

## C1 expands GICC Hyderabad facility to boost innovation and growth

Hyderabad: C1, formerly ConvergeOne, announced a significant expansion of its Global Innovation and Capabilities Centre (GICC) in Hyderabad on Monday. The expansion is to support the company's growth and improved capabilities and create value for its global customer base, a company press release said here.

After the inauguration of their facility last year, C1 doubled its investment to expand the Global Innovation and Capabilities Center (GICC) into a 40,000 sq. ft. facility at Sattva Knowledge Park in Raidurg. The seating capacity was doubled at GICC with state-of-the-art training facilities. As part of its growth plan, C1 has also established the C1 R&D Lab and the C1 Experience Center for customers. The C1 Customer Experience Center will showcase innovative products, including the newly launched C1 Elly, a GenAI-powered assistant that enhances operational efficiency and decision-making. "We are proud to reach this landmark in our expansion journey," said Chandra Boddaju, Managing Director and Country Head of India Operations. "The improved GICC is a testament to our commitment to leveraging the incredible talent in India to drive global innovation. The new facilities will support our present operations and direct the way for future growth and technological advancements". The work conducted at the Hyderabad center will continue to play a crucial role in C1's Security and Enterprise Networks portfolio, as well as in operations across the C1 ecosystem. The Indian leadership team is an integral part of the global senior leadership of C1, driving a cross-functional, collaborative approach to innovation and growth. As part of the expansion, four new



senior leaders have been onboarded in India, demonstrating C1's commitment to leveraging the country's talent and resources. "The Expansion of the GICC is a major step in our growth", said Tamara Shaw, Chief Transformation Office, USA. "The new facilities will enable us to showcase our cutting-edge solutions and provide differentiated solutions across customer experience and collaboration. By

utilizing the talent and expertise in India, we will be well positioned to accelerate our global operations and deliver exceptional value to our customers". The newly expanded facility will feature a cutting-edge lab environment, to be extensively utilized for training and cross-skilling. This will enable C1 to transition teams to new technologies, fostering growth for both the company and the industry. C1's successful

Campus Grad Program has laid a strong foundation for attracting top-tier talent with robust engineering and technical skills, positioning the company competitively in the market. The GICC in Hyderabad is a hub for driving C1's growth across its combined capabilities in building scalable networks and highly secure environments to provide holistic solutions to customers with a focus on the connected human experience.

## Air pollution causes 1500 deaths every year in Hyderabad: Study

When exposure to such air is prolonged, it causes coughing, wheezing, aggravated asthma, bronchitis, and reduced lung function.

Hyderabad: Around 1,500 deaths every year in the city of Hyderabad can be attributed to air pollution, states a study conducted over the years using various research methods. The Lancet Planetary Health Journal recently published an article on 'Ambient air pollution and daily mortality in ten cities of India' where Hyderabad saw around 5.6 per cent of deaths between 2008 and 2019, because of exposure to Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5. PM 2.5 refers to a category of particulate pollutant that is 2.5 microns or smaller in size. When they are that small, they can

easily bypass our body's defenses like nose hair, mucus, and others, and enter deeper into our bodies.

When exposure to such air is prolonged, it causes coughing, wheezing, aggravated asthma, bronchitis, and reduced lung function.

The study conducted by researchers from Ashoka University, the Centre for Chronic Disease Control, Karolinska Institute, Harvard University, and Boston University, also identified that 5,552 deaths in Hyderabad between 2008 and 2019 were due to air pollution.



# Acid attack survivors share their stories: 'I've spent my whole life not feeling loved'

"I lost my mother when I was three and my father remarried. I didn't know my step-mother's anger would flare up into an acid attack on me," said Roopa, 29, an acid attack survivor from Uttar Pradesh, who doesn't live with her family anymore. Acid attacks are often assumed to be driven by jilted lovers and rejected romantic advances, but the reality is much more complex, like in Roopa's case. Roopa was only 15 when the attack happened. "This wasn't the only time she tried to kill me—she also tried to choke me. When that didn't work, she threw acid on me while I was asleep," she said sternly. An acid attack involves the use of sulphuric acid or "oil of vitriol," and is hence also called vitriolage. Annual reports of the Acid Survivor Foundation say that 70 per cent victims of vitriolage in India are women. "I never knew what an acid attack was until it happened to me. I've spent my whole life not feeling loved, and now I don't even seek it," Roopa said. acid attack Seema's picture from Aine tak ka safar by Nanki Singh. Numbers from the National Crime Report Bureau (NCRB) show that incidences of acid attacks in India have been decreasing in the last five years, they were 244 in 2017 and fell to 124 in 2022. "Then, in 2013, my friend Archana, also an acid attack survivor, introduced me to Chhanv," said Roopa, one of the oldest employees at 'Cafe Sheroes Hangout' by Chhanv Foundation, a Non-Profit Organisation working for the rehabilitation of acid attack survivors. The foundation provides employment to acid attack survivors via 'Cafe Sheroes Hangout' in Agra, Lucknow and Noida. In Seema's case, she wasn't the intended victim; the attack was meant for her brother. "Some people were outside, expecting my brother to walk out. Instead, I came out, and they splashed boiling acid on my face," she recalled. Initially, she thought the attacker, her brother's friend, was teasing her with water. "One rivalry led to another, and that's why I have a disfigured face."

Unlike any other person battling grief, Seema chose to solve her problems herself. She ran away from home seeking treatment using money meant for snacks. With a smile on her face, Seema said, "We couldn't afford my treatment, so running away seemed logical." Seema now embraces her strength as her true beauty. "I feel more beautiful now. My strength makes me beautiful, not my face," she says. At 25, she is thrilled to be getting married on July 9, 2024. While Seema has taken control of her life, 15-year-old Julie, also an acid attack survivor, still struggles. At four, Julie was attacked by her biological father, who mistook her for his ex-wife in the dark. "He poured acid on me instead of my mother and step-father," she said.

