

Forest officials deny claims of ethanol plant management

Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Forest officials have denied the claims of the promoters of the proposed ethanol, reiterating that the promoters should obtain a clearance from the National Board for Wildlife for setting up the project. In a statement issued here on Saturday, District Forest Officer Neeraj Kumar Tibrewal refuted claims of the promoters of the plant that they had all clearances.

"The map/indicative list of clearances provided on the Decision Support System (DSS) on Parvesh 2.0 app of the ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, is for guidance purpose only. It does not constitute a legal opinion or advice," he pointed out. The DFO said the management was misleading by stating the clearance of the wildlife board was not required. However, the clearance of wildlife board was mandatory as the project site was situated in an area which forms or part of a tiger reserve as per Section 380 (1) (g) Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. He accused the management of putting 'undue pressure' on the forest department and 'threatening' lower staff, besides trying to bypass the National Board for Wild Life. He said the management did not deposit funds relating to 2023 and 2024 towards a conservation plan with a budget of Rs.2.16 crore, as proposed by the PCCF to mitigate wildlife impact under environment clearance, so far. The promoters had never



sought wildlife clearance from the NBWL even after requesting it to do so, he said. In a report published on these columns,

Sridhar Venigalla, the managing director of Aithanoli Cibus Products Private Limited (ACPPL), proposed to be set up in

Metpalli village in Kaghaznagar mandal, claimed that it had all clearances and forest officials were intentionally harassing it.

Pocharam project water hits dead storage level



Kamareddy: The Pocharam project in Nagireddypet mandal of Kamareddy district has reached dead storage level due to insufficient rains. The project water level has come down to 0.0640 TMC on Satur-

day from the full reservoir level of 1.82 TMC. According to irrigation officials, if there was no rain in the upper zones for another week or 10 days, the reservoir would be completely dry. Even though it has been over a month and a half since the begin-

ning of the monsoon season, the district has not received heavy rains so far. There is deficit rainfall in many mandals.

According to irrigation officials, only when there was heavy rain in Gandhari and Lingampeta mandals, the flood water reaches the Pocharam project through the rivulets. There were light showers but no heavy rains in the district, due to this there is no flow of water in the catchment areas, creating shortage of water in the project.

There is an alarming situation in several mandals depending on the water of the project to take up paddy cultivation. In many villages of Nagireddypet, Yellareddy and Lingampeta mandals, paddy sowing has not been completed yet. A large number of farmers have therefore taken up paddy sowing through boreholes. While 10,500 acres of Nagireddypet and Ellareddy mandals were officially receiving irrigation water through the Pocharam project, the farmers would need additional water to irrigate another 5,000 acres, the officials said.

Every year crops receive water through the Pocharam project twice – Kharif and Rabi seasons. However, this time so far, not much water has come from the project, officials said. Even the groundwater level in many mandals near the ayacut depends on the project's water, the officials informed.

According to the data released by the district administration, deficit rainfall was recorded in 14 mandals, normal in 9 mandals and above normal in one mandal in the district till Saturday. Only Nasrullabad mandal received more than average rain so far in the district. The Pocharam Project serves the water needs of Nagireddypet and Yellareddy mandals in Kamareddy district and Medak mandal in Medak district. Pocharam has been serving irrigation and drinking water needs of Nizamabad and Medak district people for the last 95 years. The project was constructed with 2.423 tmc capacity, but due to silt, the project water storage capacity over the years has decreased to 1.82 tmc.

A medical cadre for correctional homes

Thank God for the Right to Information (RTI) Act and thank God, too, for Aruna Roy who was its chief initiator, and Wajahat Habibullah, who, as the first Chief Information Commissioner, set its standards high. Responding to a recent RTI query filed by an advocate in Madurai, KR Raja, a reply came saying that between January 2022 and February 2024 — a space of two years — 118 inmates in five central prisons — Madurai, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Cuddalore, and Vellore — died. The query related to these prisons located in Tamil Nadu but there is no doubt that the statistics are not a reflection on central prisons in that state. They would be found to apply all over India. And there is no suggestion in either the query or in the reply that there was anything to the deaths other than illness and death.

Prisons — now appropriately called “correctional homes” — are where the homemaker is the State. The difference between these homes and any other residence is that its inmates are not there of their own accord but because they are either undergoing a trial for one or another offence under the IPC or have been convicted for a term in those “homes”. This arrangement casts two responsibilities on the homemaker, namely, the State: One, to ensure that the processes of lawful penology are observed and the inmates are confined according to those processes; and two, to also ensure that the inmates suffer no privation (other than their compulsory confinement) which will adversely affect their physical or mental status.

The second responsibility may be regarded and described as subsidiary to and a corollary of the first but it is nonetheless there. The health of the inmates of correctional homes is the responsibility of the homemaker, namely, the State. No confinement, either during the trial or under conviction includes as a part of the arrangement, the additional concomitant of a breakdown in the inmates’ health. No punishment includes inter alia a health breakdown. Inmates of correctional homes are just as vulnerable and susceptible to illness as anyone anywhere. But two situational issues arise: First, an inmate has no opportunity while housed there, to seek or obtain medical redress of her or his own choice and free will. She or he cannot say, for instance, while in a prison in Delhi, that she or he would like to be treated at AIIMS. The inmate is at the mercy of the home’s discretion in the matter. Second, the inmate who is unwell becomes at once two entities, a prisoner and a patient. During the incumbency of the infirmity, according to the common laws of prioritisation, the patient supersedes the prisoner for attention. And thereby the homemaker, i.e. the State, becomes a health provider in addition to being a sentence implementer.

