

## Gram panchayats struggle to ensure sanitation; Swachadhanam-Pachadhanam becomes a farce

Hyderabad: Even as seasonal diseases are spreading and hospitals are getting crowded with patients, many gram panchayats in the State are struggling to ensure basic sanitation, leave aside executing other works, due to a severe shortage of funds. Since February, after the term of sarpanches expired, the State government had appointed village secretaries for gram panchayats. However, many village secretaries are under extreme pressure to execute even routine works. At many places, spraying of disinfectants and sprinkling of bleaching powder is also turning into a challenge for panchayats, which once used to sweep performance awards at the national level.

In many of the gram panchayats that are struggling due to lack of sufficient revenue generating sources, even the operating of tractors for garbage collection is getting affected as purchasing diesel was also a task, again, due to paucity of funds. The panchayats had their hopes rekindled when the State government announced the Swachadhanam-Pachadhanam programme (the tweaked Congress version of Palle Prakruthi) from August 5 to 9. However, a majority of the gram panchayats did not get any financial assistance for the programme. Save for planting a few saplings and organizing a few events, there was no active involvement of elected public representatives from the ruling party as well. Many MLAs and other representatives participated in the programmes as a formality, while some preferred to skip them as local leaders were demanding funds for the gram panchayats. Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister D Anasuya had announced that the State government allocated sufficient funds for gram panchayats. Chief Secretary A Santhi Kumari had also instructed Collectors to make elaborate arrangements for taking up different works under the Swachadhanam – Pachadhanam programme, which were to include construction of rain harvesting pits and sanitation among others.



On the contrary, village secretaries

said many panchayats were not given funds for these activities. In many villages, village secretaries in association with the health department took up a few works with available resources. "The plight of village secretaries is horrible. Many are being forced to spend their personal money for taking up different works. It is also unclear as to when the government would refund the money spent by them," an office bearer

of the Telangana Panchayat Secretaries Association said, adding that salaries for sanitation staff were pending for many months. The government had said it released Rs.350 crore to gram panchayats, but most of these funds went towards paying salaries of sanitation staff. Given the scarcity of funds, how can village secretaries execute different civic works and ensure sanitation, he asked.

## Farmers complain over delay in urea supplies

Hyderabad: Farmers across different districts have been complaining about difficulties in obtaining sufficient urea, which is crucial for the Vanakalam (Kharif) crops. Paddy transplantation is fast picking up with release of water to the ayacut of the major and medium irrigation projects, barring certain exceptions. Urea fertilizer supports the crop providing the essential macronutrients it needs. It is extensively used in the initial stages of crop season as it improves plant growth and crop yields. Late application of the fertilizer would have a bearing on the output and pest resistance. Despite government assurances of adequate supplies, many farmers are still facing shortages and are forced to buy urea at higher prices from private outlets. This situation has been exacerbated by the increased demand. Extensive sowing of crops like cotton also added to the situation. MARKFED holds 60 percent of urea allotments

The delay is attributed mainly to distribution bottlenecks. As decided by the State government, 60 per cent of every urea rake coming to the State is in turn allotted to the MARKFED. The allotment to the private traders was restricted to 40 per cent officially. They received much less in certain districts. But the private outlets are a popular choice for urea buyers, especially the farmers with small holdings who are in majority. This preference could be due to factors such as better availability, competitive pricing, and more flexible purchasing options and supplies made on credit, when compared to government or cooperative outlets. Cashing in on the situation, some of the traders were selling urea at exorbitant prices too.

The distribution of urea allotted to the MARKFED is routed through the PACS and other government agencies. But it is involved in a cumbersome process resulting



in delays affecting the retail buyers. Farmers have been demanding that the MARKED should ensure the movement

of stocks to its dealers and distribution outlets avoiding delay or ensure timely availability through the PACS by effective moni-

# A nutrition strategy would have averted Olympic agony

The high-stakes case, of the disqualification of Indian woman wrestler Vinesh Phogat from the women's 50kg wrestling final in the Paris Olympics 2024, was a setback for India. She was found to be 100 grams heavier than permissible limits. This incident highlights the role of support staff including the sports nutritionist, doctors, and the team management in the Indian contingent. Why Vinesh Phogat was disqualified

A myopic view indicates a slip, but the situation highlights the need to integrate precision nutrition in sport. Precision nutrition tailors dietary recommendations based on specific individual requirements, characteristics and circumstances. This process focuses on better understanding and meeting an athlete's individual requirements, particularly their individual response to different food/supplement intakes and avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. Precision nutrition involves understanding an individual's metabolism, microbiome, and how their body responds to food and calorie expenditure to determine the best dietary practices for them. It focuses on systems biology and a multi-omics approach (including genomics, proteomics, metabolomics, microbiomes, and epigenetics), integrated with bioinformatics and machine learning to provide evidence-based individualised nutrition recommendations. This data-driven approach allows for adjustments based on an athlete's physiological responses, ensuring they are in peak condition for a competition. The integration with bioinformatics and machine learning will help in the identification of patterns and predict how different nutritional strategies affect an athlete's performance. The gut microflora may be influenced by diet, especially a plant-based diet and regular exercise, resulting in the production of short chain fatty acids which may support athletic performance and post-exercise metabolic recovery.

