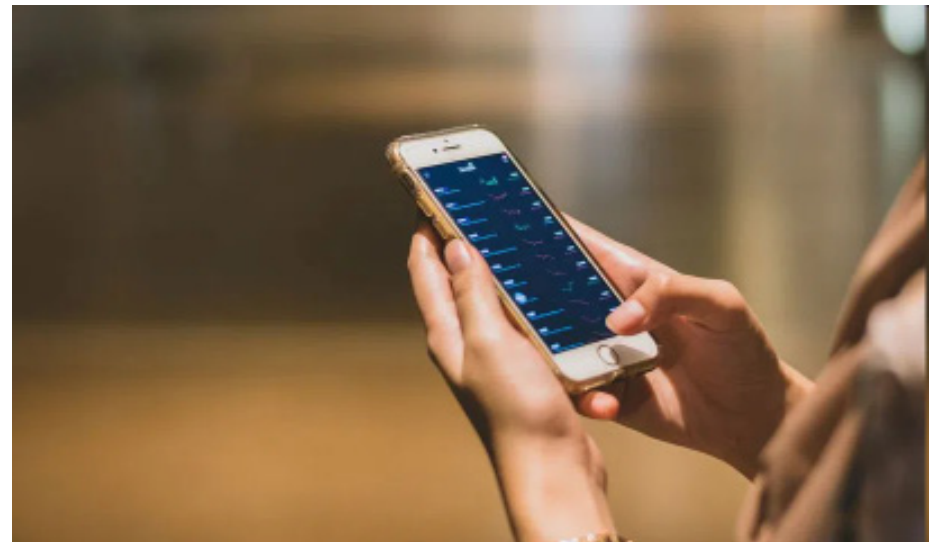


## Plainclothes police team nabs mobile phone snatchers after dramatic confrontation

Hyderabad: A plainclothes policemen team deployed to nab mobile phone snatchers hit the jackpot literally, when one of the snatchers attempted to grab the mobile phone of a policeman. As the startled policemen team grappled with the alleged snatcher, they were attacked by latter's accomplices. In the melee that continued on Friday night, one of the policemen fired a warning shot in air following which the alleged mobile phone snatchers were subdued and taken into custody. The interesting incident took place in Chilkaiguda on Friday night.

The special police team in plainclothes armed with short weapons like pistols and revolvers were deployed on information that a gang of mobile phone snatchers were moving around in Secunderabad. According to a senior po-

lice official, four persons came on two motorcycles and attempted to snatch a mobile phone from one of the police personnel. "One of the constables fired a shot into air in self-defense, after which the four-member gang surrendered. They were taken into custody and being questioned," he added. In view of a rise in the incidents of murders and property offences, the city police higher ups have deployed special teams armed with short weapons. In another incident, a senior police officer of Hyderabad police reportedly opened one round fire in air with a pistol at Asifnagar. The incident happened during inspections of a few police stations in the south west zone of the Hyderabad city in view of recent murder incidents reported in the area on Friday night. The official reportedly took the weapon of a police officer and to test its efficiency, fired a shot in air.



## Demand for new MMTS stations grows rapidly from Ghatkesar to Sanathnagar



Hyderabad: With the plying of MMTS (Multi-Modal Transport System) trains from Ghatkesar to Sanathnagar, demand for the new MMTS stations along the section is growing rapidly.

In this regard, the MMTS Train Station Sadhana Samithi and the Suburban Train Travellers Association have urged the railway officials to construct a new station at Anandbagh and a station near Loyola College in Alwal for the convenience of citizens, particularly students.

The Suburban Train Travellers Association urged the South Central Railway (SCR) to set up a temporary survey committee to identify sites for new stations on the Ghatkesar-Sanathnagar by-pass

line. "An urgent action plan is needed to extend MMTS services from Cherlapalli to destinations like Umdanagar, Lingampalli, Hyderabad, and Secunderabad. Ten years ago, plans were made for six new stations along the Ghatkesar-Sanathnagar section. However, with the emergence of new colonies, schools, colleges, and hospitals along the track, the need for additional stations has increased," says Noor Mohammed Ali, member of Suburban Train Travellers Association. Residents, including commuters going to places like Hitech City and students of Loyola Academy, are demanding railway stations in their localities, such as Uppariguda, Anandbagh, and Loyola College in Alwal.

Following the application to the Divi-

sional Railway Manager, Secunderabad, railway officials also visited the railway level crossing at Alwal Loyola College to assess the feasibility. They will submit a report to the head office soon. Locals highlighted the necessity of a new MMTS train station at Loyola College Alwal. "The current closest MMTS train stations, Bhudevi Nagar and Suchitra, are too far, making it inconvenient for local residents to use the MMTS

train services," Noor said. The area near the level crossing includes around 30 colonies and 10 colleges, with Loyola Academy being the largest, hosting approximately 10,000 students. "We received requests from the local residents and associations requesting new stations. We are checking feasibility on the said routes and will take necessary and appropriate decision," said a senior railway official.

## Crocodile attacks a fisherman in Pakhal lake of Warangal

Warangal: A fisherman sustained severe injuries after he was attacked by a crocodile while fishing in the Pakhal lake in Khanapuram mandal of the district on Monday.

According to reports, Shatla Chandramouli of Budharaopet village was fishing in the Pakhal lake along with other fishermen on a raft, when a crocodile suddenly attacked him, injuring him on his leg and thigh severely. Hearing Chandramouli cry out for help, other fishermen who were in the vicinity rushed in, following which the crocodile let go of him.

The fishermen rushed Chandramouli to the Narsampet Area Hospital after calling in a '108' ambulance. However, with his condition stated to be critical, he was shifted to Warangal MGM Hospital, from

where he was shifted to Hyderabad. Sources say the condition of the fisherman was stable and that he was responding to the treatment. As Pakhal falls under the Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary, fishing is banned in the lake, but the local fishermen illegally fish in the lake on a daily basis, especially during night. The forest staff were aware of this and have caught fishermen several times and even destroyed their fishing boats. However, the fishermen continue fishing using rafts and wooden logs putting their own lives in danger. In the past too, several fishermen were attacked by the crocodiles, but they continue to fish in the lake. The Pakhal lake has over hundred crocodiles. In fact, the forest officials have installed a board warning people to stay away from the lake as crocodiles could attack them.