Though Julie survived, her step-father succumbed to his injuries. Chhanv brought Julie from Uttar Pradesh's Fatehpur to Noida. "When I saw other girls like me, a part of me felt normal," she said. Julie loves mathematics and aspires to become a doctor. "People in the West are alien to the concept of acid attacks and were perplexed by my photographs," said Nanki Singh, who captured Roopa, Seema, Julie, and other



Chhanv members in her photo collection Aaina Tak Ka Safar, offering a glimpse into the world of acid attack survivors. Singh, who has worked closely with these women for four years, said, the name Aaina tak ka safar or The Journey to the Mirror has a very special significance because the girls

have repeatedly told her how difficult it was for them to look at a mirror after their attacks. West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh are the states having the highest number of acid attacks. Delhi tops metropolitan cities having the highest acid attack incidences in the last five years. The numbers might

distract us from the bigger picture as the availability of acid is still not controlled as it should be. The Supreme Court judgment of 2014 bars anyone from buying acid without an identity proof and only registered shops can sell it. This however is far from reality as access to acid is still easy, as per experts.

## What are Parabens?

They are primarily added to these products to prevent the growth of bacteria, mould, and fungi, thereby extending their shelf life and ensuring product safety. Parabens are a group of synthetic chemicals commonly used as preservatives in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and personal care products. They are primarily added to these products to prevent the growth of bacteria, mould, and fungi, thereby extending their shelf life and ensuring product safety.

Parabens have a chemical structure that resembles the structure of natural compounds found in plants, such as p-hydroxybenzoic acid. Common types of parabens include methylparaben, ethylparaben, propylparaben, butylparaben, and isobutylparaben. They are widely used in a variety of products including moisturizers, shampoos, conditioners, makeup, lotions, and deodorants. Their effectiveness as preservatives has made them popular in the cosmetic and personal care industry.

\* Parabens are effective preservatives in many types of formulas. These compounds, and their salts, are used primarily for their bactericidal and fungicidal properties.



\* They are found in shampoos, commercial moisturizers, shaving gels, personal lubricants, topical/parenteral pharmaceuticals, sun-tan products, makeup, and toothpaste.

\* They are also used as food preservatives. Parabens are additionally found in pharmaceutical products such as topical treatments for wounds.

\* These treatments help heal wounds by keeping the skin moist and preventing infection.

\* The antimicrobial properties of parabens play a role in the effectiveness of the treatment. This application is helpful for those who have chronic wounds and need to prevent infections as much as possible.

# New Zealand teens rank among the best for creative thinking

Teenagers in New Zealand are among the most creative thinkers in the world according to the latest edition of OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Volume 3 results released in June. New Zealand is the among highest-performing education systems for creative thinking, ranking fifth in the world out of 81 countries, with an average score of 36 points per student that is higher than the OECD average of 33 points. Education New Zealand Manapouki te Ao Acting Chief Executive, Dr Linda Sissons said she was delighted to see New Zealand students stand out globally for creative thinking. "New Zealand classrooms adopt a hands-on, practical approach to learning that encourages students to express their ideas, and to think critically and collaboratively."

"Creative thinking is a valuable quality that also enriches the outputs of a wide range of tertiary and career fields, from arts, engineering, technology and biomedicine to infrastructure and mathematics. "We are pleased to see this approach endorsed in the latest PISA tests," Dr Sissons said.

The PISA 2022 creative thinking data provides insights into how well education systems are preparing students to think outside the box in different contexts. This was the first time that the PISA test measured the ability of students to demonstrate creativity, specifically their ability to come up with original and diverse ideas. Between 60-70 percent of students across participating OECD countries also reported that their teachers value their creativity, that they encourage them to come up with original answers, and that they are given a chance to express their ideas in school.



## HDFC ERGO processes its first health claim on NHCX platform

HDFC ERGO General Insurance Company, India's leading private sector general insurer, successfully processed its first-ever health claim through the National Health Claims Exchange (NHCX) platform. This groundbreaking achievement marks a significant leap forward, which will help streamline health claims processing, improve administrative efficiencies, and enhance customer experience by building a cohesive technology-driven system. Based on the directive from Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), General Insurance Council has been working on bringing the various stakeholders together to ensure the entire process of health Insurance is done in more simplified and transparent manner.

Developed by the National Health Authority (NHA), the NHCX platform is a single window interface which provides secure and efficient exchange of health

insurance claims data. The platform is poised to revolutionise India's health insurance landscape by setting a new standard for efficiency and transparency in claims processing. As a digital health claims portal, National Health Claims Exchange (NHCX) is a significant leap towards ensuring interoperability of health claims and fostering transparency within the industry. HDFC ERGO becomes one of the lead insurers to process health claim on NHCX platform. This marks a significant step forward in India's health insurance landscape and attests the commitment of the Company in propelling financial inclusion in India. Parthaniil Ghosh, Director and Chief Business Officer, HDFC ERGO General Insurance, said, "In alignment with IRDAI's vision of 'Insurance for All by 2047', we are committed to provide innovative solutions thereby making insurance accessible and affordable and continue to work towards

improving insurance penetration across the country. In alignment to the Government's flagship 'Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission', we are proud to successfully process our first health claim through the NHCX platform. This further underscores our commitment to leverage cutting-edge technology and bring in better transparency and claims efficiency in health insurance. As a crucial stakeholder in building a 'Healthy India, we are confident that the NHCX platform will play a significant role by ensuring the interoperability of health claims, democratising insurance and fostering transparency within the industry." The NHCX is a critical gateway for exchanging claims-related information within the healthcare and insurance ecosystem. It is designed to streamline and enhance health insurance claims processing by integrating insurers, healthcare providers, and policyholders into a cohesive, technology-driven system. This platform



leverages advanced digital technologies to ensure efficient, transparent, and expedited claims settlements, thereby improving the overall health insurance ecosystem. The process begins with the hospital generating a bill through their Hospital Information System (HIS), which is then uploaded to a Third-Party Administrator (TPA) app. The Health Claim System (HCS) of HDFC ERGO then processes the claims in their claim processing queue.