An effective nutrition recommendation rides on high granularity of an individual's dietary intake and physical activity data. Traditional questionnaire/interview-based methods of collecting such data have drawbacks such as self-reporting, memory bias, high respondent burden, and socially desirable responses. Combining this subjective information with targeted individual continuous monitoring (for example, continuous blood glucose monitoring) can provide more specific and individualised recommendations for athletes that not only address dietary requirements but also check the regulatory requirements of sport. Many wearable sensors track and provide information on physical activity levels, stress, sleep quality, and heart rate monitoring. This incident with Ms. Phogat underscores the importance of continuous and real-time tracking of targeted outcomes for athletes during training sessions, making it easier to achieve and maintain target weight. Glucose monitoring

Continuous glucose monitors (CGM) are commonly used by people with diabe-

tes to monitor interstitial blood glucose responses to food. These devices, implanted in the subcutaneous layer (just under the skin), record blood glucose levels minute by minute. The use of CGMs, under the supervision of a trained nutritionist, can help monitor athletes' blood glucose responses to food. The information collected can be used to individualise recommendations for building muscle, boosting energy, reducing inflammation, and maintaining body weight — important parameters for an athlete. A few players have reportedly improved their sports performance using CGM. Retired Olympic gold medal-winning Australian swimmer Chelsea Hodges, once admitted that CGM helped manage her fuel levels and exhaustion during training sessions. Long-distance runner Eliud Kipchoge of Kenya has been using the CGM since 2021 to build personalised nutrition plans that give him a competitive advantage. The Union Cycliste Internationale (the world governing body of cycling and recognised by the International Olympic Committee) has banned the use of CGM by healthy athletes during competitions. However, these could potentially be used during training sessions to see how players respond to food. This use of technology for personalised nutrition recommendation is still in its early stages and requires further exploration. The need for such personalised approaches becomes more apparent in weight-based sports, where "making weight" is crucial. Athletes in weight-based sports, such as boxing, wrestling, and martial arts, often struggle to stay within their designated weight class. To do so, they resort to extreme measures such as starvation, intentional dehydration, and using saunas or sweat suits to reduce weight quickly before weigh-ins. These drastic measures jeopardise their mental and physical health and adversely impact their performance. Reports indicate that Ms. Phogat spent an entire night trying to shed extra weight. Likewise, another Indian woman wrestler, Antim Panghal, reportedly starved herself for two days to make weight. Such instances would severely impact the capabilities of such sportspersons in such high-level competitions.

A role for sports nutritionists A study found that coaches and fellow players play an influential role in deciding what dietary regimen works best for the athlete during training and competition. Athletes need sports nutritionists trained in precision nutrition to monitor their nutritional requirements, intake, and understand their body composition and metabolism. It would be in everyone's best interest if nutritionists are assigned to different types of sports and become involved with the athletes longer, allowing their recommendations and body responses to be tracked and tested over time. These nutritionists must familiarise themselves with the rules of the sports, weight categories, weigh-in procedures, and methods to reduce weight without compromising an athlete's performance



and annual training cycles. Integrating precision nutrition into sports involves not only individualising dietary plans but also continuously monitoring and adjusting them based on the athlete's changing needs. This approach can help prevent the drastic measures often resorted to by athletes, in turn promoting healthier, and more sustainable practices. In conclusion, the disqualification of Ms. Phogat underscores

that there is a critical gap in the Indian sports support system. Precision nutrition, a data-driven approach to dietary planning, is imperative to prevent such setbacks and optimise athlete performance. By integrating technology and expert nutritionists, India can revolutionise its sports training, ensuring that sportspersons reach their full potential while prioritising their health and their well-being.

## Happy 78th Independence Day



“Senior Congress leaders Sheikh Chand Pasha” Serilingampally August 14 I/Chronical correspondent congratulated the people of Kondapur Division and Sri Ram Nagar Colony on the occasion of 78th Independence Day. On this occasion, he said that many children of Mother India

sacrificed their lives and gave freedom to Mother India.

Every year when Independence Day is celebrated on 15th August every one should remember those sacrifices said senior Congress leader Sheikh Chand Pasha.

