

Model for TB free municipalities, 'Swasthya Nagaram' launched in Medchal Malkajgiri district

Hyderabad: A model for Tuberculosis Free Municipalities, Project Swasthya Nagaram, was launched on Tuesday in Medchal Malkajgiri district. This is a collaborative initiative of State TB Cell, Municipal Corporations of Peerzadiguda, Boduppal and Pocharam, Central TB Division partnering with WHO India, The Union, Wadhvani AI and USAID India under the stewardship of local urban bodies of Medchal Malkajgiri district and NTEP Telangana. This model for TB Free Municipalities is an innovative approach to demonstrate ending TB in an urban setting where social determinants have huge impact on increasing the TB burden with an approach of surveillance, prevention, complete cascade of quality TB care with engagement of multi stakeholders.

The model will be implemented in urban settings of Peerzadiguda, Boduppal and Pocharam Municipal Corporation over a period of 3 years. It envisages one third decline in TB incidence, bring down to TB related mortality and catastrophic costs being incurred by the patient.

RV Karnan, Commissioner, Health and FW and MD-NHM launched the 'Swasthya Nagaram' project (virtually) with unveiling of the project brief and said, "This model will help in building ownership among urban local bodies towards the TB free initiatives and create an open channel of communication on the quality and availability of TB services in urban settings." "Internal migration and mobility and growing slum dwellings contribute to

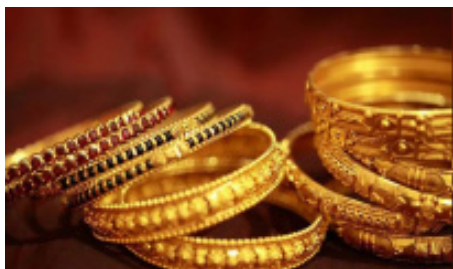


the spread of Tuberculosis. Interventions through this model in urban settings will certainly help in restricting TB disease's spread beyond city limits", said Dr. Rajendra P Joshi, Deputy Director General TB, Central TB Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in his inaugu-

ral address. TSVN Thrilleshwar Rao, Municipal Commissioner, Peerzadiguda, Medchal district said that as a part of this initiative, the municipal corporation will extend their full support in making this program successful and be an active partner in working towards TB elimination. Dr. Jyoti

Jaju, Director, Programme from The Union said that the innovative programme signifies a significant step towards combating TB and promoting community well-being as it would provide free medical care to the patients along with counselling for the family members.

Gold, silver prices in Hyderabad see major dip following customs duty reduction



The rate of silver in the city is currently Rs 92,500 per kg, having declined by Rs 3,500 today. The duty reduction on platinum has also been announced, now set at 6.4 per cent.

Hyderabad: Gold and silver prices dropped significantly across Hyderabad and other cities as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a reduction in basic customs duty on these metals

in her seventh consecutive Union Budget presentation on Tuesday.

The duty on gold and silver has been reduced to 6 per cent, leading to an immediate impact on prices. As a result, 22k gold prices in India dropped by Rs 2,750 to Rs 67,450 per 10 grams, and 24k gold prices fell by Rs 2,990 to Rs 73,580 per 10 grams. Earlier today, 22k gold prices had declined marginally by Rs 100 to Rs 67,690 per 10 grams, while 24k gold prices dropped by Rs 100 to Rs 73,840 per 10 grams.

The rate of silver in the city is currently Rs 92,500 per kg, having declined by Rs 3,500 today. The duty reduction on platinum has also been announced, now set at 6.4 per cent. This move addresses a long-standing demand from the gems and jewellery industry in Hyderabad. The reduction in customs duty is expected to boost demand for these precious metals in India, countering the recent surge in rates due to global market factors.

TGANB Director Sandeep Shandilya asks IT companies to grant leave for rehabilitation of employees

Hyderabad: Software employees who are caught by the Telangana police for using drugs are now in dilemma after the managements refused to grant them long leaves.

The Telangana Anti-Narcotics Bureau (TGANB) along with the local police units have been cracking the whip against drug addicts and nabbing them from pubs, bars, hotels, events and resorts also. Medicos, school students among those held as Anti-Narcotics Bureau cracks down on educational institutions in Hyderabad. In last three months, more than two dozen software employees working with different MNCs were caught for using drugs.

The latest was the raid at The Cave Bar, Manikonda where among others, employees of various IT companies were caught. The TGANB made it mandatory for all those caught using drugs to attend rehabilitation sessions. However, the soft-



ware professionals are bringing excuses citing difficulties in getting leaves. Following the developments, the TGANB Director, Sandeep Shandilya, asked the managements of software companies to grant leaves to their employees who are willing to undergo rehabilitation.

The Bureau had already stated that those caught for using drugs will have to undergo tests four to five times over a period of time after they are caught.

Vasco da Gama's toxic legacy is now a 'pandemic' that kills 8 million globally

What does the voyage of Vasco da Gama have to do with a commodity that is the cause of much grief and ill health across the world? The answer, in a word, is tobacco, but the story is as follows: July 8th, 1497, commemorates the beginning of the historic voyage of Vasco da Gama. This journey reshaped global maritime routes and left an indelible mark on trade and culture. Among the myriad exchanges catalysed by this era of exploration was the introduction and dissemination of tobacco, a commodity that has since impacted societies profoundly and multifacetedly.

Tobacco has profound and multifaceted effects on the human body, contributing to a range of health issues including various cancers (lung, mouth, throat, oesophagus, pancreas, and bladder), respiratory diseases (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema, chronic bronchitis), cardiovascular problems (heart disease, stroke, hypertension), and other conditions such as diabetes, infertility, a weakened immune system, and complications in pregnancy. Its consumption can lead to severe addiction due to the presence of nicotine, a highly addictive substance that alters brain function. Tobacco is marketed and consumed in various forms, such as cigarettes, cigars, bidis, smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco, snuff), and increasingly, through electronic cigarettes and vaping products. The pervasive nature of tobacco consumption and its severe health consequences make it a global public health crisis that requires urgent and coordinated action.