# Scientists find proof pain-sensing cells are either male or female

You finally got your hands on a new novel you've been wanting to read. You're turning the crisp paper of the pages when suddenly you get a paper cut. Pain erupts on your finger. A discomfiting sensation surges through your entire body yelling out, "Brain, we have a problem!" This unwanted yet necessary sensory experience most living beings share is pain. It is an essential component of our body's warning system that directs our attention to potential external or internal harm.

The International Association for the Study of Pain defines pain thus: "An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage." The way people perceive pain is highly personal and subjective in nature. In fact, scientists have suspected for some time now that the perception of pain might be sexually dimorphic: that is, different between (biological) men and women. But the particulars have been a mystery. A study led by University of Arizona Health Sciences researchers, recently published in the journal *Brain*, demonstrated for the first time functional sexual dimorphism in nociceptors, the nerve cells responsible for perceiving pain.

Why do we perceive pain?

Nociceptor cells have bare nerve endings and they are found across our skin, bones, joints, and muscles. The receptors detect extreme pressure, temperature, and chemical signals released by the body when it is injured, turn them into electrical signals, and relay them to the brain via the spinal cord. The brain finally reads the message and perceives pain. In the new study, the researchers investigated how the nociceptors first light up. "Activation of nociceptors likely produces the same perception of pain in men and women. What is different is how the nociceptors are activated. "While the nociceptors are normally activated by high-intensity stimuli, under some circumstances the threshold for their activation may be decreased allowing low intensity and normally physiological stimuli to activate them and produce pain," Frank Porreca, associate head of the Department of Pharmacology, University of Arizona Health Sciences Center, told this author in an email.

The nociceptor response threshold

Previous studies have reported that the nociceptor response threshold in females is lower than that in males. One possible biological mechanism underlying this difference could be peripheral nociceptor sensitisation: a phenomenon in which the threshold for pain is lowered by external factors, causing the receptors to respond to stimuli that they'd otherwise ignore. But researchers still needed to know how this variation in sensitisation arises. To understand sexual dimorphism in nociceptors sensitisation, the research team investigated how easily pain receptors in the dorsal root ganglion — a cluster of nerve cells located near the spinal cord — could be excited. They collected the samples from three male and female mice, two macaque monkeys (one of each sex), and donor



nerve cells from four men and three women. Dr. Porreca's lab has been exploring the relationship between sleep and chronic pain. In an April 2022 study, the team found that prolactin, a hormone responsible for the growth of breast tissue, also selectively promoted pain responses in female rodents. Later, the researchers found receptors for prolactin were expressed more in female-specific pain disorders such as endometriosis. Their studies of sleep and chronic pain also established that orexin B, a neurotransmitter that regulates wakefulness, produced sensitisation in male rodents but not female rodents. 'Differentially sensitised' In the new study, the researchers studied how prolactin and orexin-B affect on nociceptor activation thresholds in the nerve cell samples they had. They cultured the nerve cells overnight in the presence of mouse prolactin for the mice and human prolactin for both the monkey and the human samples. For orexin-B, they applied the neurotransmitter to cultured nerve cells of all three species. In the mice cohort, a technique to separate and identify proteins revealed prolactin had increased the firing-up of nociceptors in females and orexin-B had done the same thing in the males. Immunohistochemistry analysis of monkeys and humans also revealed similar effects. The team's observations here were consistent with the older findings. "Our paper showed that nociceptors from male and female animals or humans can be differentially 'sensitised', i.e. have a lowering of their activation threshold," Dr. Porreca, the corresponding author of this study, said. The devil's in the differences. When doctors prescribe medicine to help manage pain, they typically overlook the sex of the patient. In fact, other than certain female-specific hormonal therapies, health workers generally treat pain the same way among both men or women — even though we also know the rate at which different pain conditions

occur differs between the sexes. For example, pain arising from conditions not linked to visible tissue damage, such as irritable bowel syndrome, migraines, and painful bladder syndrome, are more common in women alongside female-specific issues such as endometriosis and dysmenorrhea. On the other hand, cluster headaches and gout are more common in men, together with male-specific ailments like prostatitis.

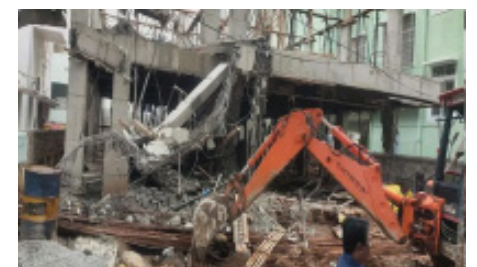
Unravelling the different mechanisms that drive nociceptor sensitisation and activation will bring us a step closer to understanding qualitative sex differences in pain perception, which in turn is essential to design precise and sex-specific pain therapies. "We studied multiple species because we were aware of some data in rodents and human cells of differential expression of the transcript for proteins, and we didn't know if this could translate into functional differences in sensitisation/activation," Dr. Porreca said. Nociceptors can be male or female. Dr. Porreca said the widespread existence of these mechanisms

across species suggests they're evolutionarily relevant. In addition, the activation or sensitisation interfering ability of these mechanisms hold the potential for being exploited for the development of highly targeted therapeutics. The study presents a unique concept: nociceptors are either male or female.

The researchers expect their findings have two implications for medical research. First, that it will encourage medical practitioners to factor in the sex of a patient when making decisions about pain therapies. Second, that in clinical trials of therapies with new pain treatment mechanisms, researchers will have to be more careful about the number of men and women in the trial so that they might be alerted to effects that may only occur in one sex. Dr. Porreca also said it might be time to revisit some 'failed' clinical trials to check if there might have been a sex-specific effect to a drug. Sanjukta Mondal is a chemist-turned-science-writer with experience in writing popular science articles and scripts for STEM YouTube channels.