## \*CBFC, Regional Office, Hyderabad conducts seminar on Guidelines of Accessibility Standards\*



\*Seminar Sensitizes Stakeholders about Provisions and Mandated Changes as per Accessibility Standards Guidelines\* 14th August 2024 Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) had issued Guidelines of Accessibility Standards in the Public Exhibition of Feature Films in Cinema Theatres for Persons with Hearing and Visual Impairment on 15.03.2024. In this regard, a Seminar was conducted on 14.08.2024 in CBFC Office, Hyderabad with the stakeholders to sensitize them about the provisions of the guidelines along with the changes that are mandated as per the guidelines. The Seminar was attended by, Shri Rajendra Singh, CEO, CBFC along with Smt. Shifali Kumar,

Regional Officer, CBFC, Hyderabad, Shri Rahul Gowlikar, Examining Officer, CBFC, representatives of producers associations and cinema theatres. CEO/CBFC informed about the importance and necessity of implementation of these guidelines. During the seminar, it was informed that as per the guidelines, the applicants for certification of films for commercial theatrical release would arrange the access- service for their films as per the following schedule:

a. All feature films that are to be certified in more than one language would be required to provide at least one accessibility feature each for the hearing impaired and visually impaired, i.e. Closed Captioning (CC) / Open Captioning (OC)



and Audio Description (AD), within 6 months from the effective date of implementation of these guidelines i.e. from 15.09.2024.

b. Feature films submitted for consideration in the National Film Awards and in the Indian Panorama Section of the International Film Festival of India, Goa and other Film Festivals organized by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting shall mandatorily include closed captioning and audio description with effect from 1st January, 2025.

c. All other Feature Films being certified through CBFC including the teasers and trailers and meant for theatrical release

(digital feature films), would be required to mandatorily provide accessibility features for CC/OC & AD, from 15.03.2026. It was also informed that a dedicated committee has been appointed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, with half its members being persons with hearing/visual disabilities and representatives from the film industry to oversee implementation of accessibility standards and provide guidance. This initiative also aligns with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act), which mandates government action to promote universal access and inclusion in information and communication, including access to films.

## Canon India Elevates Filmmaking Excellence with Sudeep Chatterjee as New Cinema EOS Ambassador

Canon India today proudly announced the onboarding of Mr. Sudeep Chatterjee, a luminary in Indian cinematography, as the latest Canon Cinema EOS Ambassador. This significant addition to the Canon Ambassador Program highlights the company's ongoing dedication to nurturing the videography industry by bringing renowned artists into its fold. By consistently expanding its program with industry stalwarts like Mr. Chatterjee, Canon fosters a deep passion for filmmaking, inspiring both seasoned and aspiring filmmakers to explore the limitless possibilities of visual storytelling. Sudeep Chatterjee, celebrated for his dynamic and diverse body of work in Hindi and Bengali films, stands as one of Indian cinema's most influential cinematographers. With a career that commenced at the prestigious Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, and spanning over two decades, he has delivered some of the most visually compelling films in Indian cinema. His portfolio includes grand period dramas like "Gangubai Kathiawadi," "Padmaavat," and "Bajirao Mastani," as well as the fast-paced, handheld cinematography of "Chak De India." His exceptional contributions to the craft have earned him two National Awards, along with numerous other accolades. Mr. Vishesh Magoo, Assistant Director, Imaging Communication Business Centre, Canon India, expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "Over the

years, filmmaking has undergone a remarkable evolution—from the technology used to the visions that come to life on screen. As someone who has been at the forefront of this transformation, Sudeep Chatterjee embodies the spirit of innovation that Canon champions. We are thrilled to have him on board, as his expertise and creativity will undoubtedly amplify the possibilities of our cutting-edge technology. Together, we look forward to creating unparalleled cinematic experiences and inspiring a new generation of visual storytellers." Sharing his excitement about joining the program, Mr. Sudeep Chatterjee remarked, "I am truly honoured to become part of the Canon EOS Ambassador Program, which represents a perfect blend of artistry and innovation. Canon has consistently pushed the boundaries of what is possible in visual storytelling, and I am eager to explore new creative horizons with their technology. This partnership marks an incredible opportunity to share my journey with aspiring filmmakers, helping them leverage Canon's technology to tell powerful, compelling stories."

Sudeep Chatterjee's artistry has been further demonstrated through his nuanced work in films like "Guzaarish" and indie treasures such as "Dor," "Iqbal," and "Chotushkone." His versatility is also evident in the blockbuster action film "Dhoom 3," where he adeptly navigated various styles and genres, solidifying his reputa-

tion as a master of cinematography. "The recently aired web series 'Heeramandi' has been celebrated for its artistic excellence, with notable praise coming from Sudeep, the series' cinematographer. The Canon EOS Ambassador Program unites creative professionals and industry experts who are trailblazers in the photo and video community, both online and offline. These ambassadors serve as trusted voices, offering product validation, consultation, and insight to a wide-ranging audience across diverse genres and demographics. The program is a cornerstone of Canon's commitment to cultivating a vibrant community dedicated to advancing the art and craft of visual storytelling.