Despite its "Pan Indian" use, tobacco, originally cultivated by Native Americans, was brought to Europe in the 16th century and, soon after, introduced to South Asia by European traders and colonizers. The Portuguese, followed by the Dutch and the British, were instrumental in spreading tobacco use in the region. Tobacco quickly embedded itself into the cultural and social fabric of South Asian societies. Yet, it is essential to remember that smoking was alien to Indian ethos and culture. To illustrate, despite the linguistic diversity in India, with as many as five linguistic families (1000s of languages), none of the Indian languages have a native or original word for the tobacco. The exception in Dravidian languages is due to the functionality- or description-related coinage for "tobacco," and there is no literary evidence about the use of tobacco before the European arrival. Surprisingly, the economic dimensions of the tobacco menace have not been subject to debate since the colonial era. Despite its deep colonial roots, there has not been a robust enough critique of the British Raj for tobacco, and often, even experts have historically overlooked the economic and human costs. Indeed, it isn't the Kohinoor diamond that should symbolise European exploitation, but the countless lives lost to smoking that should be the true emblem of colonial greed. The introduction of tobacco in India by the colonial powers has left a lasting legacy of addiction and disease. Ethical and revenue considerations



Tobacco, being a drought-tolerant, hardy crop, is economically significant in providing livelihoods to the underprivileged. Today, tobacco accounts for approximately 2% of India's agri-exports and employs more than 45 million people. The tobacco industry is a major source of revenue through taxation and exports exceeding ₹ 22000 crores. However, this economic benefit comes at a tremendous human and financial cost. The total economic cost of smoking in India, including health expenditures and productivity losses, amounts to approximately ₹ 1.82 trillion annually. This staggering figure highlights the heavy financial burden borne by the country due to tobacco-related illnesses.

Tobacco use is responsible for over 1.2 million deaths in India each year, with smoking-related diseases accounting for the majority. The impact of second-hand smoke and smokeless tobacco further exacerbates the health crisis, leading to widespread morbidity and mortality. Tobacco is a significant contributor to the country's cancer burden, with 27% of all cancers in India attributable to tobacco use. This aspect of colonial legacy — where tobacco was a tool of economic gain for colonial powers but a source of health devastation for local populations — deserves more attention in historical discourse. Stacking up priorities, the contemporary landscape of tobacco research in India is marked by a conflict of priorities between two premier institutions: the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The ICMR advocates for the elimination of tobacco to mitigate its public health impact, investing in research and policies aimed at reducing tobacco use. In stark contrast, the ICAR focuses on increasing tobacco crop yields and employing modern genetic techniques to enhance the productivity of tobacco farmers. ICAR's Central Tobacco Research

Institute (CTRI) in Rajahmundry is at the forefront of this agricultural research. The organisation research interest is to enhance tobacco productivity and commerce while ensuring the sustainability and quality of tobacco leaves and seeds. This is directly in conflict with ICMR's aspirations for a tobacco-free India, creating a significant policy and ethical dilemma. However, the law on the subject is quite clear. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, including the right to health, as an integral part of this fundamental right. Furthermore, the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) under Articles 39(e), 39(f), 41, 42, and 47 mandate the state to work towards improving public health, ensuring social justice, and raising the standard of living. These constitutional provisions compel the state to prioritise the health and well-being of its citizens over the economic benefits of tobacco farming.

Will CRISPR make a difference?

In scientific innovation, gene editing technique CRISPR (clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats) technology presents a potential solution to the tobacco epidemic. Researchers are using CRISPR to develop genetically modified tobacco plants that are less harmful or harmless. This technology could potentially alter the nicotine content and other harmful substances in tobacco leaves, providing a safer alternative for consumers and reducing the health risks associated with tobacco use.

Recent studies have shown promise in using CRISPR to knock out specific genes in tobacco plants, thereby reducing nicotine content significantly. For example, targeting the transcription factor genes ERF199 and ERF189 resulted in an ultra-low-nicotine phenotype, with nicotine levels reaching only 2-5% of wild-type levels. Knocking out the QPT2 gene drastically

reduced nicotine production but caused severe growth inhibition, making it unsuitable for agricultural use. Additionally, targeting all six members of the BBL gene family reduced foliar nicotine levels by up to 94%. These developments highlight the potential for CRISPR to create tobacco lines with dramatically reduced nicotine content. However, further characterisation is needed to ensure these modifications do not negatively impact other important agronomic traits before they can be deployed in agriculture. The technology also holds promise for precisely engineering other valuable traits in tobacco and related species. The collaboration between ICMR and ICAR is crucial to ensuring that these scientific advancements align with public health goals and agricultural sustainability. By working together, these institutions can develop tobacco crops that reduce health risks while maintaining economic viability for farmers and to achieving the mandate of ICAR-CTRI. The tobacco lobby and surrogate advertising The tobacco industry has shown remarkable resilience and ingenuity in circumventing regulations to curb its influence. Despite stringent advertising bans under the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the tobacco lobby has employed surrogate advertising to promote its products. This involves using brand names on non-tobacco products, sponsoring events, and promoting tobacco-related imagery in media and entertainment. Such tactics undermine public health efforts and perpetuate tobacco consumption, particularly among youth. There is a popular misconception that "epidemic" and "pandemic" apply exclusively to infectious diseases. However, tobacco consumption perfectly fits the existing definition of a pandemic. A pandemic is characterised by its widespread prevalence, severe consequences, and the ability to affect a significant portion of the population across multiple countries.