## Illegal constructions demolished in Serilingampally Zone

Hyderabad: Illegal structures were demolished in the Serilingampally Zone on Tuesday after officials received complaints that large-scale unauthorized constructions were taking place in Ayyappa Society in Madhapur. Zonal Commissioner Upender Reddy passed the orders, following which pillars and slabs of these structures were razed to the ground. Meanwhile, some other illegal structures in Chandanagar circle were also brought down with the help of bulldozers. Issuing strict warnings against constructions with-



out permissions, officers warned of stringent action.

# Indigenous HPV vaccine, the rhetoric and the reality

India's public health sphere was subject recently to a one-sided discourse on how vaccination against the human papilloma virus (HPV) prevents cervical cancer and consequent death. Interestingly, it is not proven beyond doubt that HPV causes cervical cancer, as only a couple of strains out of 200 strains that infect humans are somehow 'associated' with 'precancerous lesions'. Most of the women who die of cervical cancer are HPV positive, but most of the men and women who are HPV positive do not get virus-induced cancer, let alone die due to it. The Population Based Cancer Registries (PBCR) of India and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) have acknowledged the declining trends of cervical cancer prevalence in India and the globe, regardless of vaccine coverage or efficacy. Therefore, the timing of the overzealous push for 'universal' vaccination of girls against HPV does serious injustice to the more justifiable 'selective' vaccination of high-risk groups, considering its sexual transmission, unlike airborne, water-borne or contagious diseases. An extremely important western assumption behind targeting pre-puberty girls for this vaccine is that teenage girls indulging in promiscuous physical relations and becoming carriers of the virus are a huge risk factor for the entire adult population. This is a huge moral conundrum in Indian society and even reeks of patriarchy, as men can be carriers too.

But this article focuses on the questionable timing, promotion and pricing of indigenous HPV vaccines, assuming some high-risk populations need it. The Serum Institute of India (SII) developed 'Cervavac' and promoted it as an indigenous and affordable vaccine. It is pertinent to ask why it took nearly two decades for the 'indigenous' vaccine after the introduction of a patented HPV vaccine in the United States, Australia and elsewhere in the Global North. Cervavac uses similar techniques, deploying virus-like particles (VLPs) produced using recombinant deoxyribose nucleic acid (rDNA) techniques to generate an immune response against HPV infections. The vaccine against cervical cancer is only the second rDNA vaccine in the world using the techniques of the early 1970s, the first being the vaccine against Hepatitis-B.

Prior to the development of rDNA methods, vaccine manufacture was largely a charitable or public sector enterprise with universal sharing of strains/techniques and little or no place for patenting of vaccines. The whole scenario changed with the amendment of the U.S. Patent Act in the 1980s allowing the patenting of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and life processes, and the introduction of Bayh-Dole Act to legalise publicly funded scientists setting up companies. With the eventual globalisation of U.S. patent laws through the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) since 1995, vaccine development and innovation changed drastically. Vaccine innovation underwent significant changes in terms of its

organisation, patenting strategies and even distribution practices in academia and industry. An important element of this 'value addition' is legalisation of the conversion of public 'research' into private 'development' and its monopolisation by patenting. This facilitated the change of hands in vaccine development and production from the public to private sector the world over, aided by the politics of liberalisation and globalisation. This was elaborated by William Muraskin in his book, *The Politics of International Health: The Children's Vaccine Initiative and the Struggle to Develop Vaccines for the Third World*, and, more recently, in a collection edited by Stuart Blume and Baptiste Baylac-Paouly, titled *Immunization and States: The Politics of Making Vaccine*, that included the Indian scenario. Developed under these new innovation conditions was the first vaccine for cervical cancer marketed as Gardasil by Merck and Cervarix by Glaxo Smithkline, globally.

These developments impacted the Indian pharmaceutical and biotech industry in general and vaccine development in particular. Earlier, the Indian Patent Act (1970) abolished patenting products and allowed only processes, that too excluding agricultural and biological patents. This enabled the growth of domestic industries to become the pharmacy of the world within two decades. They manufactured low-cost generic drugs and vaccines, often within a couple of years after they were introduced in the global north. The first rDNA vaccine produced in India for hepatitis-B not only entered the market within five years under the process patent but also dropped the price to an order of magnitude cheaper than in the global north. On the other hand, under the current product patent regime, a locally made DNA vaccine against cervical cancer had to wait for two decades till the expiry of the product patents before its indigenous 'generic' version was made available. The expiry of key patents of the HPV vaccine was recently reported by the World Health Organization and a highly cited article published in *Nature Biotechnology*. While multinational patent monopolies largely explain the delay in developing a local vaccine, what still remains unexplained is the exorbitant current market price of Cervavac. Prior to the domestically manufactured vaccine, two prominent multinational vaccines (Gardasil and Cervarix) were sold in India for ₹4,000 a dose. Even at about half that price, a domestically manufactured vaccine in the private market remains largely unaffordable, keeping the vaccine out of reach for a large section of the target population. What is even more worrisome is the unreasonable pricing strategy itself, as the price does not truly reflect the production costs. First, Indian industry is well equipped infrastructurally to make rDNA products at scale, particularly vaccines. Second, Cervavac development was funded heavily, which included nearly \$7 million by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) under its Grand Challenges Fund. Third, the infrastructure used in producing Cervavac was also a part of the production



facility for the Covishield vaccine, built with significant support from the Indian government's Department of Biotechnology. Such a shared use of resources must have reduced the actual input costs to enable more affordable pricing, thus raising doubts on the pricing strategy of the SII. It seems to be designed to capitalise on high-margins even at low trade volumes, rather than using economies of scale and low margin pricing to boost volume trade. This is essential for public health, as high population coverage is crucial for the success of any vaccine.