About Canon Inc.

Canon Inc. (NYSE: CAJ), headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, is a leader in the fields of professional and consumer imaging equipment, industrial equipment, and information systems. Canon's extensive range of products includes production printers, multifunction office systems, inkjet and laser printers, cameras, video and cinematography equipment, network cameras, medical systems and semiconductor-manufacturing equipment. Originally established in 1937 as Precision Optical Industry, Co., Ltd., a camera manufacturer, Canon has successfully diversified and globalized to become a worldwide industry leader in professional and consumer imaging sys-



tems and solutions. With approximately 180,775 employees worldwide, the Canon Group includes manufacturing and marketing subsidiaries in Japan, the Americas, Europe, Asia and Oceania; and a global R&D network with companies based in the United States, Europe, Asia and Australia. Canon's consolidated net sales for fiscal 2022 (ended December 31, 2022) totalled \$30.31 billion (at an exchange rate of ₹133=U.S. \$1). Visit the Canon Inc. website at: [global.canon](http://global.canon)

# India's First Crossover Utility Vehicle [CUV] – MG Windsor Showcases Unmatched Water Wading Capabilities in Latest Teaser

JSW MG Motor India has released a new teaser of its upcoming vehicle and India's first Crossover Utility Vehicle [CUV] - MG Windsor, showcasing its exceptional water wading competencies. This latest teaser underscores the MG Windsor's engineering excellence and adaptability to Indian road conditions, positioning it as the Intelligent CUV for diverse terrains. The teaser features MG Windsor, confidently navigating through challenging terrains, similar to one during the monsoon season, a common challenge faced by car drivers in India. With a meticulously engineered design, the Windsor effortlessly handles water depths. This capability is made possible by the vehicle's elevated

ground clearance and CUV's stance, ensuring a smooth and secure drive even in the most challenging terrains.

This teaser follows the recent reveal of the segment-first Aero-Lounge seats, which have already set a new standard for comfort and luxury in the segment. The combination of these cutting-edge features will make the MG Windsor a standout choice for Indian consumers seeking a premium driving experience, without compromising on practicality and performance. The Intelligent CUV is inspired by the iconic architectural masterpiece and emblem of royal heritage - Windsor Castle. Similar to the legendary castle, MG Windsor will dem-

onstrate meticulous craftsmanship, a commitment to excellence and royalty. Attention to detail is another hallmark of this largest occupied castle in the world. The MG Windsor mirrors this excellence, ensuring every aspect of the car is precisely crafted to reflect the same level of superiority and luxury that Windsor Castle embodies. As Indian roads continue to evolve, the need for CUVs has become progressively relevant. CUVs offer a perfect blend of aerodynamic design and spacious interiors, making them ideal for navigating bustling urban roads and tighter spaces in smaller towns. Due to their versatility and adaptability, CUVs ensure that families can

travel, whether it's for daily commutes or weekend getaways. Their higher ground clearance allows for better navigation over potholes, speed bumps, and uneven surfaces, providing a smoother and more comfortable drive.

Link – <https://we.tl/t-XVs88Dm8ae>

Website: [www.mgmotor.co.in](http://www.mgmotor.co.in)

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## Holding parallel meetings by Governor is against the spirit of federalism – SAD



Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), August 14: The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) Wednesday said Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria's meeting with administrative secretaries was against the spirit of federalism as enshrined in the constitution and amounted to direct interference in the internal affairs of the State by the union government. It is pertinent to mention that

newly appointed Governor of Punjab, Gulab Chand Kataria Tuesday chaired a meeting of all Administrative Secretaries of the state. As per reports he sought details about the status of various centrally sponsored schemes. Criticising the step of the governor, SAD also advised chief minister Bhagwant Mann to set his house in order to avoid interference in State affairs

by the Centre. In a statement here, senior SAD leader Dr Daljit Singh Cheema said the new trend of Governors holding direct meetings of administrative officers of the State would result in a doubling in command and would be detrimental to the interests of the State. "Such meetings will also affect the Centre-State relations". Asserting categorically that the SAD had always stood for more powers to the States, Dr Cheema said it was unfortunate that in recent years State governments were being subjugated by the centre and not being allowed to plan and implement their own State specific schemes. "This has resulted in friction between the States and the centre in recent years and also resulted in misery for Punjabis with central funds in the health and education sector being withheld by the union government. We have also witnessed Punjab being denied its Rural Development Fund (RDF) dues besides unjust extension of Central control over the State's border areas". Stating that there could not be two parallel governments in the State, one elected by the people of Punjab and another appointed by the union government, Dr Cheema said States should be