OPPO K12x 5G boasts military-grade durability with premium design

OPPO India will launch the K12x 5G—the newest addition to its K-Series—built for those who require a handset that redefines ruggedness. The smartphone, which will be launched on 29th July, boasts segment-leading durability that's tested against stringent military standards and carries an IP54 rating for dust and water resistance. The phone—available in two colours, Breeze Blue and Midnight Violet—also comes with segment-first Splash Touch technology that lets users operate its touchscreen with wet hands or even if the screen is wet; it is a device for those who "Live Unstoppable" lives. Durable and Stylish The internals of OPPO K12x 5G are protected by a 360-degree Damage-Proof Armour Body. Its internal design uses a drop-resistant material—inspired by the structure of a sponge—that cushions internal components for shock absorption. Additionally, its display is protected by twice-reinforced Panda Glass. As a testament to its durability, it carries the MIL-STD-810H certification, which means it has been rigorously tested in the harshest of environments and conditions, be it extreme heat, moisture, and for shock resistance. The box pack also includes a high-value Air Cushion Armour Case with corner cushioning and a reinforced back to ensure against accidental drops. The splash-resistant IP54-rated K12x 5G's Splash Touch algorithms ensure that its screen will continue to work even when used with wet hands – be it while cooking or after a sweaty workout.

The OPPO K12x 5G's durability does



not mean a compromise in style; it is just 7.68mm slim and weighs just 186g. The matte finish around its frame ensures a smooth and comfortable grip. At the same time, the circular camera design at the back—with the prominent Cosmic Flashlight—adds to its premium look. Unstoppable Entertainment

The OPPO K12x 5G is designed for

entertainment: Its 6.67-inch HD+ display comes with a 120Hz refresh rate for smooth scrolling, and 1000nits of peak brightness so content on the screen is visible even under direct sunlight. The handset's L1 Wide vine certifications ensure users can stream their favourite shows from OTT platforms in HD without compromise. OPPO's proprietary AI Link boost technology en-

sure stable signal strength and faster network recovery in elevators, basements and crowded environments like concerts; its Dual View Video feature lets users record videos from the front and rear cameras simultaneously to create more engaging and personalised vlogs. The device packs a 5100mAh battery supported by a 45W SuperVOOCTM charger in the box.

Union Budget 2024



The central focus of this budget has been on employment and associated issues like skill formation. The government's efforts to reap India's demographic dividend is visible in its push towards labour intensive production, its skilling initiative, incentivising formal job creation and increasing participation of women in the workforce. The budget estimate that these measures will help create 8 million jobs per year -- which is line with the employment requirement that has been set out in the economic survey.

The change in income tax slabs along with the direct benefit transfer to first time workers, is likely to spur consumption, particularly for small ticket items, by increas-

ing disposable incomes. The budget's policy mix – including continued capex, job creation, support for manufacturing, agriculture, and rural development – is likely to be positive for India's potential growth. The government made no compromise on its capex plans despite the increased allocation to some of its allies. The commitment towards fiscal consolidation with a reduction in the fiscal deficit to 4.9% of GDP in FY25 is a positive for medium-term debt sustainability. Although markets have been disappointed with the increase in the capital gains tax, this is line with the communication by different branches of the government and regulators to be cautious and prevent any excess build-up of risk in the system.

Union Budget 2024: Reforms in Insurance Sector to Drive Growth and Enhance Economic Stability

PolicyBazaar Partners, a brand under Policybazaar Insurance Brokers, expresses strong support for the Indian government's Union Budget 2024, recognizing its visionary approach designed to foster economic growth, innovation, and social inclusion across various segments of society. The budget's provisions are set to have a significant positive impact on the insurance



sector and beyond.

Versuni India Advances Local Area Development With Education Empowerment Initiatives

Versuni India, a leading home appliance company and home to legacy brands Philips Domestic Appliances and Preethi, has announced a new initiative to empower education in the country, through wide assistance for education infrastructure in local govt schools around its areas of operations starting with Chennai. The brand kick started the project in two government primary schools in Chennai's Veluchai and Thaiyur villages that accommodate roughly 50 students. This initiative reflects Versuni India's broader vision to support and empower underprivileged students by improving their learning environments. The objective is to foster holistic development and create a better, brighter future for all students.

Dedicated to empowering consumers and communities nationwide, Versuni India has implemented a phased approach to create a more cohesive and impactful program. In the first phase, Versuni India has enhanced two primary schools by constructing playgrounds, renovating buildings, and providing essential furniture such as tables, chairs, and bulletin boards. Additionally, the brand has improved local area development by installing a 1000L capacity RO water system for clean drinking water, planting trees, and securing the premises with fencing around a nearby pond. These efforts aim to foster a conducive learning environment crucial for students' academic and personal growth. Furthermore, Versuni India is committed to monitoring and improving the schools' sanitation to ensure clean and safe conditions for students' well-being.

"Education serves as the foundation for community growth and development.



At Versuni India, we are committed to shaping a future where every child can overcome obstacles and reach their full potential.

Our mission is to empower individuals and communities, ensuring that future generations have access to quality educa-

tion. Our initiative exemplifies our dedication to this cause and goes beyond simply improving infrastructure; it is about fostering an environment where students can thrive academically and personally. By providing essential resources and support, we aim to create a sustainable impact that will

benefit the community for years. This endeavour aligns with our vision of economic, emotional, and social self-reliance. We are eager to witness the positive changes this initiative will bring" said, Gulbahar Taurani, Managing Director, and Chief Executive Officer, of ISC at Versuni India.

PolicyBazaar Partners applauds Union Budget 2024 for promoting economic growth, innovation and social inclusion



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of society. The budget's provisions are set to have a significant positive impact on the insurance sector and beyond. Dhruv Sarin, Co-founder, PBPartners said, "We applaud the Indian government's Union Budget 2024 for its forward-thinking approach across all segments of society. The reduction of TDS (Tax Deducted at Source) rates

from 5% to 2% for individual agents selling insurance policies is a particularly commendable initiative, as it will directly increase their disposable income. Dhruv further added, "Empowerment of India's young workforce was also one of the central focus areas. With five targeted schemes aiming to benefit 41 million youth over five years and supported by a central outlay of ₹2 lakh crore, this move will result in more employment opportunities and significantly

uplift India's youth. The women-specific skilling programs and initiatives to boost workforce participation are also laudable steps towards inclusive growth. These initiatives will lay a solid foundation for sustained economic growth by financially strengthening India's lower middle segment and youth." PBPartners believes that the Union Budget 2024 is a transformative step towards building a more inclusive and prosperous India.