Another serious concern is the unavailability of other competing vaccines from domestic players, which could have put downward pressure on the current price of Cervavac. This is surprising given the fact that at least four different vaccine candidates were in the pipeline since 2010 from other domestic players. Shantha Biotechnics, Hyderabad, which produced a rDNA Hepatitis-B vaccine at a cheaper price pledged to bring an affordable HPV vaccine to the market by 2015, after it acquired licences from the National Institutes of Health and Johns Hopkins University in

the U.S. This may have collapsed after Shantha was acquired by Sanofi Pasteur, Paris, which itself was associated with Merck's Gardasil in several ways. Nonetheless, Shantha Biotechnics, Indian Immunologicals, and Bharat Biotech, Hyderabad, and Zydus Cadila, Ahmedabad have all announced their HPV vaccines in the pipeline around the same period. Their unavailability despite the expiry of the earlier patent barrier is a matter of concern. The Cervavac vaccine is currently recommended universally under the government vaccination programme for girls between the ages of nine to 26 at a price of ₹500 for two doses, which is expensive even for the government. For those millions who are left out of the government coverage, the retail price of Cervavac will shoot up four-fold to ₹2,000, in a country that has low insurance penetration and catastrophically huge out-of-pocket health expenditures. Therefore, even as the need for universal HPV vaccination to prevent cervical cancer remains an unresolved doubt, the lack of competition and opaque pricing merits investigation in the larger public interest.

## Dr Srinivasa Rao elected as ISTD chairman of Hyderabad chapter

Hyderabad: The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Indian Society for

Rao, Associate Professor at BVRIT, was elected as the Chairman of the Hyderabad chapter, while Akhila Ali was elected as Secretary. The AGM saw a gathering of esteemed members and dignitaries from the industry, who came together to discuss the society's growth and future plans. Dr. Srinivasa Rao's election as Chairman marks a new chapter in the Hyderabad chapter's journey, and his expertise and leadership will undoubtedly propel the society forward, a press release said.



Training and Development (ISTD) was held at Manohar Hotel, Begumpet. Dr. Srinivasa

# Decode Politics: Hemant Soren in, Champai out, why and what now

Hemant Soren is set to return as Jharkhand Chief Minister with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's (JMM's) legislature party choosing him as its leader on Wednesday. After incumbent CM Champai Soren met the Governor Wednesday evening and tendered his resignation, Hemant submitted a request to form the government. The Governor will now decide on a date for the swearing-in of Hemant and his ministers. The JMM leader had resigned as CM five months ago, ahead of his arrest over money laundering allegations, after which Champai had taken over.

What message does the JMM hope to send with Hemant's return as CM?

The party has got a shot in the arm from the regular bail to Hemant in the money laundering case, with the Jharkhand High Court noting in its order that "there exist reasons to believe that he is not guilty". Party insiders admitted that they too were taken by surprise at the court move. Going forward, the JMM led by Hemant is set to go to the public with the message that he was kept in jail for five months in a "false" case led by an agency controlled by the Centre, "forcing" him to leave the post of CM. With elections due at the end of the year, this is the best-case scenario for the JMM, which is anyway on the upswing after its Lok Sabha poll performance. Hemant is expected to push through the remaining promises made by him while in government, ahead of the elections. Sources close to Hemant also suggested that while he was "not keen" to take over so soon after coming out on bail, there was alarm over allegations regarding some aspects of the Champai administration.

Did Champai go out willingly?

No. Sources said Champai pushed back, pointing out that elections were due in two months and the bid to remove him from the post "would not look good". He also argued that while he was also a "mass leader" in his own right, Hemant was out only on bail, and there could be attempts to destabilise his government again. A source present at the meeting of the JMM and its coalition partners said: "Champai ji said it was a matter of only two months before the elections, and what was the need for such a hurry. He said he considered Hemant and (his wife and MLA) Kalpana as his son and daughter." However, all the members of the coalition government, including those of the Congress and RJD, backed Hemant at the meeting, leaving Champai with few options. One of the Congress MLAs present is reported to have said that the 2019 win of the coalition had been a vote for Hemant, and that it would serve them well to fight again under his leadership. Leaders also underlined that it was important that the coalition government portray a "unified command", and leave no possibility of doubts among the public as to who is leading the JMM. Congress leader Pradeep Yadav then had a 45-minute-long conversation with Champai. Following it, the latter announced he would step down as CM.

Where does this leave Champai?

He may be accommodated in the new Hemant government, but sources admitted the party will tread carefully and watch closely his next moves. It is also not clear whether Champai will agree to take up a ministerial post, after stepping down as CM. Champai was the Minister for SC, ST, Backward Welfare Department along with Transport when Hemant was the CM earlier. Champai's five-month tenure as CM was pretty smooth, with the JMM leader careful to signal in so many words that he was a "Hemant-Part II". After Kalpana took on a public role following Hemant's arrest, Champai also rallied behind her, careful not to leave scope for any tensions. However, as it became clear Tuesday that he would be eased out as CM, Champai found it difficult to hide his disappointment. Sources said he mentioned to people close to Hemant that he had not even asked Kalpana to move out of the CM house. The JMM would be wary of an angry Champai as he commands considerable support in the Kolhan region, which accounts for 14 Assembly seats. Sources close to Hemant, however, point out that they have alternatives in the region now, with Deepak Birua, the JMM MLA from Chaibasa (in Kolhan region), holding the Welfare and Transport Department, and another leader, Jobha Manjhi, a former minister-turned-MP from Singhbhum.

How has the opposition BJP reacted



to the development?

State BJP chief Babulal Marandi said the decision by the JMM showed that tribal leaders outside the Shibu Soren family used and discarded them, like "a fly in milk", and that the JMM's tribal leaders should take heed from this. "They should understand their limits. They should understand that they are only meant to be the palanquin of the Shibu Soren family," Marandi, the BJP's foremost tribal face in the state, said. That the BJP hopes to make this line

of attack stick was clear from similar statements by its senior leaders. Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, the BJP Jharkhand co-in-charge, posted on X: "The removal of a senior tribal leader from the post of Chief Minister in Jharkhand by the JMM and Congress party is deeply distressing." The results of the recent Lok Sabha elections showed that the tribal vote may have swung towards the JMM over Hemant's arrest. The BJP was not able to win even one of the five ST-reserved seats in the state. In the Assembly elections, where 28 of the 81 seats are reserved for tribals, the ST vote will be crucial.