allowed to run their own affairs. He said this was all the more important in a border State like Punjab. "The entire responsibility for running the State should be with the elected government", he added. The SAD leader also requested the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government led by Bhagwant Mann to perform its constitutional duties and not give an opportunity to the centre to interfere in State affairs due to its ineptitude. Dr Cheema said non-performance issues like collapse of law and order in the State and the failure of the AAP government to acquire land for express highways raised by the Union Minister Mr Nitin Gadkari, if not addressed by the State government, would give further opportunities to the union government to interfere in its internal affairs. "The chief minister should understand his failings and correct them immediately to ensure increasing interference in State affairs by the centre comes to an end", Cheema added. But the Chief Minister, Bhagwant Mann stated it was just an introductory meeting. Responding to a question, Mann said that it was just an introductory meeting. "Let him meet. He will come to know who works what," he said.

## Rachakonda CP interacted with field level staff to inspect the implementation of visible policing

After assuming charge as the Commissioner of Rachakonda, CP Sri Sudhir Babu IPS is giving high priority to visible policing in the jurisdiction of the Commissionerate and is taking stringent measures to maintain peace and security in a novel way. Officers and staff are being guided by the CP to make police services more accessible to the people and to increase public confidence in the police. As a part of the visible policing, the Commissioner himself visited NTR Nagar area of LB Nagar division today to inspire the staff who are performing duties in the field level. CP advised the staff on duty to talk to the people generously and treat them in a

friendly manner. CP instructed the staff to control the people who cause trouble to the common people. He talked to the local people in many streets and inquired about their problems. He said that the police officers and staff are working with commitment round the clock for the maintenance of law and order in Rachakonda area and in case of any emergency one can complain to the police through dialing 100 and 112 toll free numbers without fear. CP also stated that teams of She teams are on duty in all areas for the protection of women. LB Nagar DCP Praveen Kumar, Maheswaram DCP Sunitha Reddy, DCP SOT Muralidhar, Traffic DCP Srinivas and other officers .



# The problem of landslides in Kerala

Nearly a fortnight after two landslides gouged out the face of the Vellarimala hill in Wayanad's Meppadi panchayat, killing more than 230 people in the foothills, the search continues for the missing, estimated to be more than 130 people. This is a tragedy of epic proportions for Kerala, which has been battered by extreme weather events ever since the great flood of 2018. That year, 341 major landslides were reported in the State. Landslides have become a major hazard every monsoon since then, with Wayanad, Idukki, Malappuram, Kasaragod, and Kozhikode districts marked as, and proving to be, highly susceptible to deadly landslides. About 75 people died in overnight landslides at Kavalappara in Malappuram and Puthumala in Wayanad, situated six kilometres apart across the hills, in 2019. Puthumala is barely a few kilometres down the hill from the Choorimala and Mundakkai wards of Meppadi panchayat, which bore the brunt of the landslides on July 30 this year. As in 2019, the landslides this year were also triggered by extremely heavy rainfall: 527 mm of rain in 48 hours. It is evident now that there was inadequate early warning. But the role of anthropogenic factors in exacerbating the disaster cannot be discounted. Decoding the Wayanad landslide | In Focus podcast

The Kerala government embarked on a mission to rebuild the State in the wake of the 2018 flood. The post-disaster needs assessment report envisioned a climate-resilient Kerala, which was to be built by managing integrated water resources, following an eco sensitive and risk-informed land use and settlement approach, promoting community-based disaster management, and integrating disaster risk reduction plans across sectors with technology and innovation. However, implementation has been tardy. The 'room for river' project for flood management in the plains has not made any headway. Affirmative action to ensure eco sensitive land use remains a chimera, with the government biding time and a vast majority of the people opposed to the idea of resettlement due to a deep distrust of the system. Unregulated constructions continue to be a menace on the fragile hills in Wayanad and Idukki, with an eye on revenue from tourism. The India Meteorological Department and the Geological Survey of India have delayed upscaling their technical capabilities to give accurate, actionable, and timely early warnings. A case in point is the endless wait for the installation of a Doppler weather radar in Kozhikode to bring north Kerala, including Wayanad, under coverage. Such a radar can give 'people-friendly' information such as probable rainfall intensity, wind shear, and the probability of extreme weather such as a cloudburst. But this appears to be a tall order as Wayanad does not even have an adequate number of rain gauges.

But the government has brought local bodies on board the disaster risk reduction matrix. As many as 260 local bodies were handheld by the Kerala Institute of Local Administration in putting together panchayat-level disaster management plans after some laborious fieldwork. Each report contains the whole gamut of information pertaining to that panchayat. For instance, Meppadi, ravaged by the landslides in July, has published a report. To



what extent this has been useful in fighting the disaster needs to be examined. Nevertheless, the plan is sweeping in its coverage of the geomorphological features of the land, the people, the interventions on land, crops, safe routes, etc. It identifies the vulnerable spots and people, such as the differently abled, the bedridden, children, the aged, migrant workers, and those under palliative care.