As per official statistics, by the end of 2022, India had 1,330 correctional homes of all categories, housing 5,73,220 inmates, 75% of whom were undertrials. These nearly 600,000 human beings are the penological and medical responsibility of the State, whether represented by the central government as in the case of



central prisons or the state governments in respect of the others. It is nobody’s case that the State must ensure that these 600,000 human beings do not fall ill. That is not reasonable, not scientific. But it is the undeniable case that the State must ensure the swift and quality treatment of illness, physical and mental, where it occurs, of correctional home inmates. I am putting the following to my reader and the authorities. India must set up a medical authority exclusively for its correctional homes, making medical expertise a partner of their punitive expertise. Without this, they cannot carry out their second responsibility, namely, their inmates’ medical health. Without such a setup, for instance, the military would be unable to maintain health standards in barracks, cantonments, or units in the field. Medical personnel hold ranks in the military services.

The same should be the case with our correctional homes. Just as there are superintendents and wardens exclusive to them, so should there be medical professionals, including physicians, surgeons, and nursing cadres comprising a medical wing to assist the officers in charge of correctional homes. Requisitioning specialist doctors from “outside” can always be done in emergencies but a standard operating system must be in place.

I can anticipate the reaction: So, you want jails to morph into hospitals, right?

While saluting the healthy cynicism behind that comment, I would say no, I am not doing that; I am only suggesting that our jails should not be thought of as a place where you are confined but also a place where you are left to sicken and, God forbid, follow the 118, whom the RTI reply to advocate Raja showed, on their unintended “journey out” of the home. At the end of the day, the issue is about how we as a modern society, and the post-colonial State as our society’s most prominent public entity, view our responsibility towards prisoners.

Do we look upon them as persons who need the opportunity to emerge from their incarceration as better people? Illness and death in jail have, globally, a morbid history. Kasturba Gandhi died of illness in the British Raj’s custody, with medical aid leaving much to be desired. Syamaprasad Mookerjee died a prisoner in Srinagar, with the nation still unconvinced about the medical aid received by that patriot. Jayaprakash Narayan’s critical illness

while he was a prisoner during the Emergency elicited a comment from Dr MK Mani, who later restored him, that saving his life would have been easier had he come to hospital care two weeks earlier. We are citizens of a Republic not subjects of a medieval order. Our prison reforms are incomplete without a credible medicare component. Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a former administrator and diplomat. The views expressed are personal

AI, ChatGPT, social media can worsen climate crisis: Study

New Delhi: Generative artificial intelligence (AI) which includes large language models like OpenAI’s ChatGPT, and social media can undermine efforts to address climate change, said researchers in a new forum article published in the journal *Global Environmental Politics*, on Friday.

Researchers from the University of British Columbia (UBC) noted that it is a common conception that AI, social media, and other tech products and platforms are either neutral or potentially net positive in their impact on climate change action.

Further, these can reduce human capacities for creative thinking and problem-solving — crucial for tackling climate change. Additionally, the platforms also work to take away attention from pressing global issues and foster feelings of hopelessness, they said. According to Dr Hamish van der Ven, Assistant Professor of sustainable business management of natural resources at UBC, “These technologies are influencing human behaviour and societal dynamics, shaping attitudes and responses to climate change.” He noted that AI and social technologies can lessen our focus on the climate crisis, as they al-



ways offer “new, ever-changing content.” Recurrent exposure to “negative news on social media may also erode optimism and increase feelings of hopelessness. All this could prevent us from organising or taking collective action on climate change,” he noted, calling for a cautious review of generative AI. Increased dependence on these technologies may decrease the “capacity for creativity and forward-thinking solution,” noted Dr van der Ven.

JSW MG Motor India's ZS EV Records 95% Q-on-Q Growth

JSW MG Motor India has achieved a significant milestone in its NEV (New Energy Vehicle) journey through its ZS EV, India's first Pure-Electric Internet SUV, recording its highest monthly sales. Sales of the ZS EV increased by 95% in Q2 '2024 compared to Q1 '2024, demonstrating its growing appeal among EV buyers in India. Notably, electric vehicles accounted for 40% of the company's total sales in June, highlighting the rising demand for MG EVs and greater customer acceptance and satisfaction and a shift towards ZS EV.

JSW MG Motor India's June NEV sales increased by 21% year-on-year, further solidifying its strategy for this category. The manufacturer's overall NEV segment exhibited a 39% growth in Q2 2024 compared to Q1 2024, pointing to an accelerating adoption of its electric vehicles. The company remains committed to investing in advanced technology and NEV infrastructure to support a greener future. Their focus continues to be on providing customers with cutting-edge NEVs that prioritize efficiency, performance, and sustainability.

"Our focus on expanding our electric

vehicle portfolio is yielding positive results, as evidenced by the strong sales performance of MG EVs," said, Satinder Bajwa, Chief Commercial Officer, JSW MG Motor India. "The significant contribution of NEVs to our overall sales reinforces our commitment to sustainable mobility. We remain dedicated to supporting the transition to electric vehicles in India and providing our customers with innovative and environmentally friendly transportation solutions," he added.

Beyond the strong sales figures, JSW MG Motor India has taken concrete steps to solidify its position as a leader in India's NEV space and contribute to strengthening and boosting the country's EV infrastructure. With 6-way charging and its ecosystem partners, JSW MG India has installed more than 15,000 charging touchpoints nationwide, including public and home chargers.

The carmaker has been focused on bringing a world-class technology-enabled futuristic suite of automobile products including the new generation of intelligent connected ICE and NEVs in India. With a



strong focus on EVs, the company is also looking at battery assembly at its plant along with cell manufacturing and a major production ramp-up with extensive localisation.