Police arrests Two burglars; 23 tolas of gold and cash recovered

Hyderabad: Two burglars who moved around in a car to commit offences and broke into houses in the city were arrested by the Hayathnagar police on Tuesday. The police recovered 23 tolas of gold, Rs. 2 lakh cash, a phone and seized a Toyota Glanza car from them. The arrested persons are Shaik Azeez (38) and Pathiwada Lovaraju (30), both natives of East Godavari. According to the police, the duo

travelled to the city from East Godavari in Andhra Pradesh in their car and moved into the colonies in the night.

After identifying houses that are locked, Azeez and Lovaraju broke the door locks and entered into the house and took away valuables. On June 27, the duo had committed burglary at a house in Hayathnagar and took away gold ornaments.

Rachakonda Police Commissionerate to reach people through social media

Commissioner unveiled the QR Code posters to be installed in Police stations and Offices

Aiming at brining awareness among public about Rachakonda Police Commissionerate's social media platforms and make them accessible to all, CP Shri Sudheer Babu, IPS has unveiled *QR code* posters at the Rachakonda office of Neredmet. Addressing the gathering, CP said that as part of the law and order security measures in the Rachakonda area, social media accounts like "Facebook", "X", "Instagram" and YouTube channel are being maintained by the Rachakonda Police. CP stated that in every police station premises, at the reception, posters with Rachakonda Police *QR Code* will be installed and everybody can easily access and subscribe to the respective Rachakonda Commissionerate social media accounts by using this QR code and scanning it on their mobile phones and follow them as well. CP said that Rachakonda Police are adopting modern technology and opined that these social media accounts will help police to reach people more, provide them with better impecable

services and develop direct relations with them. CP said that more publicity will be given to the public about the social media accounts of Rachakonda Commissionerate and suggested everyone to follow them.

"Through these social media platforms, from time to time various awareness programs will be conducted about the consequences of drug abuse, alerting people about cyber crimes, providing disaster management information in heavy rains, floods, fire accidents and other situations," he added. CP also said that the victims can also complain through Rachakonda WhatsApp control number 8712662111 in case of emergency. DCP Yadadri Rajesh Chandra I, DCP LB Nagar Praveen Kumar, DCP SB Karunakar, DCP Crime Arvind Babu, DCP Maheswaram Sunita Reddy, DCP Women Safety Usha Vishwanath, IT Cell ACP Narender Goud, Inspector Lu Sudhakar, Gattu Mallu and others participated in this meeting.



A Budget sans poetry, but filled with political pragmatism



In a Budget speech sans poetry but filled with political pragmatism, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman kept her focus on addressing youth unemployment, while also offering special packages to keep crucial allies — the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) governing Andhra Pradesh, and the Janata Dal (U) in power in Bihar — on her side. Rising unemployment, the lack of avenues to government jobs, and the leakage of question papers for recruitment exams even when vacancies were announced were all issues that weighed heavily on the BJP in the recent Lok Sabha

election. In the Union Budget for this year, therefore, this sector has been addressed via a series of incentive schemes that will, it is hoped, help young, first-time job seekers with finding employment. Internships and incentives An internship scheme to place young people at 500 top companies, with an allowance of ₹5,000 per month to be provided by the government and a one-time assistance of ₹6,000, is expected to help generate employment, as is the payment of a month's wage to those newly entering the workforce in all formal sectors, which will be provided by the govern-

ment in three installments. This will be applicable to those getting salaries up to ₹1 lakh per month. This move is expected to benefit 2.1 crore young people. Incentives, directly paid out to employees and employers in the first four years of employment will be paid out for those entering the manufacturing sector, with those producing additional employment across sectors for jobs within a salary of ₹1 lakh per month to be provided by ₹3000 per month for two years to cover EPFO charges. Skilling of more youth, and education loans of upto ₹10 lakh for higher education in domestic educational institutions, with e-vouchers providing annual 3% interest subvention on these loans, was also announced. 'Copy-paste Budget'

The Opposition was quick to point out that these incentives for internships and first-time employees announced by the Finance Minister were uncannily reminiscent of the Congress party's Lok Sabha manifesto promise of 'Pehli Naukri Pakki', to provide paid internships in top companies. "A copy paste budget," remarked Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. Sops for Andhra, Bihar Key NDA allies, the TDP and the JD(U), however, had no qualms about wholeheartedly welcoming the allocations to Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, the States they govern, in this Budget. The two parties, with 16 and 12 Lok Sabha MPs re-

spectively, are both crucial to the stability of the BJP-led NDA government. For Andhra Pradesh, the goody bag included a financial assistance package of ₹15,000 crore, more funds to complete the Polavaram project, and special packages for backward area development for Rayalseema, Uttaraandhra and Prakasam districts. The Union government has also promised to enforce the guarantees made in the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014, to provide special assistance to nodes in the Visakhapatnam-Chennai industrial corridor, and to develop the industrial centres of Kopparthi and Orvakallu, with a special project for Andhra Pradesh through the Purvodaya scheme. Bihar will get ₹26,000 crore to develop roads and highways, including the Patna-Purnea expressway, the Buxar-Bhagalpur highway, the Bodh Gaya-Rajgir-Vaishali-Darbhanga highway, and a two-lane bridge over the Ganga in Buxar. The Union government will provide funds for building schools and hospitals, and has approved the development of the Vishnupad Temple corridor and the Maha Bodhi temple corridor along the lines of the Kashi Vishwanath corridor. Nalanda and Rajgir will also be developed, Ms. Sitharaman announced, to the thumping of desks by her allies. Both Chief Ministers — N. Chandrababu Naidu of Andhra Pradesh, and Nitish Kumar of Bihar — rained praises on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Is the West Bengal Governor immune from criminal prosecution amid sexual harassment allegations? | Explained