There are long lists of people to sound warnings and be the first responders in the event of a disaster. Officials say these panchayats have been given downscaled climate projection data and maps. For panchayat officials to make sense of the downscaled climate project data and maps, there is a need to ground truth the same. While the disaster management plan should be frequently updated, experts

point to the need to integrate these individual plans while preparing district disaster management plans. There is now a fairly sound understanding of which areas are prone to disasters. While the government should urge the Central agencies to upgrade their systems in order to be able to provide accurate and timely weather alerts, it should also pay attention to community-driven climate monitoring systems.

## Hints of the corporatisation of science research in India

During the inaugural address of the 107th Science Congress in Bengaluru in January 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reflected on the government's take on how science should be conducted in India. It was conveyed to young researchers in his usual aphoristic manner of speaking: "innovate, patent, produce, prosper". By expressing it in a maxim, the Prime Minister was hinting at the birthing of a new policy on knowledge production under his leadership. Over several years, the current ruling regime has been directing laboratories and other research centres to earn their revenue from external sources by marketing their expertise and investing the surplus to develop technologies for national missions. This policy position can be traced to the 'Dehradun Declaration' prepared by the directors of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research labs in 2015, where it was decided to market patents as a means to self-finance research. In other words, this was a call for the corporatisation of science research — a process of converting any state-owned entity into a market commodity and being able to follow the business model to support itself, rather than relying on public support. Science institutes are now encouraged to develop research centres registered as Section 8 companies,

wherein private companies or shareholders can invest money. This line of thinking can be seen in the formulation of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF). Established under the ANRF Act of 2023, this new mechanism is designed to fund research in the country and to improve linkages between research and development, academia and industry. The Finance Minister echoed the same in her July 23, 2024 Budget speech: "We will operationalise the ANRF for basic research and prototype development." The "prototype development" is a significant part of the innovation cycle to assess the marketability of a product — yet another hint of the government's overriding interest in funding the research that will cater to the market. Another giveaway is the way funding proportion is designed. The ANRF will receive ₹50,000 crore over five years, 72% of which is expected to be from the private sector. Judging from the way the resources are currently scheduled for the ANRF, it is clear that the government intends to reduce its role in funding the research and expects private entrepreneurship to pitch in a big way. Even in the United States, where research and development has significantly outstripped government funding over the

last decade, it is clustered mostly in IT and pharmaceuticals. The knowledge thus generated through research is considered a commodity to be marketed. The entrenchment of market-oriented perspectives comes from two sources, as discussed by Prabir Purkayastha in his book, *Knowledge as Commons*. What makes science different from the Renaissance period and after that is that science and technology are now more closely integrated than ever, and scientific advances can now end up as marketable products more rapidly. This transformation has also led to intellectual property rights allowing universities to sell the patents to private corporations, even if the research is publicly funded. The adoption of neoliberal economic policies across the globe has also accelerated the greater involvement of the private sector in funding science. The understated objective of the ANRF is to fund research in natural sciences, but in reality, there are sufficient hints that the government is planning to place the university research system subservient to what Ellen Meiksins Wood calls "the dictates of the capitalist market". The curiosity-driven research in natural sciences involves understanding and predicting natural phenomena based on empirical evidence and experimentation.

# In Tamil Nadu, data on quota is a Pandora's Box

Politics over reservation in education and public employment is nothing new to Tamil Nadu. The State is one of the early movers with regard to the quota, having introduced it over 100 years ago. But, the absence of quantifiable data on community-wise representation under Backward Classes (BC) and Most Backward Classes (MBC)-Denotified Communities (DNC) categories has been a subject matter of debate since the quantum of reservation was hiked to 50% in 1980. In the State, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have 18% and 1% reservations, respectively. The overall 69% quota was, through a 1994 Act, protected under the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution. The question over the data has been addressed partially through the publication of the State Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Minorities Welfare Department's reply to a query under the RTI on the representation of Vanniyars and the rest within the exclusive 20% quota for MBC-DNCs over the last 10-odd years. The query, made in 2023, got a reply on July 31. The timing of the reply was significant, as the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), a chief advocate for the 10.5% separate reservation for the Vanniyars, had been pressing the government to issue an interim report on the issue, in view of reports that the State Backward Classes Commission had sought a one-year extension to make a recommendation on the internal reservation for the Vanniyars within the MBC-DNCs' share. It all began with the previous AIADMK regime, which, on the eve of the announcement of the Assembly election schedule in February 2021, got a reservation law passed by the House and cleared by the then Governor.