Website: www.mgmotor.co.in

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/>

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Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MGMotorIN/>

LinkedIn: <https://in.linkedin.com/company/mgmotorindia>

PBPartners celebrates 3 years of exceptional offline services, expands insurance access to 1,200+ cities with 1.2 lac certified agent partners



PBPartners, Policybazaar's PoSP arm, proudly celebrates its 3rd anniversary, reflecting on 3 years of dedicated offline service and its impact on the lives of agent partners and customers alike. PBPartners has achieved significant milestones over the last 3 years, establishing a strong network of 1.2 lac certified partners, serving 18,000+ pin codes and operating across 1,200+ cities nationwide. This network ensures access to seamless offline services, from policy issuance to claim settlement, driving substantial business growth and expanding insurance coverage, notably in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

Operating from best-in-class experience centers in over 16 cities, PBPartners is committed to delivering comprehensive insurance solutions to under-served populations in tier 2 and tier 3 cities that may not have access to digital solutions. This strategic approach is supported by a strong sales force of more than 1400+ relationship managers, who work closely with agent partners to ensure an adequate insurance safety net in remote and rural areas.

Key initiatives in the last 3 years On-

Demand Payout: Introduced an industry-first payment redemption solution, where partners can access their commissions on-demand. **Partner Ledger:** Real-time visibility into payouts to ensure transparency and efficiency. **Partner Engagement:** The launch of the PBP One Loyalty Program has significantly boosted agent partner engagement, with 1.2L partners enrolled in the program. **Contest Visibility:** All contests are now accessible via mobile/portals, enhancing engagement with a 14% increase in daily active user participation. **Operational Productivity** PBPartners has streamlined operations, reducing payout turnaround time (TAT) to 30 days for Motor, 30 days for Life, 15 days for Health and 7 days for SME/CL for non-On-Demand Payout (ODP) partners, further enhancing efficiency and partner satisfaction.

Sarbvir Singh, Joint Group CEO, PB Fintech, said "PBPartners was established to take insurance services via offline mode to Bharat beyond metros. We have accomplished nearly 50% of business from Tier-3 cities and beyond, hence, increasing insurance penetration in those areas. We have built a strong safety net of insurance,

serving over 6 million happy customers. PBPartners has been successfully supplementing Policybazaar's digital presence and is expanding across the nation. Our efforts in empowering micro-entrepreneurs have also shown remarkable progress. The growth we have achieved in this short span demonstrates PBPartners' commitment to innovation and excellence." Dhruv Sarin, Co-founder, PBPartners, said "PBPartners has rapidly become one of the

leading insurance PoSP businesses in the country, boasting partnerships with over 51+ insurance providers. PBPartners now has the highest proportion of non-motor business in the industry at 34% for the quarter ended March 31, 2023.

Our user engagement has also surged, with over 10,000 daily active users, a 4X increase in FY24, reflecting strong user engagement and satisfaction."

Ponnam Prabhakar writes to Bandi Sanjay for funds

Siddipet: BC Welfare and Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar sought union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar's support to get funds for Telangana from the Centre.

In a statement on Tuesday, Prabhakar urged Sanjay Kumar to put all efforts to get funds to the Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency. Prabhakar sought funds for opening a skill development centre, setting micro and small scale industries for the displaced under Mid-Manair and Gouravelly reservoirs, Rs 200 crore grants fund for Sathavahana University, regular operation of a train between Karimnagar and Tirupathi, doubling of railway lines between Karimnagar-Tirupathi and Karimnagar-Shirdi and Medical College for Husnabad town among other demands.



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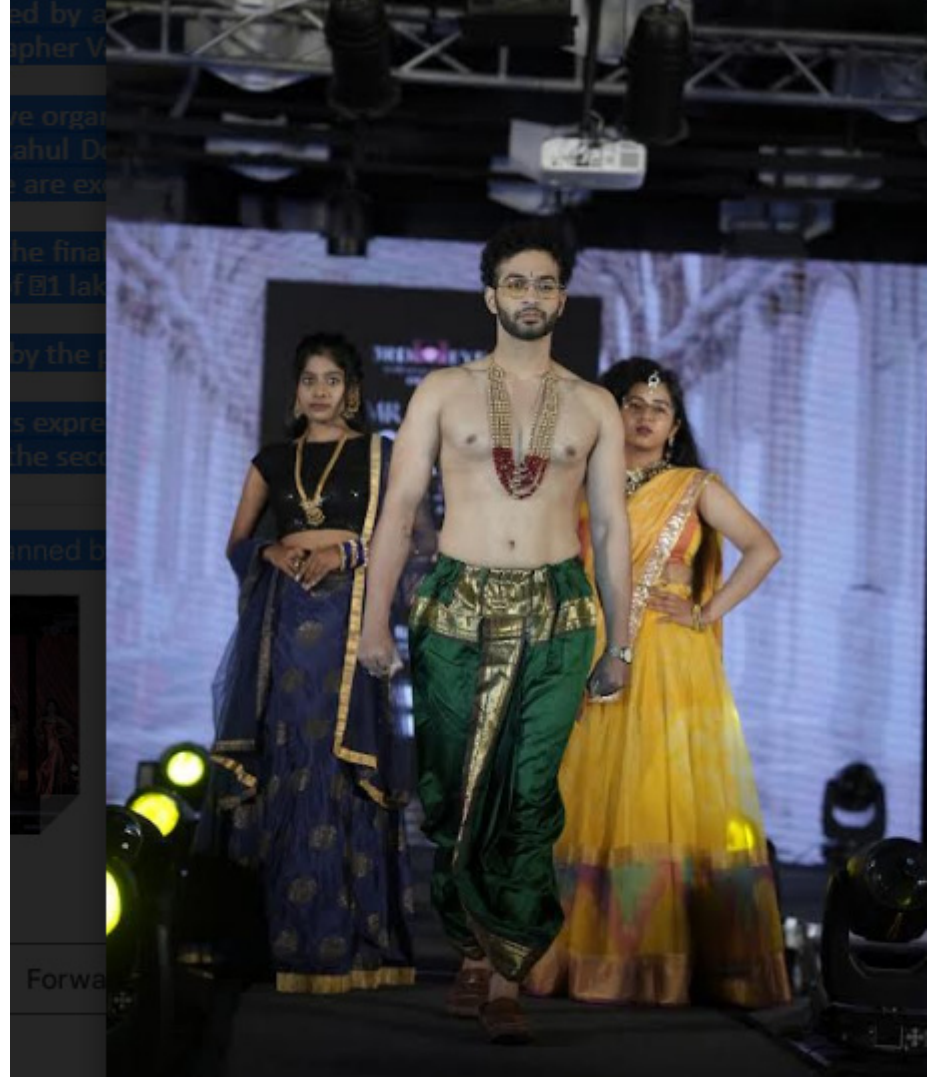
Abbu Sai Prakash Reddy and Yesheswini were crowned as Mr & Miss Fashion Gala 2024