The story so far: The Supreme Court on July 19 has agreed to examine the contours of Article 361 of the Constitution which grants “blanket immunity” to governors from any criminal prosecution. A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud was adjudicating upon a plea moved by a female Raj Bhavan employee who has registered a sexual harassment complaint against West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose. In the meantime, the Kolkata Police has also constituted an eight-member special inquiry team to look into the allegations against the Governor. The team headed by Deputy Commissioner (Central) Indira Mukherjee has sought CCTV footage and summoned a few people working in Raj Bhavan.

However, in a letter to the Raj Bhavan staff, Mr. Bose pointed out that no criminal proceedings can be instituted against a Governor during their term of office. “Since the Governor has been granted constitutional immunity from any criminal proceedings being instituted or continued against him, it logically follows that the police cannot investigate/inquire into the matter in any manner whatsoever. To say that the inquiry/investigation of the police could continue even during the tenure of the Governor though no court can take cognisance of the final report, would be in derogation of the objective and essence of Art. 361 of the Constitution of India,” the statement stipulated. The development has triggered outrage in the State’s political circles, with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee reprimanding the Governor’s alleged actions. “The tears of the woman broke my heart,” Ms. Banerjee said. The ruling party — the Trinamool Congress — has also called the incident “appalling and unthinkable.” Constitutional privilege

Article 361 of the Constitution stipulates that the President, the Governor or the Rajpramukh of any State “shall not be answerable to any court for the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of his office or for any act done or purporting to be done by him in the exercise and performance of those powers and duties.” The provision also envisages two important sub-clauses — (1) No criminal proceedings whatsoever shall be initiated or continued against the President, or the Governor of a State, in any court during the term of his office. (2) No process for the arrest or imprisonment of the President, or the Governor of a State, shall issue from any court during his term of office. Past precedents

In 2009, Andhra Pradesh Governor N D Tiwari resigned on “health grounds” after allegations of his involvement in a sex scandal emerged. Similarly, in 2017, Meghalaya Governor V Shanmuganathan tendered his resignation after sexual harassment allegations were levelled against him. Nearly 100 Raj Bhavan staff had demanded his removal for “seriously compromising” the dignity of the gubernatorial office.



The constitutional immunity granted to governors is, however, not lifelong and is limited only to the Governor’s term in office. In 2017, the Supreme Court revived the charges against BJP leaders L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, and Uma Bharti in the criminal conspiracy case pertaining to the 1992 demolition of the Babri Masjid. It directed the Court of Sessions in Lucknow to frame the additional charge of criminal conspiracy against them. However, the verdict barred the framing of charges against former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh who was then serving as the Governor of Rajasthan. “Mr. Kalyan Singh, being the Governor of Rajasthan, is entitled to immunity under Article 361 of the Constitution as long as he remains Governor of Rajasthan. The Court of Sessions will frame charges and move against him as soon as he ceases to be Governor,” the top Court said. Soon after Mr. Singh’s term ended, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in February 2022 moved the sessions court in Lucknow to summon him to face trial in the case.

In 2016, days after ordering Arunachal Pradesh Governor J.P. Rajkhowa to respond as to why he recommended President’s rule in the sensitive border State, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court recalled the order saying that it made a “mistake” by not realising that Governors have “complete immunity” and are not answerable to Courts for acts done in their official capacity. The notice had been issued on a petition by Rajesh Tacho, chief whip of the Congress Legislature Party, contending that the Governor and the Centre “played [a] fraud on the Constitution” by imposing the President’s rule. ‘Absolute immunity’ against criminal proceedings

In 2015, the Madhya Pradesh High

Court quashed the FIR registered against Madhya Pradesh Governor late Ram Naresh Yadav for his alleged involvement in the Vyapam scam on the ground that he enjoyed ‘absolute immunity’ against criminal prosecution. The Court held that the expression “whatsoever” following the expression “criminal proceedings” in clause (2) of Article 361 would include within its ambit an FIR. Per contra, the State government argued that an FIR is registered by the police officer and, therefore, is not a criminal proceeding instituted before the Court within the meaning of Article 361 (2) of the Constitution. The High Court reasoned that such immunity is granted to insulate “the Head of a State from any possible exposure to malicious publicity of his involvement in any offence instituted during his term of office.” At the same time, it clarified that such immunity will not impair the police’s powers to investigate the offence including the recording of the Governor’s statement. “...the immunity in Article 361 (2) or 361 (3) does not extend to recording of statement of the Head of a State by the police in connection with investigation of a crime, if it is so essential. The police, however, must take all salutary precautions and observe circumspection while recording statement of the petitioner in the course of investigation, so that the majesty of the office of the Governor of the State is not undermined in any manner,” the verdict underscored. Soon after, a Supreme Court Bench headed by former Chief Justice of India (CJI) H.L. Dattu agreed to hear a batch of petitions seeking Mr. Yadav’s removal as well as formulation of guidelines for the removal of Governors if they are found to be involved in corrupt practices while being in office.