# A story of displacement to one of empowerment

The Sri Lankan Tamils who arrived on the shores of Tamil Nadu, India, for the first time in 1983 had lost everything. Their only objective was to save their lives from the hate-filled ethnocentric violence which caused their displacement. Most vulnerable Sri Lankan Tamils chose India due to its proximity, accessibility and linguistic commonality of Tamil. Though aware of all the hardships, they were sure of leading a threat-free life in Tamil Nadu. Since 1983, 3,34,797 Sri Lankan Tamils have sought refuge in Tamil Nadu. They came in four phases that coincided with the escalation of conflict in Sri Lanka since 1983: 1,34,054 from 1983-87; 1,22,000 from 1989-90; 54,188 from 1995-2002, and 24,556 from 2005-24. Currently, as of January 1, 2024, there are 57,975 refugees living in 105 government-run camps in Tamil Nadu and an estimated 40,000 Sri Lankan Tamils living outside the camps in Tamil Nadu with police registration (data compiled by the Organization for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR) from sources such as the Commissionerate of Rehabilitation, the UNHCR and the OfERR database). New beginnings

The lifestyle of these populations underwent a drastic change — from one of an individual family living with basic facilities in hand to that of a sharing of basic facilities. They had to get attuned to a new life — of living in isolated camps in different locations and also from their own home set up to life in huts. Often, these looked like temporary sheds or a common building and entailed the use of public toilets, common water resources for daily usage and dealing with limited potable water. Every person in the camp is registered. And every person receives a monthly dole after a bimonthly roll call that ensures the presence of the person in the camp. In addition to the cash dole, there are several benefits such as free housing, electricity, water and monthly food rations. They also have access to all the welfare schemes available to the people of Tamil Nadu including the latest women's rights scheme of ₹1,000 per month. In terms of education, the refugees have access to government schools, and receive the additional benefit of ₹1,000 a month if they progress to higher education. There are also specific one-time education support programmes that are available to refugees — arts and science college students get ₹12,000 and students of engineering courses get ₹50,000. Most recently, the Government of Tamil Nadu has handed over brand new homes to about 5,000 Sri Lankan Tamils. A costing study that was completed in end-2023 documented that the government spent about ₹262 crore on refugees (₹170 crore directly and ₹92 crore indirectly) annually.

Bringing back dignity The welfare schemes form a large part of the protection of the Sri Lankan Tamils to restore their dignity and empower them to build a sustainable future. This has resulted in 100% enrolment in schools and over 4,500 graduates from the camps. They have been able to break free of their caste barriers as they fall under the Refugee category. This



has ended up in people not knowing their caste is treated as no longer necessary. The treatment of the Sri Lankan refugee manifests a clear concern of every arm of the state especially in the context of India not being a signatory to the Refugee Convention of 1951 and in the absence of domestic laws to govern refugees. In a positive turn, the government of Tamil Nadu went ahead and issued a government order (764) dated October 28, 2021 renaming the refugee camps as Sri Lankan Tamil Rehabilitation Camps. This is a clear step in destigmatising the refugee population of the refugee tag. Henceforth, Sri Lankan refugees are addressed as Displaced Tamil, from Sri Lankan Tamils in India. This is not merely a shift in nomenclature but a firm stand on restoring the dignity of the population. Having lived in India for over two generations, the refugees have constantly empowered themselves with experience and education. This has happened as a result of advocacy by OfERR and other well-wishers, donors and political parties that has facilitated the patronage extended by the Government of Tamil Nadu and the Government of India. The refugees are now seeking a durable solution to their current situation. Since the end of the war in Sri Lanka in 2009, a total of 16,641 refugees have returned to Sri Lanka according to the OfERR database and the UNHCR. While the momentum to return was picking up at a steady pace, the COVID-19 pandemic, and thereafter the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, paused and later slowed down the process.

Currently, Indian laws are unable to permit local integration by granting citizenship to the refugees from Sri Lanka. The option of third country resettlement also remains very slim. Also, other international crises have taken priority. Given this context, Sri Lankan Tamils continue to live in

uncertainty about their future, dealing with day-to-day challenges. The story of the Sri Lankan refugee living in the welfare centres of Tamil Nadu is one of a refugee-care model that is to be emulated. The concern of the Government of Tamil Nadu and the Government of India towards the Sri

Lankan Tamils living in the welfare centres has resulted in a transformation — of hapless refugees turning into resource persons who could potentially contribute to the rebuilding of the nation when they return. They will also form the most important skilled human resource that is ready to take up any challenge as it arises.

## Lizards are now biggest threat to power supply in Telangana

Hyderabad: The tiny but superfast, ubiquitous tribe of lizards have apparently turned out, quite suddenly, to be a major threat to uninterrupted power supply in Telangana, if the responses from power distribution corporations here any indication. The Telangana Southern Power Distribution Corporation Limited (TGSPDCL) and Northern Power Distribution Corporation Limited (TGNPDCL) have over the last few days been sharing photographs of dead lizards stuck on horn gap (HG) fuses and distribution transformers, blaming the little reptiles for sudden power outages in different parts of the State, right from in Jagtial district to even in the Cyber City circle in Hyderabad.

The responses from the power utilities on social media, especially microblogging site X, is now eliciting sarcastic comments from the public, who are pointing out the frequent power outages and asking how come the lizards were not a threat earlier during the BRS regime, and suddenly started jumping onto to transformers and fuses. The responses from the discoms are mostly on the same lines. For instance, on Thursday, the DE Technical Cybercity, TGSPDCL, sharing the image

of a lizard on a DTR responded to a complaint: "Sir, supply restored. Lizard fallen on DTR." This was after a software employee posted about power fluctuations at 5 am in the morning. The TGSPDCL, on its part, was quick to respond, with a technician reaching the spot soon.