3rd Eye Entertainments, an entertainment and event management company, successfully hosted the grand finale of first Season of Mr & Miss Fashion Gala 2024 at T Hub in Hyderabad. Abbu Sai Prakash Reddy and Yesheswini were crowned as Mr & Miss Fashion Gala 2024. The highly anticipated event saw the participation of 100 modeling enthusiasts from across India, out of which 30 finalists were selected to compete in the grand finale. The competition was judged by a panel of industry experts, including model and actor Sajjad, model and actor Eshwar Sai, actress and model Twinkle Kapoor, and fashion director and choreographer Vamshi Palle.

"We are thrilled to have organized the first edition of Mr & Miss Fashion Gala, which provided a platform for aspiring models to showcase their talent and compete for the coveted titles," said Rahul

Doundigala and Pavan Kumar, Founders of 3rd Eye Entertainments. "The response from the participants and the fashion industry has been overwhelming, and we are excited to continue this as an annual event." The grand finale saw the finalists competing in various rounds, including ramp walk, talent showcase, and personality round. The winners of Mr & Miss Fashion Gala 2024 received a cash prize of ₹1 lakh, while the runner-up received ₹50,000. The event was graced by the presence of renowned fashion designers, choreographers, and industry experts, who shared their insights and experiences with the finalists. 3rd Eye Entertainments expressed their gratitude to all the sponsors, partners, and supporters who contributed to the success of the event. The company is already looking forward to organizing the second edition of Mr & Miss Fashion Gala in 2025.



Bu Abdullah Group signs investor agreement with Tconsult

Hyderabad: Bu Abdullah Group of Companies has signed an investor agreement with TConsult becoming a partner in the Tconsult Global Investor Pool (TGIP) on Tuesday. This agreement signifies the start of an ambitious initiative to connect international investors with businesses seeking global growth.

Bu Abdullah, renowned for his investment acumen and leadership, heads the Bu Abdullah Group, which manages over 270 companies across the Middle East, Asia, and other regions. He holds a Guinness World Record for his extensive investment portfolio. His participation in TGIP represents a significant endorsement of Tconsult's mission to facilitate strategic investments and promote global economic collaboration, a press release from Tconsult said on Tuesday. Bu Abdullah Group's inclusion in TGIP offers an opportunity for businesses aiming for cross-border expansion. Additionally, the Tconsult also signed joint venture agreements with 30 innovative startups and businesses, paving the

way for their international growth.

"Tconsult is honored to welcome Bu Abdullah Group as the first investor in TGIP. This collaboration aligns perfectly with our mission to connect innovators with global investors, thereby fostering international business growth and economic prosperity," stated Sundeep Kumar Makthala, Chairman of Tconsult. Bu Abdullah expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "Joining TGIP is a strategic move that aligns with our vision of supporting promising businesses and driving economic growth across borders. I am enthusiastic about the opportunities this initiative will generate and look forward to a productive collaboration with Tconsult." TGIP, or the Tconsult Global Investor Pool, is a pioneering platform designed to bring together top international investors and businesses seeking global expansion. By leveraging advanced technologies and strategic partnerships, TGIP aims to revolutionize traditional business practices and drive economic prosperity through seamless integration and customized solutions.



No entry for outsiders to Loddi Mallanna temple in Nallamala for 'Toli Ekadasi'

Nagarkurnool: Despite severe pressure from different sections, the Forest Department has made it clear that except for local Chenchu tribals, no outsiders will be permitted to visit the Loddi Mallanna temple on Wednesday for Toli Ekadasi. The temple is located deep inside the forests of Nallamala near the Mannanur checkpost on the Srisailam road. People from different places are keen to visit the temple on Toli Ekadasi and in the past, forest officials used to permit them for one day.

However, since the last few years, the department has strictly imposed a ban on people visiting the temple in large gatherings. "We will permit local Chenchus to perform pujas and do their traditional worship. They are aware of the reasons behind not permitting people from outside," Rohit Gopidi, FDO Amrabad said. "This is the mating season for wild animals, especially tigers. Amrabad is now home for many tigers and we want to continue the good work being done for their conservation. Movement of people in large numbers can disturb the wild animals, besides affecting the breeding activities," he said. In fact, a few days back when a few local Chenchus wanted to pray at the temple for rains, the forest staff accompanied them. It was completed in a few hours, he added. Apart from this, there would be a lot of pollution, particularly plastic and other waste dumped in the forest if people from outside were allowed. Forest officials said people coming from far off places stay overnight here and consume non-vegetarian food as well. They even said that a few



years back, a few people organised DJ music systems at the temple. All these practices are against the National Tiger Conservation Authority norms. However, in sharp contrast to the Forest Department orders, messages are being circulated on

social media platforms and WhatsApp groups that people are being permitted to visit the temple. In a message, local MLA Dr Vamsi Krishna of the Congress is seen speaking to the forest officials and asking them to permit people for darshan at the

temple for three days. The VHP is also asking for permission with some social media groups also spreading messages that their request has been accepted with people being allowed into the forest. However, officials denied giving any such permission.