## Seasonal ailments: Telangana DPH issues health advisory

Hyderabad: Director of Public Health and Family Welfare (DPH) Dr B Ravinder Nayak has urged people to take precautions during the ongoing monsoons. The senior public health official has issued an advisory comprising of precautions to be taken against seasonal ailments.

- Doors, windows, beds, cribs secured with mosquito nets / screens.
- Mosquito repellent like creams / lotions / roll-on sticks / body sprays can be applied.
- Use mosquito repellents with caution.
- Maintain drains to prevent water stagnation.
- Observe dry day once a week to get rid of stagnant water in households.
- Avoid stagnant water in discarded flower pots, cans, tyres, buckets, coolers, ditches.
- Acute Gastroenteritis, Jaundice and Typhoid.
- Drink/carry filtered / boiled water from home, bottled water when outside.
- Wash hands frequently, especially before and after meals, after visiting the washroom.
- Avoid eating outside, especially raw, pre-cut and uncovered food sold in the open.
- Eat freshly made home cooked food and discard leftovers as far as possible.
- Viral fever, Conjunctivitis and Influenza.
- Avoid shaking hands, sharing food, water and clothes, with someone who is sick.
- Wash hands frequently, as well as use hand sanitizers often, to avoid being infected.
- Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough, to avoid



The senior public health official has issued an advisory comprising of precautions to be taken against seasonal ailments.

infecting people around you. Use disposable tissues during cough and cold and

discard the after use. If fever persists for more than three days, consult doctor

# Exhilarating Euros knocking it out of the park

International knockout football, there's nothing like it. Stature holds no weight here, it disintegrates and fades away into oblivion. Tactics take the backseat. Pulverising passion, oceans of emotion, gut-wrenching nerves, the hopes of an entire nation — these are the driving forces in the playoff rounds. David, Goliath, Butch, Sundance, it doesn't matter. It is all about these 90 minutes — a one-off tie with the highest of stakes and you have to leave it all on the pitch. It is not the team that is most structurally sound nor the side with the highest possession that progresses. But it is the outfit that is the hungriest for the win, which will go to the ends of the Earth to give to its country the intoxicating ecstasy of progression that will prosper. The best teams win leagues; not so much the case in Cup football. Knockout football, however, is decided by moments of magic, by players who embrace the pressure and step up, the biggest of names on the grandest of stages. Stoppage-time bicycle kick, shock headers in the game's opening moments, fingertip stops to win the game, controversial VAR calls to alter the course of the match, and an unprecedented hat-trick of penalty saves. This is what elimination football promises, and it is exactly what an exhilarating round-of-16 delivered at the Euro 2024. The prelude

There was drama in Deutschland well before the first elimination game even kicked off. There was an imbalance in the scales. One half was laden with several title-winners like an ornate necklace sporting several beautiful stones. The other, crafted like a pendant flaunting one dazzling diamond, a centrepiece, hogging the spotlight from its supporting acts. Germany was set to play, arguably and personally, the tournament's strongest unit in a revamped Spain in the quarterfinal. Euro 2016 winner, Portugal was also on the same side of the draw alongside powerhouses France and Belgium. On the other end of the draw, it seemed like a straight route to the final for underperforming England, with a Netherlands team that came third in the 2014 World Cup and defending champion Italy also present. The draw also had its fair share of dark horses with a Slovakia side that beat Belgium, Ralf Rangnick's transformed Austria, and spirited debutantes Georgia, off the high of a sensational 2-0 win against Portugal. Swiss affair The stage was set. The Olympiastadion Berlin prepared to host the first pre-quarterfinal clash, and boy was it a cracker of a game! Italy — which finished second only thanks to Mattia Zaccagni's superb last-minute leveller against Modric's Croatia — up against underdogs Switzerland which went unbeaten in the group stages and would have finished top of the group with three wins in three had it not been for an equaliser from Nicholas Fullkrug in the dying moments to clinch first place for the host. Murat Yakin's aggressive approach meant Switzerland had the upper hand right from the start. The side deservedly took the lead after Ruben Vargas' pass from the edge of the box was

cleanly volleyed into the bottom corner by Remo Freuler.

Italy skipper Gianluigi Donnarumma's heroics in goal saved the title-holder's blushes as he produced a stunning save to deflect Fabian Reidler's freekick onto the post moments before the whistle blew for half-time. Assister then turned scorer as Vargas sent a mouth-watering shot curling into the top-right corner to book Switzerland's berth in the last eight, ending Italian hopes in what was a lacklustre performance from Luciano Spalletti's men. The Azzurri's closest sight of goal came when Swiss defender Fabian Schar almost headed the ball into his own net with custodian Yann Sommer left watching as the ball hit the post and was cleared out of harm's way. Italy's loss marked the third successive Euros where the reigning champion bowed out in the last 16, following Spain in 2016 and Portugal in 2020. "If we failed, we failed. And we failed because of my team selection. And in terms of the way I conducted myself, it's never down to the players," said Spalletti. While the Euro 2020 winner crashed out in its first knockout game, the runner-up barely scraped through to the quarterfinals in a tense encounter against a Slovakian team that was playing in the European knockout stages for only the second time as an independent nation. Cometh the hour, cometh the man. The undeniable favourites going into the tournament, the Three Lions were starting at yet another unsuccessful outing as England went behind in the 25th minute. Slovakia put Gareth Southgate's men in a chokehold in the game's early minutes, coming agonisingly close to bulging the net twice, and the constant attacking pressure finally bore fruit when David Strelec found himself with an abundance of space and time to play a perfectly weighted pass to Ivan Schranz who buried it in the bottom corner to score his third goal of the tournament. The star-studded English outfit went into half-time humbled by the 45th-ranked Slovakia. The second 45 minutes were better for England, relatively at least. Phil Foden did manage to put the ball in the back of the net within five minutes of the restart, but the goal was ruled out for offside. Southgate needed a spark to revive England's title charge. In search, the English manager brought on attacking dynamites Cole Palmer and Eberechi Eze in the 66th and 84th minutes hoping to effect change. While there was a more direct approach, the increased threat did not materialise. He later brought on Ivan Toney for Foden in the fourth minute of added time, a bittersweet consolation, it seemed for the Brentford forward. It looked like it was all over. The headlines were all typed out. 'English tears, Slovakian jubilation'. An upset for the ages was within touching distance for Slovakia. And there it was — a speck of gold in a barrel of dust. A deep throw-in from Kyle Walker into the box in the fifth minute of stoppage time, a Marc Guehi flick backwards with his head, hoping, searching, praying for someone to be on the receiving end. True greats shine