The reason given for the power issue, according to the technician was that 'two lizards were fighting on the transformer'. The issue was however, resolved. With the complainant posting that the issue was resolved, another user commented that if he hadn't posted that the complaint was solved, an FIR would be filed against him, hinting at the recent instances of the power utilities approaching the police against those who complain. In reply, the complainant said: "Actually technician asked to delete the tweet. I said I won't delete but post an appreciation tweet for timely service and fix. It's a win-win for both of us..." This was not the first instance of officials from distribution companies in the State citing lizards falling on DTRs as reasons for power interruptions. On June 18, AE, Chilkanagar in reply to a complaint over no power in Sri Sai Durga Nagar Colony, posted on X:

# OPPO Unveils A3 Pro, starting at just INR 17,999, Sets a New Benchmark for Extreme Durability and Quality

OPPO India announced the launch of the OPPO A3 Pro which is engineered for all-around endurance and boasts a stunning premium design. The new A-series smartphone features a Damage-proof All-Round Armour Body for drop and impact resistance, IP54 certification for water and dust resistance and Splash Touch technology for use with wet hands. It boasts additional features like a 120Hz Ultra Bright Display, AI LinkBoost, AI Eraser, and a large 5,100mAh Hyper Energy Battery with over a four-year lifespan plus 45W SUPERVOOCTM Flash Charge.

The OPPO A3 Pro's Damage-proof All-Round Armour Body features a new reinforced internal structure and a suite of drop-resistant materials like Blue Glass double tempered glass for the screen cover that ensure the phone can withstand most everyday drops and impacts. Key components inside the phone are also cushioned with a Biomimetic Sponge for shock absorption. In recognition of its extreme ruggedness, the A3 Pro has received SGS Drop-Resistance Certification (Standard) and SGS Military Standard Certification. For even greater protection against accidental drops, the OPPO A3 Pro comes with a newly designed Anti-Drop Shield Case in the box. In tests conducted at OPPO labs, the device survived 450 rotations in a tumble drum to demonstrate a 200% increase in protection compared to when it is without the case. Further to this, OPPO's Splash Touch feature makes it possible to use the phone with wet hands. This technology is based on an advanced touch-detection algorithm within the touch chip to improve touch accuracy and responsiveness when the screen is wet. It allows users to continue operating the phone while cooking, immediately after getting out of the shower, or in virtually any other situation in which their hands may be wet. The OPPO A3 Pro is rated IP54 for water and dust resistance, which means it can withstand everyday splashes and dust, and has been tested in OPPO Labs to work perfectly after being exposed to rain for 10 minutes. The OPPO A3 Pro not only boasts durability but also maintains a sleek (7.68mm) and lightweight (186g) design. The smartphone—available in Moonlight Purple and Starry Black—features a premium, glossy middle frame design and a rectangular camera module on the back cover to exude a sophisticated look.

The Moonlight Purple variant employs OPPO's Magnetic Particle Design to create a dynamic flowing texture against its dark purple back cover, while the Starry Black model sports a matte texture that has undergone the iconic OPPO Glow process. A standout feature of the OPPO A3 Pro is its new 120Hz Ultra Bright Display, which reaches a maximum brightness of 1,000nits in sunlight. The standard brightness can be manually adjusted to 850nits, making this mobile phone's screen the brightest in the under INR 20K category. The 6.67-inch screen offers one of the clearest and smoothest viewing experiences among smartphones in its price range. It also comes with a 180Hz touch response (120Hz default) that makes it ideal for casual gaming, complete with an

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immersive visual experience that brings games to life with stunning clarity and fluid motion. The OPPO A3 Pro is also equipped with a large 5,100mAh Hyper Energy Battery with 45W SUPERVOOCTM Flash

Charge. Additionally, OPPO's Smart Charging adapts to your charging habits to provide safer and more efficient charging to preserve the battery's longevity and maintain peak performance for over four years

of normal use. That is, the battery maintains over 80% of its original capacity after 1,600 charge cycles, equivalent to over 4 years of use if charged once per day on average.

## Congress counters BRS on defection charges

Hyderabad: Countering the Bharat Rashtra Samithi's (BRS) charges over the Congress encouraging defections, Congress leaders here said it was the BRS that had actually started the culture of defections since 2014 in the State. Advisor to the Telangana Government Mohammed Ali Shabbir accused the BRS of undermining democracy by decimating the opposition. He reminded that between March 2 and June 6, 2020, BRS had engi-

neered the defection of 12 Congress MLAs and effectively stripped Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka of status of the Leader of Opposition. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, he condemned the BRS for criticising the Congress party citing anti-defection laws and morals.

When Congress and Telugu Desam Party MLAs joined the BRS, its leadership justified defections claiming that they were

joining the ruling party to develop their constituencies and Telangana. However, now when BRS members were joining Congress, the same logic was not being applied, he said. Meanwhile, responding to BRS working president KT Rama Rao's charges that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy was 'Cutting Master', Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao said the Chief Minister was a 'Correcting Master'.

# Vikranth Raj Durgalla Sweeps Multiple Golds in 10M Rifle (NR) Championships

The Telangana Rifle Association (TRA) hosted the highly anticipated X Telangana State Shooting Competitions, showcasing the exceptional talent and sportsmanship of over 300 participants across various events. Organized under the guidance of Mr. Amit Sanghi, President of TRA, the competitions were a resounding success, cementing Telangana's position as a hub for sporting excellence. The competitions featured the 10M Air Rifle, 10M Open Sight Rifle, and Trap events, which saw athletes from diverse backgrounds compete at the highest level. The event was graced by the presence of Mr. Anjani Kumar I.P.S., former Director General of Police, Telangana, and the current Chairman of the Road Safety Authority, who is renowned for his unwavering support for sports. During the award ceremony held at the SATS Shooting Range in Gachibowli, winners across various categories were felicitated for their outstanding performances. The disciplines included 10M Air Rifle, 10M Open Sight Rifle, and Trap event, where athletes were recognized for their hard work, determination, and remarkable achievements.