PL Asset Management's AQUA PMS Delivers 76% Returns in Debut Year; Outperforms its Benchmark BSE 500 by 2x

PL Asset Management's (the asset management arm of Prabhudas Lilladher Group) revolutionary strategy, AQUA PMS, has marked its first anniversary with outstanding performance, consistently ranking among India's top-performing flexicap PMS strategies. The strategy blends cutting-edge quantitative techniques with 80 years of investing wisdom from Prabhudas Lilladher Group, one of India's most trusted financial services organisations. This synergy has redefined wealth creation for clients and cemented PL's leadership in the quant-based asset management space. In its debut year, AQUA PMS delivered an impressive 76% return, doubling the performance of its benchmark BSE 500. This translates to an alpha of 37% versus the BSE 500. Investors have shown immense confidence in the strategy, driving its assets under management (AUM) past the INR 340* crore mark within a year. AQUA, which stands for Adaptive. Quantitative. Unbiased. Alpha, is India's pioneering style agnostic and style adaptive flexicap equity strategy. Inspired by the adaptability of water, AQUA breaks free from traditional one-size-fits-all approaches. It instead seamlessly aligns with changing macro and market cycles. By systematically eliminating human biases and integrating multi-factor analytics with responsive risk

management, AQUA consistently delivers superior, process-driven, performance. Commenting on the strategy's success, Siddharth Vora, Head of Quant Investment Strategies C Fund Manager at PL Asset Management, said, "After over five years of development and testing more than 7,500 strategies, we launched AQUA with a simple goal: to deliver sustainable alpha across market cycles. I am thrilled to see us achieving this objective. Our model exemplifies the perfect blend of human insight and machine power, what we term the 'power of Man with Machine.'" AQUA's investment framework analyses over 1,000 indicators to create an optimal portfolio mix. The strategy aims to invest in the right place at the right time – maximising returns while managing risks. For example, the company maintained a disproportionate overweight on industrial, energy C utilities, and automobile industry which have significantly outperformed the benchmark. Also, in the past year, Value and Momentum investment styles notably outperformed other strategies. AQUA accordingly adapted its portfolio, showcasing its expertise in maintaining a style-agnostic approach. Siddharth added, "The USP of AQUA lies in its ability to adapt and evolve with the market landscape. As we look

ahead, our goal is not just to keep pace with the market but to stay ahead of it, consistently delivering value to our investors. The journey has just begun, and the potential for growth is immense." AQUA is a true blue, 100% quant-based strategy with no human intervention. This enables it to remain benchmark agnostic, and style,

sector, C risk adaptive. It simply follows a rules-based, equal-weighted approach that focuses on generating granular and repeatable performance.

The result is a portfolio that is optimally diversified, with no concentration risk, working to achieve consistent and sustainable returns.

ED case against Hyderabad-based engineering company for defrauding bank of Rs 15 crore

Hyderabad: The Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Hyderabad attached immovable properties worth Rs. 3.11 crore registered in the name of Sagiraju Suryanarayana Raju, Managing Director of Saisree Engineers Private Limited (SEPL) under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 in a case of alleged cheating and defrauding State Bank of India (erstwhile State Bank of Hyderabad), by depositing fake title deeds as collaterals for availing bank finance. The Enforcement Directorate conducted an investigation into the allegations on the basis of First Information Report registered by CBI, EOW, Chennai against

Saisree Engineers Private Limited its Promoters, Directors and others on the complaints made by the bank. "As per the FIR, the company and its management hatched a criminal conspiracy and defrauded the bank by producing fabricated / forged documents and fictitious properties as collateral securities for availing credit facilities from the bank to the tune of Rs. 15 crore," a press release issued by the ED stated.

The Central Bureau of Investigation, Economic Offences Wing, Chennai after completion of its investigation, filed a charge sheet in December 2020 against the company and its directors.

Fresh influx of refugees into southern Mizoram reveals new complications in western Myanmar

On May 7, The Mizoram Post, citing sources, reported that more than 40 Myanmar nationals had entered a village in southern Mizoram's Lawngtlai district on 30 April from Paletwa in southern Chin State. According to the report, the asylum seekers fled after the Arakan Army (AA), an ethnic armed organisation at war with the Myanmar junta, tried to forcefully conscript them into its ranks. While Mizoram's home department is yet to confirm the influx, the reported development shows how an increasingly messy conflict landscape in western Myanmar can affect India by aggravating the refugee crisis along its borders and destabilising its cross-border economic interests. Emerging frictions in southern Mizoram since the military overthrew the civilian government in Myanmar in 2021, thousands have fled across the border into Mizoram. According to a recent Economic Times report, the recent arrivals have put the official refugee figures at 34,332. Unofficial estimates stand at some 50,000. Most of the refugees are Chins who share close ethnic ties with the Mizos, which is why they have been given shelter in Mizoram. However, the Mizoram government and civil society remain wary of the asylum situation, which has put additional stress on the state's limited finances and public service infrastructure, especially along the border districts. There are also local concerns around an upsurge in cross-border narcotics smuggling because of the conflict next door. Beyond these, stray incidents of violence between Myanmar nationals and locals have sparked tensions in southern Mizoram. In March 2023, Mara Thyutlia Pi, a local civil society body representing the Mara tribe in Siaha district, decided to 'seal' the India-Myanmar border after accusing Chin armed groups of murdering three people from the adjoining Lawngtlai district who had crossed over and were found charred to death inside Myanmar.

Weeks later, they accused the Chin Defence Force (CDF)'s Mindat unit of committing the murders and directed the group to hand over the accused to India. The Central Young Lai Association (CYLA), a civil society body representing the Lai tribe from the adjoining Lawngtlai district, also raised alarm bells about the whole situation.

Once again, in January, police arrested four Myanmar nationals for allegedly murdering a resident of Siaha town. The Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), an influential Mizo civil society organisation, claimed that the accused belonged to Myanmar's Rakhine State and had ties to the AA. While these are little more than one-off incidents, they have sparked xenophobic anxieties in certain pockets along the border in Mizoram. New push factors for refugees besides refugees from Myanmar, southern Mizoram has also received asylum seekers from neighbouring Bangladesh. Beginning in November 2022, some 1100 Chin-Kuki people from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region of eastern Bangladesh have fled across the border into southern Mizoram's Lawngtlai dis-



trict.