The Supreme Court in Rameshwar Prasad v. Union of India (2006), while deliberating upon the legality of the Gover-

nor recommending Presidential rule in Bihar, underscored that the personal immunity guaranteed under Article 361 of the Constitution extends to the exercise and performance of all or any powers and duties by him. It added that such immunity also extends to cases where “allegations of personal mala-fides” have been made against the Governor. However, the Court added an important caveat — such gubernatorial immunity does not imply that the actions of the Governor are beyond the ambit of judicial review. “...Such immunity does not take away power of the Court to examine validity of the action including on the ground of mala fides,” it asserted. The verdict further clarified that a government supporting the actions of the Governor is permitted to defend him before a judicial forum by referring to the material on record or filing an affidavit. However, whether Governors can claim immunity for extra-constitutional gestures was not an issue of concern in the case. Reiterating this, the apex Court in Nabam Rebia and Bamang Felix v. Dy. Speaker (2016) ruled that the discretionary powers of the Governor are amenable to judicial review. West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose on May 5 wrote to Raj Bhavan staff and asked them to ignore any communication from the Kolkata Police in connection with a sexual harassment complaint filed against him by a female Raj Bhavan employee. The move came a day after the Kolkata Police constituted an eight-member special inquiry team to look into the allegations of molestation against the Governor. The team headed by Deputy Commissioner (Central) Indira Mukherjee has sought CCTV footage and summoned a few people working in Raj Bhavan. The development has triggered outrage in the State’s political circles, with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee reprimanding the Governor’s alleged actions. “

A behind-the-scenes view of Kerala's gender-sensitive textbooks

"Fish curry is made by father himself." This statement in the Class V Social Science textbook for the Kerala board syllabus, brought out in June, was just one of the changes made to break down gender norms as part of curriculum reforms initiated by the present Left Democratic Front government. Similar references to gender parity in the textbooks for Classes I, III, V, VII, and IX were celebrated across India as leading the change in the way children are taught in school.

The first chapter of the Class V textbook has a group of friends travelling to their classmate Peeli's village where they are served rice, tapioca, and fish caught by her father. The father's presence in the kitchen was a break from tradition in Kerala's predominantly patriarchal society — a factor that caused an uproar at the subcommittee meet of the Kerala curriculum steering committee in Thiruvananthapuram in December 2023. One participant at the meeting asked: "If the father is doing everything, what is left for the mother to do?" "A revolution is set to begin in the kitchens in Kerala," was another sarcastic jibe. The sentence in question, though, remained unchanged in the final draft of the textbook and is now being studied in schools across the State. "That was seen as a victory, but it is tough to describe what we went through during that time," recalls Anjana V.R. Chandran, academic coordinator of the Class V Social Science textbook development team. Father makes 'unniyappam'

An image shared by V. Sivankutty, the State's Minister for General Education, on social media on school reopening day, June 3, had created a buzz. The illustration, from a Class III Malayalam-medium textbook, shows a man sitting on the floor, grating coconut, while his wife does the cooking. Positioning the kitchen as a main workspace in the house and depicting the man engaged in a domestic chore was all about sending a message to children. At Government Lower Primary School, Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram city, Class III students are studying English. Under discussion is a character named Sasha whose father is pictured in the textbook as not only 'helping' the woman of the family in the kitchen, but also preparing a not-so-easy-to-make sweet called unniyappam, for Sasha to take to school.

As students are quizzed by the teacher about what chores their fathers do around the house, Anjaneyan R.A. shares that his father makes sambar, does the dishes, hangs clothes out to dry, and cleans the house. Other students in the classroom try to make each other heard about fathers who knead the dough for chapattis, steam appam, dress infant siblings, and bathe the dog. Anuroop D., father of Aadya, a classmate of Anjaneyan, says girls and boys are increasingly taught together, without discrimination, and this is reflected in their thinking too. "My daughter expects me to pull my weight in the house, and does not shy away from pointing it out. Things have changed from the time when it was believed a woman belonged in the kitchen." Anuroop feels the school environment has

played a role in this, and the new curriculum will reinforce this. The basis for the new thought in the textbooks is that gender sensitisation will put boys and girls in touch with the other's thoughts and feelings, reducing the possibility of toxic relationships and gender violence. Anuroop also stresses the need for teachers who can spur students to reimagine gender roles. The new textbooks attempt to do just that: to demolish entrenched gender stereotypes and foster an inclusive outlook even among very young children.

In the chapter 'Peeli's Village' over which the brouhaha had erupted, one of Peeli's friends is wheelchair-bound. Another lives in a slum with a single mother, a mill worker. A third is the daughter of a migrant worker couple from Assam, and one has entrepreneur parents. Beena S. Nair, who teaches Social Science to Class V students at Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Malayinkeezhu, on the outskirts of Thiruvananthapuram city, says the response of the students to the lesson and activities such as role play taken up in class has been very positive. Beena attributes this to the fact that they can relate to the characters portrayed in it. Her school has two secondary students who hail from Manipur and Assam. Now that schools in the State are inclusive with differently abled students mainstreamed, "Attitudes are changing. The foremost reaction to the differently abled is not sympathy. Instead, students suggest to teachers how better they can provide academic support to them," says Beena. Inclusivity is also reflected in how the migrant workers' daughter, who feels people keep a distance from her family, gets a warm welcome in the village while her friend, who has been told by his mother to skip food at Peeli's house, goes on to relish it, points out Chandran. A message through drawings

Niketan M., a Class XII Science student at Government Higher Secondary School, Medical College campus, Kozhikode, who drew the illustrations for 'Peeli's Village' is happy that he got an opportunity to become a part of a process intended to bring about a transformation. "Gender sensitivity and inclusivity are yet to be fully realised. There are still boys who think only they can do certain things. My illustrations will send a message that will help students steer clear of such notions as they grow up," he says.

"Seeing a picture of a man cooking or washing clothes will have a greater impact on a student's mind than being just spoken about in class," believes Niketan, whose own perspectives on gender equality and diversity evolved through his passion for cinema, be it those that address gender equality directly such as *The Great Indian Kitchen* or the more recent *Laapata Ladies*. This inclusive approach is evident in the chapter 'Strive Forward' in the new Class IX work-integrated education activity book that features the country's first transman pilot Adam Harry; national hand-wrestling champion Amal Iqbal who has cerebral palsy; and entrepreneur, cancer survivor, and single mother Shalin. "It is good to see Adam Harry written about in



the textbook as one does not read about transmen or intersex people as much as about transwomen," says transgender poet and activist Vijayaraja Mallika, a member of the curriculum steering committee.