(S-25) Clay Pigeon Trap Shooting (NR) Championship Master Men (Individual)

1. Wasif Hasan Lateef got GOLD Medal with the score of 42/50
2. Faisal Yousufuddin got SILVER Medal with the score of 37/50
3. Mohammed Fateh Faiz Bin Jung got BRONZE Medal with the score of 36/50

(S-24) Clay Pigeon Trap Shooting (NR) Championship Men (Individual)

1. Mohd. Mujahid Ali Khan got GOLD Medal with the score of 43/50
2. Mohammed Zohair got SILVER Medal with the score of 42/50
3. Zohair Hasan Lateef got BRONZE Medal with the score of 38/50

(S-22) Clay Pigeon Trap Shooting (NR) Championship Junior Men (Individual)

1. Gautham Reddy Thota got GOLD Medal with the score of 37/50

(S-21) 10M Rifle (NR) Championship Women Individual

1. Laakhi Abhishek Maheswari got GOLD Medal with the score of 396 /400
2. Akshita Bhumarapu got SILVER Medal with the score of 394/400
3. Vanamala Akhila got BRONZE Medal with the score of 392/400

(S-22) 10M Rifle (NR) Championship Junior Men Individual

1. Vikranth Raj Durgalla got GOLD Medal with the score of 395 /400
2. Prithvi Saket Thakur got SILVER Medal with the score of 395 /400
3. Nandanoori Ashutosh Kumar got BRONZE Medal with the score of 392 /400

(S-19) 10M Rifle (NR) Championship Men Individual

1. Dhanush Srikanth got GOLD Medal with the score of 398/400

2. Vikranth Raj Durgalla got SILVER Medal with the score of 395/400

3. Rohan Sirigadi got BRONZE Medal with the score of 391/400

(S-24) 10M Rifle (NR) Championship Junior Women Individual

1. Laakhi Abhishek Maheshwari got GOLD Medal with the score of 396/400

2. Verabelli Mahathi got SILVER Medal with the score of 391 /400

3. Sri Laxmi Bhandharam got BRONZE Medal with the score of 391 /400

(S-25) 10M Rifle (NR) Championship Youth Men Individual

1. Vikranth Raj Durgalla got GOLD Medal with the score of 395/400

2. Prithvi Saket Thakur got SILVER Medal with the score of 395/400

3. Nandanoori Ashutosh Kumar got BRONZE Medal with the score of 392 /400

S-27) 10M Rifle (NR) Championship Senior Masters Men Individual

1. Pradeep Bansal got GOLD Medal with the score of 351 /400

(S-65) 10M Rifle (NR) Championship Sub Youth Men Individual

1. Vikranth Raj Durgalla got GOLD Medal with the score of 395 /400

2. Tanmay Onkar Roy got SILVER Medal with the score of 391 /400

3. Neil jain got BRONZE Medal with the score of 389 /400

(S-66) 10M Rifle (NR) Championship Sub Youth Women Individual

1. Avika Kansal got GOLD Medal with the score of 392 /400

2. Dhavalika Devi Nyamurs got SILVER Medal with the score of 390 /400

3. Ananya Javvaji got BRONZE Medal with the score of 388/400

(S-79) 10M Rifle (NR) Championship Masters Men Individual

1. Vamsidhar Nali got GOLD Medal with the score of 368 /400

2. Pradeep Bansal got SILVER Medal with the score of 351/400

(A-98) 10M RIFLE OPEN SIGHT (NR) CHAMPIONSHIP YOUTH MEN INDIVIDUAL

1. Kota Akhilesh got GOLD Medal with the score of 303/400

2. Karthikeya Vedula got SILVER Medal with the score of 302/400

(A-100) 10M RIFLE OPEN SIGHT (NR) CHAMPIONSHIP SUB YOUTH MEN INDIVIDUAL

1. Karhikeya Vedula got GOLD Medal with the score of 302/400

(A-92) 10M RIFLE OPEN SIGHT (NR) CHAMPIONSHIP MEN INDIVIDUAL

1. Raunak Rhishabh got GOLD Medal with the score of 306/400

The competitions have been a true testament to the dedication and talent of the participating athletes, showcasing the growth and development of the shooting sport in Telangana. The Telangana Rifle Association extends its sincere gratitude to all the participants, coaches, and offi-



cial who contributed to the success of this prestigious event. Starting tomorrow, the competition will continue with thrilling events in 10M Pistol, 50M Rifle Prone, 50M

Rifle 3P, 50M Open Sight Rifle, 50M Open Sight Rifle 3P, and Double Trap, promising an exhilarating experience for both the athletes and the spectators.

## HDFC Bank's Vigil Aunty - End of Scam Sale Campaign Wins a Silver Cannes Lions



We understand your world

HDFC Bank, India's leading private sector bank, announced that it has won a Silver at the Cannes Lions 2024 for the Vigil Aunty - End of Scam Sale (EOSS) Campaign. The social media campaign, featuring actress Nora Fatehi and Vigil Aunty, has so far acquired a reach of over 28 million and 22 million views. Vigil Aunty is a fictional social media character created by HDFC Bank to spread awareness on digital frauds. As part of the EOSS Campaign, HDFC Bank used actress Nora Fatehi's star power to replicate the modus operandi of fraudsters and make the public aware of how one can easily be susceptible to deepfakes and frauds. The Bank created a fake brand and had audiences believe in its legitimacy by creating an Instagram page for 'Lulumelon', making it sound like a genuine brand with exciting offers and deals. The campaign was recognised at the prestigious Cannes Lions for the best use of 'Events & Stunts'. Ravi Santhanam, Group Head, Chief Marketing Officer and Head - Direct to Consumer Business, HDFC Bank said, "Winning a Cannes Lions for our fraud awareness campaign only adds to our commitment to spreading awareness about the issue, to help customers avoid becoming victims of digital frauds. This recognition is a testament to the exceptional creative tal-

ent of our agency partners, FCBKinnect. Working together, we are delighted to have created an impactful campaign with an innovative approach. For us, powerful storytelling for a relevant cause was gratifying and we stay committed to making more and more consumers aware about the issue." Jahid Ahmed, SVP & Head of Digital Marketing, HDFC Bank said, "We are delighted to be amongst the winners at the industry's most prestigious awards, Cannes Lions. Along with our partners at FCBKinnect, we are proud to have created the innovative 'Lulumelon- End of Scam Sale' campaign for digital fraud awareness, subtly leveraging the concept of optimism bias. We stand proud to come up with and take forward this impactful campaign for fraud prevention." The Vigil Aunty initiative, launched in 2022, introduced an influencer who urged people nationwide to adopt safe banking habits. The campaign has been instrumental in promoting secure banking awareness and educating the public on various digital fraud techniques employed by fraudsters. Since its launch, the initiative has garnered a substantial fan base of over two million across social media platforms, covering over 60 modus operandi to educate customers on preventive measures against various types of fraud.