The refugees, belonging to the Bawm sub-tribe, were forced to enter India following fierce clashes between Bangladeshi security forces and a local ethnic armed group known as the Kuki-Chin National Front (KCNF). The current Mizoram government, led by the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), has welcomed them. Yet, recent reports suggest continuing violence in CHT, which could lead to fresh influxes and greater pressure on border district administrations in south Mizoram. What's more, this January, some 276 soldiers from the Myanmar military fled across the border into Lawngtlai district after the AA cornered them. While they were eventually repatriated, the likelihood of similar trespasses in the future remains high as the civil war next door rages on. Further, according to some reports in Burmese and Bangladeshi media, the AA is planning to settle people from Rakhine State currently living in Bangladesh in Paletwa, which it captured after a fierce battle with the Myanmar junta in January. The ethnic armed group is allegedly forcing local Chins to build settlements for the new arrivals and also serve in its ranks, forcing them to flee.

This has sharpened tensions with other powerful Chin armed groups. Among them, the Chin National Front/Army (CNF/A), which dominates the newly-established 'Chinland Council', sees the AA as trespassers in their territory. On the other hand, a separate set of Chin armed groups, organised under the 'Chin Brotherhood Alliance', has been working with the AA to consolidate their influence in southern and southeastern Chin State.

These conflicting political-military interests between different Chin groups and the AA could trigger fresh conflict right across the Indian border, which would

force more people to flee to Mizoram. Both sides would especially vie for control of Paletwa, a strategically important hub located just south of Mizoram's Siaha and Lawngtlai districts, with large-scale investments in connectivity infrastructure under the India-funded Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit and Transport Project (KMMTTP). Whoever controls Paletwa will command strategic and economic leverage over other groups in western Myanmar as well as over India. Even as the hydra-headed revolutionary war against the Burmese junta roils and fresh inter-group faultlines emerge along the borders, India will have to work with all groups in Chin and Rakhine

States to ensure security and stability along the border, including ensuring the safety of civilians trapped in active conflict zones. New Delhi will also need to work with the Mizoram government to ensure that asylum seekers are protected. India must also dial up pressure on the brutal military regime in Naypyitaw to stop attacking its own people and fueling an avoidable war along the India-Myanmar border. A federal democracy in Myanmar is in India's national interest. Angshuman Choudhury is an Associate Fellow with the Centre for Policy Research, and focuses on North-east India and Myanmar. The views expressed are personal.

Over 26,000 missing in Telangana

Hyderabad; A whopping 26,618 people, including 15,703 women and girls, are missing in Telangana, according to NCRB report 2022.

All over India, a total of 7,85,052 people including 4,97,393 women are missing. The highest number of missing persons recorded in the country is from West Bengal with 1,12,526 persons missing including 75,835 women, followed by Maharashtra with 1,10,221 persons. On the third position is Madhya Pradesh with 98,901 persons missing and it includes 68,700 women. Telangana stands ninth in the list. Advanced tools fail to bring numbers down. Despite the police boasting about latest tools including facial recognition to trace missing persons, the number of persons who have gone missing remains high. Concerns are raised over such a large number of persons, particularly women, remaining untraced. MBT party spokesperson Amjedullah Khan, who also takes up missing cases when families approach for

help, complains about lack of professionalism on the part of the police. "At the most, the police check call details of the person and issue a lookout circular. The families themselves are asked to run around to different places and check. Only in cases where children are feared kidnapped, the police act following pressure from higher officials," he said. Social activist SQ Masood alleges that a case often gets watered down with missing person being mentioned as mentally disturbed. In instances of a marital discord, the police ask the husband to go to the in-laws' house and check for himself, bothering little about the man's safety. "Also, poor families can't afford to spend money running around to search for their loved ones," he said. 'Majority migrants' The TS police say majority of the missing persons are migrants who come in search of livelihood. "At times, family doesn't bother to inform police once the person is traced or returns," said an official.

The coming-together of Indira and Kamaraj in the Puducherry polls and an anti-climax

The practice of Prime Ministers taking part in Assembly election campaign is nothing new. But, in one instance, the participation of a Prime Minister in the campaign was seen as a prelude to bigger political changes. That was 50 years ago when the Union Territory of Puducherry went to the polls and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who ran a Congress of her own — the Congress (Requisitionists or Ruling) — and former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K. Kamaraj, who was the live wire of the Congress (Organisation), campaigned together for candidates of their parties. The year 1974 began with the dramatic collapse of the DMK Ministry — headed by M.O.H. Farook Maricar (later, he dropped the surname Maricar) — following the defection of Ministers S. Ramaswami and D. Ramachandran to the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (ADMK and now called the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam). In one-and-a-half months (when the Union Territory was under President's Rule), the election to the 30-member House was held. It was in the run-up to the election that the idea of the two Congress parties fighting together got crystallised again. Ariyankuppam, a precursor

The Ariyankuppam by-election in March 1972 was a precursor: Congress (R) nominee P. C. Purushothama Reddiar, backed by the Congress (O), defeated the DMK. However, in the intervening period, in Tamil Nadu, the two Congress parties fought separately in the May 1973 by-election to the Dindigul Lok Sabha constituency. Despite losing to the fledgling ADMK, founded by M.G. Ramachandran, the Congress (O) came in second, whereas the other Congress, which was in power at the Centre, forfeited deposit. It was then that the demand for the two parties to come together grew louder.