Until now, children were not taught about gender diversity in schools, and words like transperson and intersex person have not been regularly spoken about at home either. "When there are marks attached to it, it gets more importance and value," she says. At a time when the education system is highly competitive, it is the State's responsibility to not only ensure that students attain competency but also study in an inclusive system where they can express their identity fully. The new textbooks are the first step in that direction, Mallika says.

Jayaprakash R.K., director of the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), which is spearheading the curriculum revision, says that since the last revision of textbooks in 2013, attitudes to gender have evolved into an acceptance of various gender identities. Court verdicts have reflected this. "In a first, the State's curriculum steering committee has a transgender representative in poet Vijayaraja Mallika." The Class IX Social Science volume 2 textbook that is under print, he says, has an entire chapter on gender justice as defined in the Constitution, related court judgments, gender perceptions, gender roles, and discrimination. This portion can be the springboard for teachers to delve further into gender issues in the classroom, says Jayaprakash.

Praveena Kodoth, Professor at the Centre for Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram, observes that a gender binary is very deeply rooted in textbooks. "In pre-pubescent children, there is very little that differentiates girls and boys in terms of bodily features. They do the same things. So, there is no need to differentiate between genders at that age. You can come up with ways of learning where, irrespective of caste, class, or gender identity, you are capable of similar things. There are differences also as people have different innate abilities," she says. Auditing textbooks for gender bias Work on the gender aspect began with an audit of the textbooks in use for the past decade, says Jayaprakash. As many as 22 textbooks across 13 subjects of Classes I to X were

audited at random. Textbook development teams were found to have little or no women representation. The content adhered to the gender binary of male and female. In language subjects, stories or poems by women were few and far between. A number of instances of gender bias were found in the language used; illustrations reinforced society's gender rules.

The gender audit went beyond textbooks by conducting school visits and looking at oft-overlooked aspects such as school infrastructure, environment, classroom practices, and parent-teacher association (PTA) through the gender lens to detect biases or discrimination, says Chandran a convener of the gender focus group and author of the chapter on gender in the Class IX Social Science textbook. As a host of problems prevalent in schools came to the fore, it became apparent that the vision of the previous Kerala Curriculum Framework (KCF), from 2007, for a gender-sensitive approach in content and practice of curriculum had not been achieved.

Mridul Eapen, former State Planning Board member and chairperson of the gender and education focus group, says a start has been made with the new textbooks, but the school system is a much larger entity: there is infrastructure, school environment, classroom and pedagogical practices, learning material, PTAs and school management committees, interface with home and community, and importantly, teacher education. These too have to be addressed if the school system has to be overhauled to be gender-sensitive. Chandran says public discussions ahead of the preparation of the curriculum framework included classroom and school-level discussions on a host of topics, including gender, in institutions across the State. The gender focus group also studied national and international education policy documents models in gender and education practices. "A careful attempt was made to look at gender beyond the binary, be inclusive of the gender spectrum, and address gender concerns within an intersectional context," says Chandran. Jayaprakash says an orientation was given to textbook writers on preventing gender bias in language, content, and illustrations. "There has been a change from the male-dominated textbook development teams that used to be there earlier.

When a home is 'enemy property'

Faisal Azim Abbasi, 48, is worried for himself and his joint family of eight. He has been getting notices to sign an 11-month license agreement with the Custodian of Enemy Property for India (CEPI), a department under the Ministry of Home Affairs, formed after the Indo-Pak war of 1965 and the two Indo-China wars in 1962 and 1967. Abbasi has known no other home other than the single-storey, 800-square-foot space in Lucknow's Maulviganj. The house, popularly known as Zareef Manzil or Lal Kothi, has been inhabited by his family for four generations.

"My grandfather took the property on rent from the Raja of Mahmudabad in the late 1930s," says Abbasi. They paid ₹16 and 8 annas (50 paise). In 1957, the erstwhile raja moved to Pakistan and took citizenship there.

Abbasi is among hundreds of residents across India who occupy 'Enemy Properties', declared thus after the Enemy Property Act, 1968, came into being. The Act enabled the state to regulate and appropriate real estate belonging to those who had left India and got citizenship of countries it has gone to war with: Pakistan and China. Now, the Union government has begun to e-auction many of the 12,611 properties across the country, out of which 126 belong to Chinese citizens. Uttar Pradesh has the maximum number, at 6,041, followed by West Bengal at 4,354. Lucknow itself has 361 such properties, with 105 occupied, the highest in U.P. and all in disrepair. Shamli district has 482, Sitapur 378, Muzaffarnagar has 274, and Budaun 250, besides the others. These 'enemy properties' could be "any property that belongs to, is held or managed on behalf of an enemy, an enemy subject, or an enemy firm". The word "enemy" signifies any country that has committed an act of aggression or declared war against the Union of India, and "property" is immovable assets and all negotiable instruments such as shares, debentures, and other commerce. Family dynamics

Abbasi's grandfather, Matloob Alam, signed the original lease and the family was told on September 24, 1966, via a letter from the then Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDO), Lucknow, S.S. Nigam that the building they lived in had become 'enemy property', and was owned by the state. "I, SDO Lucknow hereby direct Shri Matloob Alam, the occupant of the property, to pay monthly rent, dues etc. to Tehsildar Lucknow with immediate effect," the letter had said. Thereafter, the rent was paid to the CEPI. The amount was increased to ₹22.28 in 1972 and further increased to ₹312 in April 2013.