# HDFC Bank Hosts Fraud Awareness Session For Its Employees

HDFC Bank hosted a virtual fraud awareness session for its employees as a part of a secure banking awareness drive. The session was to raise awareness about various types of fraudulent practices employed and further equip employees with information and skills to be more aware about such tactics.

Mr. Sundaresan M, Group Head - Retail Credit Strategy & Control and Mr. Manish Agrawal, Executive Vice President - Credit Intelligence and Control - HDFC Bank hosted the event and shared case studies to further illustrate this. The session focused on educating staff on newer types of frauds like courier scam, fake police scam, fake credit scam, among others. Also covering aspects like how to avoid opening of fraudulent accounts, prevent misuse of banking channels for money mule(s), terrorist funding, cyber frauds and money laundering activities - all with legal and reputational consequences. The session was addressed by Mr. D. Sivanandhan, IPS (Retired), Former DGP of Maharashtra & Former Police Commissioner of Mumbai. Mr. Sivanandhan from his rich experience shared live examples on how fraudsters use emotions like greed, lust and fear to influence people that typically leads them to make a mistake. He shared insights on different types of modus operandi used by fraudsters to dupe innocent citizens.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Sundaresan M said, "Today we are transacting more digitally. Hence it is important to create awareness about various modus operandi used by fraudsters and the secure banking practices that one needs to follow so that we do not become victims of



online frauds. It is important to remember basics like never to click on unreliable links or give out private banking information to strangers." In the Financial Year 2024, HDFC Bank has conducted over 16,000 such sessions pan India and reached out to over 2,00,000 participants covering various segments of society. These workshops are aimed at educating students in schools

as well as colleges, customers, law enforcement agencies, senior citizens, Self-Help Groups, vendors, partners and employees among others. The Bank encourages customers to be cautious and adopt safe banking habits while transacting digitally and to avoid sharing their confidential banking information with anyone. In the event that a customer(s) falls prey to online

fraud, they should immediately report the unauthorised transaction(s) to the bank and get the payment mode blocked for safeguarding against future losses. Customers should also file a complaint by calling 1930 helpline number started by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and submit the complaint on the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal <https://cybercrime.gov.in>.

## Apple's App Store rules breach EU tech rules, EU regulators say

Apple's App Store rules breach EU tech rules because they prevent app developers from steering consumers to alternative offers, EU antitrust regulators said on Monday, a charge that could result in a hefty fine for the iPhone maker. The European Commission, which also acts as the European Union's antitrust and technology regulator, said it had sent its preliminary findings to Apple following an investigation launched in March.

The charge against Apple is the first by the Commission under its landmark Digital Markets Act which seeks to rein in the power of Big Tech and ensure a level playing field for smaller rivals. It has until March next year to issue a final decision. EU antitrust chief Margrethe Vestager cited issues with Apple's new terms.

"As they stand, we think that these new terms do not allow app developers to communicate freely with their end users, and to conclude contracts with them," she told a conference. The Commission said under

most of the business terms, Apple allows steering only through 'link-outs', meaning that app developers can include a link in their app that redirects the customer to a web page where the customer can conclude a contract.

It also criticised the fees charged by Apple for facilitating via the App Store the initial acquisition of a new customer by developers, saying they went beyond what was strictly necessary for such remuneration. Apple said it had made a number of changes in the past several months to comply with the DMA after getting feedback from developers and the Commission.

"We are confident our plan complies with the law, and estimate more than 99% of developers would pay the same or less in fees to Apple under the new business terms we created," the company said in an email.

The EU executive said it was also opening an investigation into the iPhone



maker over its new contractual requirements for third-party app developers and app stores and whether these were nec-

essary and proportionate. DMA breaches can cost companies fines as much as 10% of their global annual turnover.

# Blueprints beyond borders, for solace and shelter

Today, the world has over 43.4 million refugees, and with conflicts raging in different parts of the world, this number is only increasing. But as it rises, we also run the risk of treating these people as figures in a statistical compilation, and not human beings with needs, fears, hopes and wants. Yet this, precisely, is what they are. And World Refugee Day (June 20) is a sombre occasion to think of all those human beings — a ceaseless succession of families with dreams and desires, laughter and joy — whose lives have been uprooted, all those homes that have been destroyed, and all those futures that have been jeopardised. But this is also an occasion to think of safe havens granted, asylum ensured, refugees protected, and solutions found.

India is well-poised to commemorate this poignant day. History, after all, is on our side. Our record of granting asylum goes back millennia, from the Jews who fled to India centuries before Christ after the demolition of their Jerusalem Temple by the Babylonians and then the Romans, to the Zoroastrians fleeing Islamic persecution in Persia, to the East Bengalis — for the cause of whose nationhood we waged war with Pakistan in 1971, liberating what became Bangladesh — Tibetans and Sri Lankan Tamils in more recent years, alongside streams of Nepalis, Afghans and Rohingyas. As a nation that attained independence against the backdrop of one of the most horrific refugee crises in history, when 13 million to 15 million people crossed the freshly created borders between India and Pakistan, we are all too aware of the perils that befall refugees, and of the consequent need to help them rebuild their lives.

The pitch for suitable legislation Despite our glorious history of affording solace and shelter to refugees from the world over, it is ironic that India is neither a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention (which outlines the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, alongside the obligations of host states) nor to its 1967 Protocol. Nor does our country have a domestic asylum framework. Whereas, with our history, we ought to lead the global march on the question of refugee rights, our present actions and lack of a legal framework does our heritage no credit, shames us in the eyes of the world, and fails to match up to our stellar past track record. It was to address these gaping lacunae that I introduced, in February 2022, a Private Member's Bill in the Lok Sabha, seeking the enactment of a Refugee and Asylum law. My Bill laid down comprehensive criteria for recognising asylum seekers and refugees, and prescribed specific rights and duties accruing from such status. This legislation was proposed because of our government's failure to honour the international legal principle of non-refoulement — the cornerstone of refugee law, which states that no country should send a person to a place where they may suffer persecution — and even more, its betrayal of India's impeccable tradition of granting asylum to strangers.