Along with the Puducherry Assembly election, the by-election to the Puducherry Lok Sabha constituency took place. The by-election was necessitated by the death of Mohan Kumaramangalam in 1973. In Tamil Nadu, the by-elections to the Coimbatore Lok Sabha and Coimbatore (West) Assembly constituencies were also held simultaneously. According to A. Gopanna, author of Kamaraj: An Era, the Congress (O) was allotted the two seats in Coimbatore, whereas the other Congress was allotted the Puducherry Lok Sabha constituency. Of a total of 30 seats in the Puducherry Assembly, the Congress (O) was given 16 and the Congress (R) 14. Plank of progress

On February 17, 1974, Indira Gandhi and Kamaraj, who parted ways in November 1969 after the split in the Congress, campaigned together at two places in the Union Territory — Natesa Nagar Maidan, Puducherry, and the Thomas Thidal, Karaikal. Union Minister C. Subramaniam and veteran actor Sivaji Ganesan, who was in the Kamaraj camp, also took part in the campaign. While Indira Gandhi sought votes on the plank of fighting against "forces which are trying to obstruct the country's progress and growth", Kamaraj highlighted the need for saving the country "from the rot of dishonesty, falsehood, and



deception". The elections created a hype to such an extent that the merger of the two Congress parties was considered a matter of time and formality. But, eventually, when the results of the Puducherry Assembly election and the by-elections were out, they would not have pleased both Kamaraj and Indira Gandhi

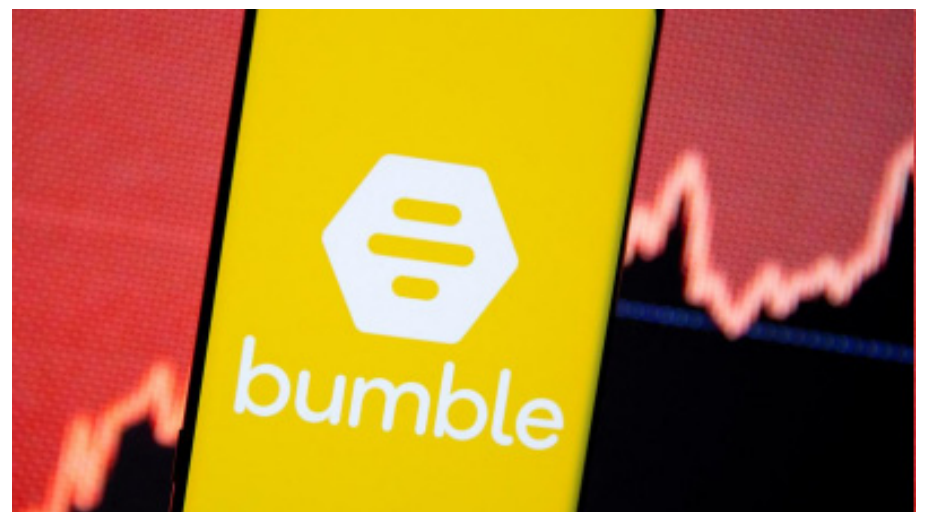
The ADMK-CPI combine emerged as the single largest group in the Puducherry Assembly, having bagged 14 seats (the ADMK-12 and the CPI-2). The Congress (R) captured seven and its ally, Congress (O), five. The DMK, which was in power till January 1974, netted only two seats, while the CPI(M) bagged one seat and an Independent won in a constituency. It was another matter that the ADMK-CPI coalition government, which was sworn in on March 6, was defeated in a motion by a single vote on March 27. In the Assembly, Chief Minister Ramaswami accused the Congress parties of having "openly and in a shameful manner" joined the DMK to bring his government down, while Dhana Kantharaj, leader of the Congress (R), contended that the coalition had proved its "in-capacity to rule" by allowing the publication of the Budget even before it was presented to the House. In the Puducherry and Coimbatore Lok Sabha by-elections, Bala Pazhanur of the ADMK and Parvathi Krishnan of the CPI romped home respectively. Likewise, in Coimbatore (West), C. Arananayagam of the ADMK emerged victorious.

A non-starter Despite all the talk of the two Congress parties getting closer, subsequent developments proved that the merger was a non-starter, at least till Kamaraj was alive. Many months later, during a visit to Chennai, Uma Shankar Dikshit, Union Minister and a key figure in the Indira Gandhi camp, said no decision had been taken on the merger. In January 1975, during the Congress (O)'s national meeting at Chalisgaon in Maharashtra, it

was made clear that there was no question of the Tamil Nadu unit of the party "joining or merging" with the other Congress. As Jayaprakash Narayan's campaign against the Indira Gandhi government intensified in the months to come, the Congress (O) inched closer towards him. In October that year, Kamaraj died. Four

months later, a faction of the Congress (O), led by G.K. Moopanar, merged with the Congress in the presence of Indira Gandhi at a public meeting held in Chennai. The other faction, headed by P. Ramachandran, functioned under the banner of the Congress (O) before becoming part of the Janata Party in 1977.

Bumble adds option to report fake profiles that use AI-generated photos: Report



Bumble added an option that will allow users of the dating app to report fake profiles that are using AI-generated images and videos. Users, when reporting a profile, can now choose "Fake profile" and then select the option "Using AI-generated photos or videos", a report from TechCrunch said. Other reporting options on the app include inappropriate content, underage users, scams and the use of someone else's photos, among others. The dating app hopes the move will deter people from us-

ing AI-generated images to lure users. AI-generated photos on dating apps are a common method used by threat actors to lure victims into sharing personal information which can then be used to launch targeted attacks. The new reporting options follows the launch of a tool by the platform which uses AI and human moderation to detect and remove fake profiles. Bumble claims since the launch of the tool, named "Deception Detector", there was a 45% drop in users reports of spam, scams and fake profiles.