Citing "extreme backwardness" of Vanniyars (who, in turn, encompass seven sub-castes — Vanniyar, Vanniya, Vannia Gounder, Gounder or Kander, Padayachi, Palli and Agnikula Kshatriya), the Special Reservation Act of 2021 had assigned 10.5% to this community, apart from 7% for 25 MBCs and 68 DNCs, and 2.5% for the remaining 22 MBCs. The law was first quashed by the Madurai Bench in Madras High Court in November 2021, and the Supreme Court upheld the decision in March 2022. In its judgment, the court saw "no substantial basis" for classifying Vanniyars into one distinct group for internal reservation. Now, only the BC Muslims have been given a 3.5% reservation under the BC quota.

Since then, the PMK and other pro-Vanniyar activists have been demanding the restoration of the 10.5%. On July 24, PMK founder S. Ramadoss demanded an interim report on the work done by the State government and the Backward Classes Commission in 18 months. The RTI query revealed that Vanniyars were well ahead of the rest of the MBCs and DNCs in terms of representation in higher education and public employment. For example, with respect to admission to the MBBS, 5,938 candidates belonging to the MBC-DNCs were selected during 2018-22, both under the



20% exclusive reservation and open competition. Of them, Vanniyars accounted for 3,354. Likewise, of the 893 MBC-DNC candidates who qualified in the examination held by the Teachers Recruitment Board in 2021 for postgraduate assistants in government schools, 533 were from the community. But, PMK president Anbumani Ramadoss dismissed the data as "incorrect" and demanded that the government release a White Paper on the representation of all communities within the MBC-

DNCs in education and jobs since 1989. While the data sought to show that the Vanniyars' share within the 20% quota was above 10.5%, the PMK leader, relying on the data sourced by his party, contended that the share of Vanniyars in directly recruited Group I posts was much lower than 10.5%. The ruling DMK and the PMK differ on one other issue too. During the recently-held Assembly session, on June 26, the House adopted a resolution, proposed by the CM, urging the Centre to conduct a

caste-based Census along with the general Census. However, the PMK argues that the State government itself can hold a socio-economic survey. The episode has underscored the need for making public, at the earliest, the data on the break-up of caste-wise and Group-I-wise representation of all communities in education and employment under the 69% quota scheme and all the government's replies under the RTI Act, just as the Ministry of External Affairs has been doing for years.

## Consult the doctor first, before Googling, says Dr. Sainath, Oncologist of Star Hospitals

Hyderabad: You wake up in the morning to a mild headache, or acidity. Though you might be placid at first, if the symptoms do persist through the day even after your home-medication, you end up Googling your symptoms. However, the Dr. Google online self-diagnosis, more often than not produce alarming results. In reality, the headache might be due to being constantly glued to your screen, while, the indigestion might be the result of giving in to your midnight-cravings.

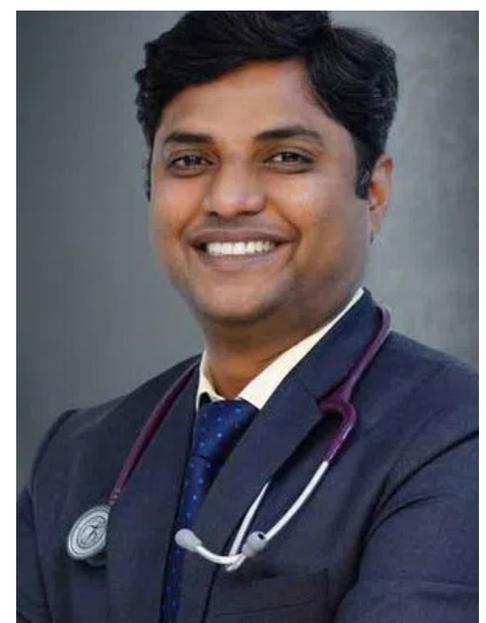
Speaking to Telangana Today, senior consultant and Head-Medical Oncologist at Star Hospitals, Dr. Sainath Bhethanabhotla, said patients tend to search their symptoms, rather than their disease or learning about the root-cause of the problem. "While you might have a cough and you search the same, Google might say you have Asthma. Cough is a symptom for several illnesses, therefore when you are trying to Google your symp-

tom you're trying to diagnose an illness you do not have the skillset for," said Dr. Sainath.

Without an understanding of the illness, patients tend to rely highly upon the search-engine, which does not have a cap. "There is no filtering of data, either by percentages or symptoms online and the results are generalized that leaves the patients anxious," he said.

Besides the symptoms, patients tend to search about the prescribed medicines and their side-effects which lead to confusion, said the doctor. "All prescribed drugs contain side-effects, but those depend upon the dose and duration given to you. Medicines are prescribed when the benefits outweigh the risks," he added.