However, Abbasi claims that the rent has not been collected by the CEPI since December 2016. "Where will we go from here? If they sell it to us at a reasonable rate, we will take it," he says. He considers ₹50 lakh a reasonable sum to buy the property. Alternatively, he is ready to pay five times what he is paying on rent if the lease is renewed. Over the years, the Enemy Property Act has seen several amendments, with the most significant and recent being The Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2017. It expanded the meaning of the term "enemy subject", and "enemy firm" to include the legal heir and successor of an 'enemy', whether a citizen of India or a citizen of a country which is

not an enemy; and the succeeding firm of an 'enemy firm', irrespective of the nationality of its members. The Act also made it clear that once a property is declared 'enemy property', it remains so. The amendment nullified a Supreme Court judgment which ruled in favour of Mohammed Amir Mohammad Khan, son of the erstwhile Raja of Mahmudabad.

Though the erstwhile Raja of Mahmudabad took Pakistani citizenship, Amir stayed behind as an Indian citizen, and asserted claims over various properties that were originally in his family's name. After a prolonged legal struggle of over three decades, the Supreme Court ruled in his favour in 2005, declaring him the rightful owner, even though they have been declared 'enemy properties'. Amir was a two-time MLA in the Uttar Pradesh State Assembly in the 1980s from the Congress party and died in October 2023 at the age of 80. The most well-known among these properties is the three-storeyed Butler Palace, built on the banks of the Gomti river in the 1910s. The palace was originally constructed in a mix of Indo-Mughal and Rajasthani styles as the official residence of the commissioner of Avadh, Harcourt Butler, in Lucknow. It has remained empty since the 1960s, and has been branded 'haunted', by the Lucknavis — either by ghosts of the past or addicts of the present. It is now missing its best brass bit and anything of value. Sometime in September-October 2023, the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) began refurbishing it as a tourist attraction after receiving a no-objection certificate from the CEPI. Another prime property is Halwasiya market in Lucknow's Hazratganj, the older part of the city, where real estate prices start at approximately ₹15,000 per square foot, if the buyer is lucky enough to get a place. Sued from many sides like Abbasi, many shopkeepers received notices for a fresh lease and licence agreement for the 'enemy property' they were occupying, but no one has signed one with CEPI until now. The occupants proposed a long-term lease for at least a decade, which was not accepted by CEPI. Ali Khan Mahmudabad, the next in line from the family, is still fighting for various properties in the Supreme Court. He declined to comment on the matter since it is sub judice. Niraj Gupta, who has been his lawyer since 2003, says, "The Supreme Court has maintained the status quo related to our petition challenging the Act and its amendment provisions. The government cannot sell, auction, or create third-party rights on our properties." Ali is an associate professor in a private university and a member of the Samajwadi Party.

Mohammad Haider Rizvi, a Lucknow-based lawyer who is fighting the legal battle of tenants occupying enemy properties, says many of his clients have been living as tenants for 70-80 years. They are all nervous after receiving renewed agreements. "Now, the proposed arrangement is only for 11 months, and it adds that on the expiry of this period or an earlier termination, the licensee shall hand over the property to the licensor, which is CEPI. It is frightening," he says. In 2020, the Union government set up a Group of Ministers led by Home Minister Amit Shah to monitor the disposal of 'enemy properties'. The value of the earlier 9,000 surveyed 'enemy



properties' across the country was estimated to be ₹1 lakh crore. Later, over 3,000 such properties were identified, taking the numbers above 12,000. The guidelines for the disposal of enemy properties stipulate that if the property is valued below ₹1 crore, the custodian must offer the occupant the choice of purchase. If they refuse, the property will be e-auctioned. Those valued at over ₹1 crore but less than ₹100 crore will be disposed of by the CEPI through e-auction or through a rate determined by the Enemy Property Disposal Committee, unless the Central government chooses to retain it.

All auctions take place through the Metal Scrap Trade Corporation Limited, a Central public sector undertaking. In 2023, the Central government earned over ₹3,400 crore from the disposal of movable 'enemy properties', like shares and gold. Halwasiya Market, situated in the older part of Lucknow, Hazratganj.

In U.P., 79 enemy properties identified as agricultural land, each valuing less than ₹1 crore were auctioned across Muzaffarnagar, Sultanpur, and Amroha districts till March 2024. "A person interested in buying these properties can visit the site and talk to the local tehsildar to check documents before going ahead with the e-auction," says Kamlesh Verma, a Home Ministry official who is the supervisor for such properties in Sonbhadra district. Before the process of the disposing of such properties began, the U.P. government, on the directions of the Home Ministry, conducted surveys of the properties to free them of legal hindrances and set their value, so they could be auctioned off. Roughly half of such properties are without any legal hindrance. "Our role was to help in surveying the properties and send notices to encroachers. The rest is done by the CEPI," says Saurav Singh, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Malihabad, Lucknow.

Housewife becomes victim of trading fraud of Rs 24 lakh

Hyderabad: A 29-year-old housewife from the city became a victim of a trading scam and ended up losing over Rs 24 lakh to fraudsters.

The woman joined a malicious group on WhatsApp with her husband's mobile phone to learn about trading and earning money from the share market. Group members regularly posted messages and information about buying and selling shares. The scammers also provided live trading classes to the victim and her husband, with group members frequently posting about their profits, which increased the victim's and her husband's confidence in them.

According to the police, the fraudsters instructed the victim to go through a simple registration process by sending her a link. She was instructed to send a screenshot after downloading the app, and they would guide her through the registration process.

"After completing the registration, the scammers guided the victim on how to invest in trading. Within a few days, the victim's funds appeared to grow rapidly as the scammers regularly advised her and her husband on buying and selling



The woman joined a malicious group on WhatsApp with her husband's mobile phone to learn about trading and earning money from the share market. Group members regularly posted messages and information about buying and selling shares

shares," police said.

However, when the victim attempted to withdraw money from the trading app, she was unable to do so due to insufficient balance. She contacted the scammers multiple times, explaining that she urgently needed the money.

Realising that she had been a victim of a stock and share market fraud, the victim lodged a complaint against the scammers and requested necessary action to be taken.