in the darkest of hours, and how he did! Like a phoenix rising from the ashes. Number ten on his back. "Who else?", he mouthed as he put his arms out and celebrated in trademark fashion. Reminiscent of that David Beckham free-kick versus Greece. The Golden Boy, Jude Bellingham took to the air to execute an inch-perfect bicycle-kick and restore parity, as he rescued his country from the depths of despair. From there it was England's game to lose. Slovakia, still recovering from Bellingham's devastating blow, went behind in the first minute of extra time. A flick-on from substitute Toney following a scuffed Eze volley was enough for captain Harry Kane as he headed England home and into the last eight. Slovakia did respond well, but it wasn't enough as Kane & Co. held on to their lead for dear life as the full-time whistle blew. England was through. Milan Skriniar's men left their hearts out on the field and deserve to walk with their heads held high. Turkish delight Everyone loves an underdog story, and the final round-of-16 fixture witnessed two of the tournament's biggest ones battle it out as Rangnick's riveting Austrian side square off against Vincenzo Montella's men. Austria impressed everyone after it beat the formidable Netherlands to top a group that also had 2018 World Cup winner France. Turkiye qualified in second behind Portugal on goal difference after a solid group stage show, which also included a 3-1 win over Georgia. It didn't take long for the drama to unfold as an Arda Guler corner fell right in front of the Austrian six-yard box, a few ricochets here and there and Merih Demiral thundered the ball into goal in the 57th second — the second fastest goal in the Euros. Austria responded almost immediately as Christoph Baumgartner came close twice in the next couple of minutes. It was shaping up to be another quintessential international knockout fixture. This was never a match-up that promised compact defending or an impenetrable structure. Though, it did have instore end-to-end football where chaos was the currency. It was a beautiful anarchy. Since going down, or from the first minute if you want, Austria tore Turkiye apart. Attack after attack, Rangnick's men hurled everything they had at the

Turks. Against the run of play, the same duo combined once again for Turkiye's second as Demiral headed home another goal to give his team some much-needed breathing space. The game resumed in similar fashion, and a vital touch by substitute Michael Gregoritsch in the 66th minute from an Austrian corner halved the deficit at last. Baris Yilmaz was in on goal in the last seconds of added time but a terrific save by goalkeeper Patrick Pentz kept Austria in the game. The ball went up the field and was put into the Turkish box by Alexander Prass, and in, potentially, the most important save of his career, Mert Gunok produced a heart-stopping save off of Baumgartner's header from close range to confirm Turkiye's place in the elite eight. Amidst the incessant Leipzig rains, Mert Gunok stopped time, and Austria, to cement his place as a cult hero. It was excruciating for Austria but that is the beauty of international football. Rangnick's men, much the better team, were on a flight back home after two moments of Turkish delight. Spain too hot to handle On the other side of the draw, Spain utterly outclassed Georgia despite going behind in the 18th minute as Robin Le Normand was unable to get out of the way of a dangerous cross. Goals from Rodri, Nico Williams, Dani Olmo, and Fabian Ruiz were enough to crush any glimmers of hope Georgia may have had. In a tournament where all the big names have been misfiring, Alvaro Morata's men have been impeccable. The tiki-taka style of play that has been the hallmark of the Spanish football for long has been replaced by free-flowing, flashy football best exemplified by young guns Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams. The quality Spain possesses combined with the sheer dominance it has shown makes for a combination that seems unstoppable. Germany will be looking to put an end to the fiery La Roja, but chances look slim as Spain seems favourites to take the reign once again. Could we be seeing a sequel to the Spanish era of 2008-2012? The usual suspects — Germany, Netherlands, Portugal, and France — all progressed to the quarterfinals, with Belgium's golden generation crashing out, maybe for the last time, in a 0-1 loss to France.

# Till Russia do us part? NATO at 75, an enduring alliance

In Gen. Sir John Hackett's terrifying alternate fiction, *The Third World War* (1978), which describes a world locked in nuclear conflict, a deliberate provocation against the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) powers in Europe causes WWII. Though NATO wins the war, it's a pyrrhic victory. In H.G. Wells mould, *The Third World War* was a 'Shape of Things to Come' for the nuclear age, and leagues apart from dreary military publications on NATO, and an exciting way to understand the complex structures of this alliance, which turned 75 this year since its formation on April 4, 1949. NATO began life as the 'Atlantic Alliance' in 1949 with 12 states including the U.S. and Canada, as well as the U.K., France, Belgium among others in Europe as its founding members with the aim to deter Soviet Union expansion under Stalin (NATO today has 31 members). U.S. President Harry Truman's administration feared that the dictator wanted to expand his empire as Stalin's iron fist fell on countries in eastern and central Europe 'liberated' by the Red Army from Nazi Germany where puppet Communist regimes were installed following the Second World War.