Titled the Asylum Bill, 2021, it followed close on the heels of our government expelling to Myanmar two batches of Rohingya refugees despite the grave risk of persecution in the country they had fled. In conducting this act of "refoulement" in violation of international law, our government revealed both religious bigotry (the refugees were Muslim) and intolerance. In fact, in 2017, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a circular classifying Rohingyas as "illegal migrants", leading to their being callously flung into detention centres across India, where they languish in deplorable conditions — unable to communicate with their families and without any access to medical facilities, food, sanitation and water supply — until they are deported. As of August 2023, over 700 Rohingyas were in detention throughout India. The government has also been inhospitable to the Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmarese in Mizoram. My Bill sought to put an end to such arbitrary conduct by the authorities. It afforded to all foreigners — regardless of their nationality, race, or religion — the right to seek asylum in India. It also called for the creation of a National Commission for Asylum to review and decide all such applications. Having staunchly affirmed, with no exceptions, the principle of non-refoulement, I specified reasons for exclusion, expulsion and revocation of refugee status, thus respecting the government's sovereign authority while limiting its discretion. In a state of suspense

In the absence of a consistent and comprehensive law to deal with asylum seekers, we lack a clear perspective on refugee management. We have a flurry of such laws as the Foreigners Act, 1946, the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, the Passports Act (1967), the Extradition Act, 1962, the Citizenship Act, 1955 (including its ominous 2019 amendment) and the Foreigners Order, 1948, all of which club all foreign individuals together as "aliens". Because India has neither subscribed to international conventions on the topic nor set up a domestic legislative framework to deal with refugees, their problems are dealt with in an ad hoc manner, and like other foreigners, they always face the possibility of being deported. While speaking of refugee protection, we must not limit ourselves just to providing asylum. We need a rigorous mechanism to ensure that refugees can access basic public services — chief among them medical facilities and educational institutions — and legally seek jobs to get back on their feet.

We can, and must, do better. India should enact a National Asylum Law, such as the one I have presented to Parliament. We currently host more than two lakh refugees, but the Bharatiya Janata Party government's churlish attitude to the Rohingya and other "inconvenient" refugees risks putting us in the global doghouse. Had it been enacted, my Bill would have placed India at the forefront of asylum management in the world. It would have vindicated our steadfast and imme-



morial commitment to humanitarian and democratic values while dealing with refugees.

Taking up the judiciary's baton In 1996, the Supreme Court of India held that not just Indians but everybody living in India, irrespective of nationality, enjoys the inviolable rights guaranteed by Articles 14, 20 and 21 of the Constitution of India. On these grounds, the apex court, in the landmark case of National Human Rights Commission vs State Of Arunachal Pradesh & Anr., stopped the forcible eviction of Chakma refugees who had entered Arunachal Pradesh in 1995. The Court held that an application for asylum must be properly processed, and till a decision is made whether to grant or refuse asylum, the state cannot forcibly evict an asylum seeker. Our judiciary, therefore, has already pointed us towards the golden path: now we must scrupulously tread it. Yet, at times, different judges have taken radically different approaches, which we saw aplenty in the Rohingya case. The enactment and enumeration of refugee rights will reduce our reliance on judge-centric approaches — or, even worse, the whims of Home Minis-

try bureaucrats, police officers and politicians. The problems of refugees worldwide are problems that demand international cooperation. India, as a pillar of the world community and as a significant pole in the emerging multipolar world, must play its own part — on its own soil as well as on the global stage — in this noble task, devising solutions for refugees that offer blueprints beyond borders. In so doing, we would uphold our own finest traditions and the highest standards of our democracy, alongside demonstrating that we truly are what we have forever claimed to be: a vishwaguru, striving inexorably to serve, in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "the still larger cause of humanity". This is a worthwhile aspiration for all of us who care about what India stands for, both at home and in the world. Shashi Tharoor, Member of Parliament (Congress), spent 11 years (1978-89) working for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, including three and a half years as head of its Singapore office at the peak of the Vietnamese 'boat people' crisis. He is also an author and columnist who has long advocated the passage of a refugee/asylum law in India

## Eye care facilities for children at Fernandez

Hyderabad: Fernandez Hospital on Thursday announced the launch of Children's Eye Clinic, which will provide comprehensive eye care services to children up to 16 years, in partnership with LV Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI) at their Necklace Road facility.

The paediatric ophthalmology team at LVPEI will provide eye care to children at the new facility, which will screen, diagnose and treat various eye health conditions, including refractive errors, squint, eye allergies and infections, congenital cataracts, congenital glaucoma, and retinal diseases.

The clinic intends to use modern technology for tele-ophthalmology services apart from regular visits by paediatric ophthalmologists from LVPEI, a press release said. "Our goal is to provide comprehen-



sive care for children and newborns, which includes quality eye care. When children visit us for routine health checks or vaccinations, it is essential to check for eye conditions as well," Dr Evita Fernandez, CMD, Fernandez Foundation, said.

Dr Prashant Garg, Executive Chair, LVPEI, said, "This partnership will enhance our ability to reach more children in need of eye care services and provide them with the best possible treatment."

# German Opportunity Card opens up job market for skilled migrants

Swapnil Naik, 39, is the head of operations at a financial company in Mumbai. Having worked in India for over a decade, Mr. Naik wanted to expand his horizons and has been eyeing European shores. After being unsuccessful with a job visa for France earlier this year, Mr. Naik started the process to apply for Germany's job-search visa. A recent change in German regulations will make the path easier for applicants like Mr. Naik, who can leverage their professional experience.

On 1 June 2024, the German government released the third stage of its Skilled Immigration Act — passed in 2020 but started coming into effect only in 2023 — with the Chancenkarte or Opportunity Card. This allows skilled professionals in non-EU countries to search for work while legally living in Germany for up to a year. The Opportunity Card was made possible by awarding points if certain conditions were fulfilled. This practice has been common in Canada and Australia for many years. "The Opportunity Card has come at the right time for me. I have already completed my police verification for this. I will be enrolling in a German language course soon as I continue my search for jobs in Germany," said Mr. Naik. "The Chancenkarte is an interesting addition to the German labour migration system, which has evolved over the last twenty years. It is becoming more liberal but also more complex. In principle, it sends a good message to potential migrants," noted migration analyst Dr. Marcus Engler. Points system for skilled professionals The major requirements when applying for the Opportunity Card are a minimum of two years of vocational training or a university degree or work experience, entry-level German knowledge or fluency in English, and a blocked account of €12,324 per person per year.