'Outstanding work': IIT-M team makes mineral nanoparticles with water

Water drops are ubiquitous around us and come in different sizes. They can be as large as a raindrop or as small as aerosol particles released from a spray can. They can be even smaller — invisible to the naked eye — when they come as microdroplets. The latter are just a thousandth the size of a typical raindrop. "We think that droplets are very tiny, and they are not important enough," Thalappil Pradeep, a chemist at IIT Madras, told The Hindu. Dr. Pradeep led a study recently published in the journal *Science* that showed microdroplets of water can break minerals down into nanoparticles. The team involved researchers from IIT Madras and the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Studies, Bengaluru. "This outstanding work adds significantly to the growing body of evidence that water droplets enable chemical transformations that bulk water does not make possible," Richard Zare, a chemist at Stanford University who wasn't involved in the study, told The Hindu. Eccentricity of water microdroplets in a bucket of water, water molecules at the surface can participate more easily in chemical reactions than those in the bulk. But even at the surface, they'll need to be supplied some energy before they can participate. The water molecules of microdroplets do one better: because they have so little room and are packed closely together, they're more eager to participate in chemical reactions. The water in microdroplets thus engage more readily in exotic chemical reactions that also proceed faster, up to a million-times in some cases. This isn't possible with water molecules in bulk.

For the same reason, microdroplets are also good carriers of electric charge. Dr. Pradeep said they're easy to encounter in this form. Go to the beach, and close to the shore, microdroplets from the spray of water could carry an excess of ions from the salt in the water and settle on your skin, he said. A microdroplet can also become electrically charged in other ways. For example, when a larger droplet loses some water by evaporation and shrinks, the water molecules left behind are pushed closer together, and establish (weak) hydrogen bonds between themselves. This often results in a water molecule shedding one of its hydrogen atoms and becomes a negatively charged hydroxyl ion (OH⁻). The freed H⁺ is essentially a proton. This process happens in bulk water as well — but because each molecule is surrounded by other water molecules, the protons can't move around much. In microdroplets, the protons easily reach the surface, rendering the surface more acidic and creating fertile ground for chemical reactions. Researchers have shown that amino acids use free protons on their surfaces as an intermediary to form peptide linkages. The new study reported microdroplets have yet another ability. An explosive experiment Dr. Pradeep & co. were interested in whether water microdroplets could break bonds in crystals like silica (SiO₂) and alumina (Al₂O₃) to create nanometre-sized pieces. Spoorthi Bhat, then a PhD student under Dr. Pradeep



and one of the paper's coauthors, set up an experiment to confirm this hypothesis in crystals of quartz (silica), ruby, and fused alumina. She pressed a battery terminal against the outside of a capillary tube. The terminal delivered a few thousand volts to mineral microparticles suspended in water inside the tube. The voltage elongated the suspension, squeezing it out of one end, and sending it flying through the air as a mist of microdroplets. They were still airborne when, in just 10 ms, the mineral microparticles broke up into nanoparticles.

The researchers had a few ideas about what could have caused this break up. The free protons could have squeezed themselves into crystal layers, which they scraped the mineral off from within if supplied some energy. The study suggests the electric fields produced by the charged surface could have provided this energy. Surface tension — the force that keeps droplets spherical — could have been involved as well. In the experiment, a contest between surface tension, which is attractive, and like charges on the surface repelling each other could have set off shockwaves that blew up the microdroplets. "This is a striking and non-intuitive result," Shashi Thutupalli, a biophysicist at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, who was not involved in the study, said to The Hindu. "It seems quite plausible that the high electric field within the droplets could cause the particle breakup." He added that the findings could be useful to the study of proto-cells, the precursors to cells as we know them today. Scientists are interested in proto-cells because they could have played an important part in the processes that first created life on the earth. "For me personally, the relevance of these results to the context of the origins of life is very

exciting." He said the microdroplets could mimic proto-cells by being little compartments in which biochemical reactions play out. Making a green paradise The formation of nanoparticles from microparticles, Dr. Pradeep said, is "related to the origin of life, the problem of agriculture, ... to issues as large as water itself. Another problem as big as water is food. It is in this context that soil is probably an interesting thing."

Silica makes up half of sand. Plants absorb silica in the form of nanoparticles to help them become taller. The rice crop usually has high levels of silica. Supplying

soil with silica nanoparticles could thus have a positive impact on agriculture. "Here is a way to convert unproductive soil, unproductive fields or even desertified areas into productive areas," Dr. Pradeep said. He implored scientists to investigate whether water microdroplets react with minerals to form nanoparticles as part of atmospheric processes, in the form of 'microdroplet showers'. Dr. Pradeep was optimistic they do. Karthik Vinod is a freelance science journalist and co-founder of Ed Publica. He has masters' degrees in astrophysics and science, technology and society.

"The lifeblood": 42% of startups in California founded by immigrants

Washington: As many as 42 per cent of all startups in California are founded by immigrants who are the lifeblood of the Golden State, its Governor Gavin Newsom told a group of eminent Indian Americans at a fundraiser. Newsom, a senior Democratic Party leader, made these remarks in Massachusetts on Monday. "Forty-two per cent of all startups in California are founded by immigrants, and they are the lifeblood of our State. Amid the vitriol, xenophobia, and nativism that permeates much of our politics, particularly from figures like Donald Trump, we in California have endured and emerged stronger," Newsom said at a fundraiser in Massachusetts. he 'Vaccine War' based on true achievements of Indian scientists: Pallavi Joshi and Vivek Agnihotri. "We overcame the divisive rhetoric of Prop 187 in the 1990s, and today, we celebrate our diversity rather than merely tolerate it. As a result, we lead in manufac-

turing, boast the highest number of scientists, researchers, and Nobel laureates, and continue to drive innovation globally," he said. Hosted by US India Security Council president, Ramesh Viswanath Kapur and his wife Susan at their home in Winchester on July 8, the fundraiser was attended by eminent Indian Americans from in and around Boston. Kapur in his remarks expressed gratitude to Newsom for his decisive veto of the proposed SB 403 bill, which aimed to ban caste discrimination, and for his interest in visiting a Hindu temple in Florida in the coming months. The room, filled with many Indian-origin attendees, entrepreneurs, and young people, erupted in applause, recognising Newsom's steadfast support for entrepreneurial initiatives and his principled stance on critical issues. Kapur also stated that he feels the Governor has a good chance of being the 47th President of the USA.