NATO's purpose was encapsulated in a famous quip attributed to the alliance's first secretary general, Baron Hastings 'Pug' Ismay, who described it thus: "to keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down." In *Deterring Armageddon*, a sweeping biography of NATO, Peter Apps notes that the world's longest military alliance has outlasted its historic rival, the ancient Athenian-dominated Delian League, formed against the Persians in 478 BC and dissolved 74 years later following the end of the Peloponnesian War in 404 BC. Eye on minutiae in fluid prose, Apps brings to life personalities dimmed by the march of history and turns the spotlight on obscure diplomatic details. For instance, a March 1954 proposal by the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov to Politburo honchos Georgy Malenkov and Nikita Khrushchev urged the Soviet Union to take diplomatic and political initiative by applying for NATO membership!

The book is full of choice anecdotes and aperçus: Apps wryly notes that for Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme military command of NATO provided a welcome escape from the boredom of peacetime university administration. The third and fourth week of June 1948 saw a series of momentous events that directly lent impetus to the formation and growth of NATO. After the Western Allies introduced the new German currency, the Deutsche Mark (DM), in the British, French and American zones, Stalin cut off road and rail access to the western sector of Berlin on June 24, marking the start of the Berlin blockade. This in turn led to the incredible Berlin airlift (June 26) which saw Allied airplanes supplying Berliners with essentials (from foodstuffs to coal) for an incredible 323 days. Yet, relations between the Western European powers and America have been riven by tensions, right from the formation of NATO. The launch of NATO

In a splendid chapter in *The Atlantic*



and its Enemies (2010), maverick historian Norman Stone charts the formation of the NATO system. As Stone says, while there had already been a military alliance between the British and the French in the Treaty of Dunkirk in 1947, it was marked by distrust of the Americans. It was the ratcheting Soviet threat beginning with the Soviet-backed Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 that saw a 'Brussels Pact' being formed the very next month. This pact brought in the Low countries with a committee of defence ministers and staff under the British war hero, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery. The stage was set for the creation of the Atlantic Alliance as "old wartime alliances came to life," says Stone. A key point, as the edifice for future NATO coordination between countries was built upon the coordination plans laid by Eisenhower and his military colleagues from Allied countries during his time as Supreme Allied Commander during D-Day (the start of the liberation of Europe from Nazi Germany) in the Second World War. Secret armies Despite all the grand rhetoric about democratic ideology, NATO was not made up of democratic states — Salazar's Portugal was part of it. Soviet skulduggery in Central Europe was matched by NATO and the CIA in the form of secret 'stay-behind armies' (the Gladio network, consisting of military operatives, and involving the mafia with tacit support from the Vatican) which attempted to undermine left-wing regimes. What then makes NATO different from other alliances of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, which were rife with mutual suspicion and rank opportunism? For analytical clarity, Wallace Thies' *Why NATO Endures* (2009) is a must-read. The book debunks the frequent 'NATO-in-crisis' myth as well. Thies observes that the absence of divisive ideological issues was reflected in the conduct

of 18th century wars, which were mainly about balance of power. This meant every state could be considered a potential ally, while a parity in power ensured that no one had a decisive edge. Moreover, the absence of any bonds of affinity or affection between allies meant that alliance members generally had few qualms about sacrificing their partners' interests for the sake of their own. Two diplomatic classics offer a template to understand pre-NATO alliances: Walter L. Dorn's 1940 work *Competition for Empire* offers the example of England and Austria during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), characterising them as "unsuitable allies." The iconoclastic A.J. P. Taylor's *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe* (1954) is splendid on the cynical motives of the alliances formed between 1848 to the end of World War I in 1918. Taylor observes the disastrous coordination between the 'Triple Entente' countries (the U.K., France, and Russia) before the start of the 1914 war. "From the moment the war opened, the French, uncertain that Russia really would or could perform what she had promised, began exhorting their ally to hurry [on to Berlin]," quips Taylor, in one of his classic aphorisms. According to Thies, unlike the members of pre-1939 alliances, who often sought to keep each other in the dark regarding their capabilities and their intentions, NATO members opted for integration and transparency in their defence efforts to a degree never before achieved in the history of alliances. And yet, the alliance survived. After NATO's failures in Afghanistan, Russia's aggression has given new momentum to the alliance, making it feel relevant. The aftermath of the Korean War proved to be a divisive rather than a unifying element within the Atlantic Alliance. This was because a jaded Europe ravaged by the Second World War was disinclined

to re-arm. As Thies notes, when they compared themselves to the Soviet Union, it seemed inconceivable that they could ever hope to stand up to the Soviets on their own, preferring to turn the problem over to the Americans and let them take care of military security in Europe. The other great division within NATO came during the infamous 1956 Suez Crisis, when second-rate colonial powers Britain and France (acting in concert with Israel) sought to 're-assert' themselves by trying to seize the Suez Canal in Egypt after Gen. Nasser nationalised it. This act of skulduggery was roundly criticised by then U.S. President Eisenhower, who even threatened to hold back IMF funds for Britain. As Allied relations hit rock-bottom, German Foreign Minister Heinrich von Brentano quipped that "NATO is dead for the moment." As Apps says, each time every Secretary General faced a crisis within NATO, they could claim it was not as bad as Suez! To understand the intense animosity over NATO expansion, there is no better volume than historian Mary Elise Sarrote's *Not One Inch* (2021) which explains the origins of the ongoing Russo-Ukraine conflict, but which was published before Putin's attack on Ukraine. Replete with great geopolitical insights, *Not One Inch* alludes to the famous words spoken in February 1990 by the American Secretary of State, James Baker to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. As Sarrote notes, the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in the Second World War had led Moscow to station hundreds of thousands of troops in East Germany with the legal right to keep them there. To convince Gorbachev to relinquish this military and legal might, Baker uttered the words as a hypothetical bargain: what if you let your part of Germany go, and we agree that NATO will "not shift one inch eastward from its present position?" From Moscow's point of view,