One is awarded points based on German language proficiency, professional experience, age, experience in regulated professions in Germany (such as teacher, nurse, or engineer), and more. Those who are over 40 years are at a disadvantage as the Opportunity Card is targeted more at a younger professional profile. A prospective candidate must acquire at least six points to qualify for the Opportunity Card. Unlike the job search visa (which would let one look for a job for six months in Germany without any option to work part time in this duration), the Opportunity Card allows one to work part-time (20 hours per week) during the job search. The job search period can be extended by another two years (only once), depending on exceptional circumstances. Applicants must be able to secure a job with an annual gross salary of at least €40,770 to continue staying in Germany. "With the Opportunity Card, we are creating a new innovative and points-based residence permit that will contribute to the overall success of the reform of the Skilled Immigration Act. Following the Canadian model, we are focusing on an unbureaucratic, comprehensible



and digital solution that companies and associations in Germany have long wanted," said Misbah Khan, a member of the German parliament from the Green party, in a statement.

Plugging the skilled worker shortage Germany has been reeling from a skilled worker shortage as its population aged rapidly. According to German Labour Minister Hubertus Heil, Germany would need 7 million skilled workers by 2035, with sectors such as nursing, the food and beverage industry, and information technology experiencing the greatest shortage. As of April 2024, the Federal Employment Agency reported 7,01,000 vacant jobs. Based on trends in the last few years, Germany has been an attractive destination for Indian professionals. In 2022, Germany granted the most work visas to Indians, with 17,379 approved visas. In February 2023, when German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited India, he stressed the need to simplify the issuing of visas to Indian professionals, especially in the IT sector. The German economy has been slowing down for a few quarters. The economic output had shrunk by 0.3% in the last quarter of 2023 with fears of Germany entering a technical recession. This hasn't come to pass. Also there wasn't much of an impact on the IT professionals being hired remotely from India by German companies as per economy experts. The latest Bundesbank (German central bank) economic forecast claimed that the economy is slowly regaining its foothold. According to the forecast, real gross domestic product (GDP) will rise by a calendar-adjusted 0.3% this year, with the Bank's experts anticipating economic growth of 1.1% next year and 1.4% in 2026. However, employment growth is still expected to be slow.

"Employment growth is expected to weaken slightly as supply bottlenecks increase, coming to a halt in the course of 2026. This is because the slight decline in unemployment in 2025 and 2026 will no longer open up any substantial scope for additional employment," noted the report. Sonali Chowdhry, a trade economist at DIW Berlin believes the Opportunity Card is a step in the right direction as it relaxed several constraints faced by foreign workers. "Prospective applicants should be prepared for entering a labour market facing sluggish economic recovery, subdued business investment and relatively high costs of housing in major German cities like Munich, Frankfurt and Berlin," said Ms. Chowdhry highlighting the major challenges facing job seekers in Germany.

Challenges with the Opportunity Card One of the requirements of the Opportunity Card is to have a blocked account, just like it is for the students who opt for higher studies in Germany. "The requirement of over €12,000, comes to around ₹11 lakh. I don't have that much liquid balance. Most of my savings are spread out over mutual funds, deposits and share investments. I'll have to withdraw money from these investments, whereby I will lose out on the interest I could've earned," said Mr. Naik while appreciating the prospect of doing part-time work when in Germany, till he secures a job. Mr. Engler agrees that this requirement could be a challenge for many and there has to be a prospect for flexibility with the regulations. "One of the challenges is what happens if you get a lot of applications for the Opportunity Card. Then, you need to have a system of prioritisation for selection, but there is no clarity on that. The administrative processes have to work

smoothly for this to be a success. We will have to wait for more evidence-based discussion," said Mr. Engler. According to many experts, German bureaucratic processes can get tedious. "The Opportunity Card could more readily attract skilled workers in high-demand industries with labour shortages, such as digital technologies and renewable energy, by removing bureaucratic obstacles," noted Ms. Chowdhry. The German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) sees little positive effect from the Opportunity Card. In a statement to local media, DGB stated that one of the obstacles in the process is the lack of state-approved vocational training in many non-EU countries where young people pick up skills via 'on-the-job' informal training without graduating in the field. The point system in Canada offers the chance of permanent residency, whereas the Opportunity Card system in Germany does not. In Germany, permanent residency involves many more steps in addition to securing the Opportunity Card. The anti-immigrant right-wing party Alternative for Germany (AfD), which emerged as the second-largest party in Germany in the recently concluded EU parliament election, has said the Opportunity Card will lead to "wage dumping and more welfare state burden." But some of the objections raised such as there being no minimum level of earnings, are patently false as the government has mandated Opportunity Card holders to find a job with a minimum gross salary of €40,770. "Potentials instead of populism — that must be our motto. Only as a pragmatic country of immigration will we ultimately prevent a situation in which we simply lack the staff to care for our grandparents, teach our children or master the energy transition," noted Ms. Khan in her statement.

# Breaking the 'class' ceiling: Student-focused funds help campus start-ups take wings

It was a conversation with Prof. Jawahar Doreswamy, CEO of PES Institutions, that prompted Suresh Narasimha to start CoCreate Ventures, a venture capital fund that focuses on student start-ups. "Jawahar asked me why there are no funds that invest in ideas of students. That made me think. I started researching on it and structured a fund that would invest in students building start-ups, at the idea stage," says Narasimha.

Being a student entrepreneur and raising money can be tough. In India, funds that focus on student start-ups have been far and few. Whereas, within the larger venture capital ecosystem, there exists a certain scepticism about student ventures, very often for justifiable reasons. But, it's not all doom and gloom for those who, in their dorm rooms, are dreaming of entrepreneurship. Lately more funds seem to be emerging with a dedicated focus on student start-ups. High entry barrier While student start-ups have managed to raise funding, ecosystem players point out that it has been more of an exemption than a norm. So, what created the high entry barrier for student start-ups in terms of fund raising? Narasimha points out that among VCs there is scepticism about student start-ups even today, and for the right reasons.

"If I have to invest money and I don't even know what their commitment is or how much is their ability to understand the market, I would hesitate. These kinds of questions arise when you are a student. So, naturally, the entry barrier for a student to raise money is a lot higher." That said, the student focus funds choose to see the other side of this and find potential in the kind of fresh ideas one develops as a student. Dorm room start-ups

"A lot of the large transformational start-ups that have been built in the world were actually started by their founders in their dorm rooms – be it your Mark Zuckerberg or Bill Gates," says Richa Bajpai, founder and CEO at Campus Fund, a fund which invests exclusively in student startups. Bajpai herself started her first company in her dorm room in 2009 when she was a student. "We believe that the next set of these transformational global companies will be built from India, now. So, we want to find these young innovators in their dorm rooms and back them early on. Also, as a fund manager, it's the place where you can get exceptional returns," she adds. Risk alleviation Student-focused funds also adopt mechanisms and procedures that help alleviate the risk associated with these young start-ups to the maximum possible extent. Campus Fund, for example, operate very differently compared to a conventional VC, says Bajpai. "We are in fact creating a new category of founders called student entrepreneurs. So, the way to approach them, to interact with them and to evaluate them is completely different." The fund has a team of around 100 students across different colleges and universities, who work with them to find and evaluate student entrepreneurs. Bajpai notes that Campus Fund is a pre-seed investor and most of their portfolio companies are pre-revenue. "So we handhold them for 15 to 24 months before they raise their seed

round. We also have a portfolio management team that works with them to get them to a certain scale. That's why a lot of other senior large funds are investors in Campus Fund. It becomes easy for them to invest in our portfolio companies since they get a curated set of start-ups from us." "Then I have a growth and exit team which helps these organizations grow, and raise their next round of funding. So it's a very different model unlike a typical VC. We are going to the grassroots and then finding these folks." According to Bajpai, the fact that the fund has evaluated around 9500 student-led startups in the last 3.5 years and has invested only in 27 is a mark of the efficiency of its curation process. CoCreate Ventures, on the other hand, runs a foundation which works with universities and colleges to motivate bright students to become innovators.

"We have a venture foundry which handholds the students from the idea stage to the product stage. We will give them all the resources and take care of expenses such as their salary, the team they want to hire, data they want to procure, marketing and so on. Once the product is ready and the initial customer is there, we will put in \$200,000 in the company which can be used for market access," explains Narasimha. "We make it very easy for them to get in, harder for them to stay back. They come in through the foundation, go through multiple iterations with the venture studio for 12 months, and then only we will invest."

According to him, the fund has helped initiate around 75 teams in the last 2.5 years, 30 of which have started generating revenues and seven have done follow on rounds. The later rounds being 2-4x times the money put in by CoCreate also makes it commercially a very attractive proposition for the fund. "Globally there is lot of hype around this space," Narasimha points out. The team currently works with around 40 universities and 400 colleges in Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, North East India and Tamil Nadu. All the founders are less than 22 years old and around 60 per cent of them women, says Narasimha. Entering at the right stage Chandran Krishnan, Managing Director & CEO - Campus Angels Network, cofounded the fund to fund start-ups that are have validated their projects and are ready to go to market. This, he says, helps a great deal in eliminating risk. According to him, while student startups do come with the risk of lack of experience, it is also not that hard to spot those with enough passion, unique ideas and good bonds between the cofounders.

"University campuses have become the hub for innovation and incubation," he points out. The network works with incubators of IIT-M, Anna University, PSG, VIT and more. Student experiences Ananya Mungara, founder and CEO at SmartChakra which has developed a tyre management system, feels it's important to have more student-focused funds as it's easier for student innovators to approach them than the larger funds initially. SmartChakra was one of the first start-ups to be incubated by CoCreate.



"People here understand you're a student, and you might have exams and assignments. If you go to a conventional VC they see don't see you as a student, but as a company. Student-focused funds understand you better because they understand

you as a student entrepreneur who is running a company. Funds like these allow students to give entrepreneurship a shot and lean whether it works or not for them before placements start in the final year," Mungara notes.

## Nuclear-armed nations are deepening their reliance on their nuclear weapons, watchdog finds

The world's nine nuclear-armed countries continue to modernise their nuclear weapons as they deepened their reliance on such deterrence in 2023, a Swedish think tank said on June 17. "We have not seen nuclear weapons playing such a prominent role in international relations since the Cold War," said Wilfred Wan, director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's weapons of mass destruction programme.

Earlier this month, Russia and its ally Belarus launched a second stage of drills intended to train their troops in tactical nuclear weapons, part of the Kremlin's efforts to discourage the West from ramping up support for Ukraine.

USA, China are top spenders In a separate report, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN, said the nine nuclear-armed states spent a combined total of \$91.4 billion on their arsenals in 2023 – equivalent to \$2,898 per second. The Geneva-based coalition of disarmament activists won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017.

The group said that figures show a \$10.7 billion increase in global spending on nuclear weapons in 2023 compared to 2022, with the United States accounting for 80% of that increase. The U.S.' share of total spending – \$51.5 billion – is more than all the other nuclear-armed countries put together. "There has been a notable upward trend in the amount of money devoted to developing these most inhumane and destructive of weapons over the past five years," said Alicia Sanders-Zakre,

Policy and Research Coordinator with ICAN.

The next biggest spender was China at \$11.8 billion, she said, with Russia spending the third largest amount at \$8.3 billion. "All this money is not improving global security, in fact it's threatening people wherever they live," Ms. Sanders-Zakre said. Russia, U.S. together account for 90% of all nuclear weapons, says SIPRI. SIPRI estimated that some 2,100 of the deployed warheads were kept in a state of high operational alert on ballistic missiles, and nearly all belonged to Russia or the USA. However, it said that China is also believed to have some warheads on high operational alert for the first time. "Regrettably we continue to see year-on-year increases in the number of operational nuclear warheads," said Dan Smith, SIPRI's director. He added that the trend will likely accelerate in the coming years "and is extremely concerning". Russia and the U.S. have together almost 90% of all nuclear weapons, SIPRI said. The sizes of their military stockpiles seem to have remained relatively stable in 2023, although Russia is estimated to have deployed around 36 more warheads with operational forces than in January 2023, the watchdog added. In its SIPRI Yearbook 2024, the institute said that transparency regarding nuclear forces has declined in both countries in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and debates around nuclear-sharing arrangements have increased in importance. Washington suspended its bilateral strategic stability dialogue with Russia,