About the drug repositioning concept, the doctor explains that some medicines can be used for multi-purposes. "Some of the Antipsychotic drugs also have a very good effect on appetite and prevention of vomiting.



# The Left's centrist conundrum

The term 'centrist' has recently emerged to refer to a politics that is neither formally right-wing nor left-wing. Levelled by some self-identifying leftists in debates on social media platforms, the label is intentionally derogatory and scornful. At best, it signifies the morally dubious and cowardly politics of 'liberals' in the face of right-wing assaults on democracy, equality, freedom, truth, justice, and social progress. At worst, centrism is seen as tacitly complicit in these assaults, even as their prime enabler. Therefore, despite opposing the right-wing, these left-leaning individuals often spend more time denouncing centrists, who they view as equal or even greater adversaries. Some individuals who self-identify as neither right- nor left-wing indeed exhibit a morally dubious 'centrism'. To appear objective and nonpartisan, they indulge in an all-sides-pleasing tightrope. Consequently, they make forced and false moral equivalences, give equal weight to illiberal, anti-democratic, and anti-constitutional voices and liberal-democratic and constitutional ones, and display amoral neutrality in situations demanding clear moral-political judgment. Such moral flimsiness cedes ground to illiberal, exclusionary, anti-constitutional ideological-political forces.

A second type of 'centrism' is more sinister, using the name of liberal moderation but readily sacrificing values of democracy, equality, pluralism, justice, truth, and liberty. This colludes with illiberal, inequality-promoting, exclusionary, authoritarian, and anti-constitutional forces.

However, some leftists on social media pejoratively use the term 'centrist' to criticise a third type of politics: one embodied by individuals who grasp the need to avoid extremes to build coalitions, which they recognise are essential to defeat their primary ideological adversary and realise their constitutionally-driven ideological vision. A firm commitment to constitutional morality and political realism leads such individuals to reject ideological purism and sectarianism. Their deliberate renunciation of purity and absolute truth is an adoption of a prudent, sensible path to realise their constitutionally guided ideological vision, to which they remain committed. A commitment to politico-moral ideals makes these 'centrists' reject purism. They know that while idealism is often crucial to inspire all progress, utopian purism has reduced an ideological and political group to a radical but politically irrelevant sect. And that self-defeating sectarianism thwarts the alliance-building necessary to defeat the gravest threats to one's ideological-moral visions.

Moral purity is relatively easy when not seeking power. Choosing not to seek political power is often viewed as a moral virtue, indicating disinterest in corrupting power. However, political realism demands recognising that political power is vital for moral positions to have efficacy. Nothing made this more evident than the helplessness of liberals and the left over the last decade. Their moral outcries against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the building of a Ram temple atop a destroyed mosque, the vilification of Muslims, and other aspects of the unfolding Hindutva revolution, had little effect without power backing them. Power is crucial to enforce moral visions.



And, gaining power requires identifying allies, building coalitions, making limited compromises, and rejecting ideological purism. In the past decade, some leftist individuals criticised the Congress as centrist. Some aspects of the party's history legitimise this criticism. But the Congress has also successfully represented — as Yogendra Yadav once said — a 'centrist coalition of social groups, classes, and regions', which 'accommodates conflicting visions of India without giving into any extreme', and 'stands for a non-majoritarian way of creating electoral majority'. If the Congress's intermittent adoption of a problematic 'centrism' enabled anti-constitutional forces, as some argue, its championing of another, principled centrism paradoxically kept supremacist Hindutva nationalism at bay until the 1980s. The success was demonstrated by Hindu Mahasabha leaders admitting that 'the

entire Hindu population is with Gandhiji and his movement'. The Jana Sangh and the BJP's national vote share of roughly 3%-11% till 1989 similarly highlight the 'centrist' Congress's success at keeping Hindutva ethno-nationalism at bay. The Congress's 19.3% national vote share, even at its lowest nadir in 2014, means it remains the primary political force capable of challenging Hindutva supremacism nationally. Meanwhile, even when the CPI was more politically influential, during 1951-89, its vote share hovered between 2.5% and 9.94%. Since 1999, the CPI has steadily declined, ending with 0.49% of the national vote and two Lok Sabha seats in 2024. The Hindutva ideological project has been actualised via state power. While people's power is highly significant in a democracy, state power is indispensable to ensuring that the polity remains a hu-

mane constitutional democracy and does not turn to inhumane unconstitutional authoritarianism. Given the electoral irrelevance and political inefficacy of the left, I imagine that to halt the Hindutva juggernaut, many left-leaning Indians were compelled to rely on, in the 2024 elections, the same 'centrist' force they frequently castigated. This awkward reliance begs serious questions: will such individuals re-evaluate their ideological purism and their uncharitable judgments of others who are less purist? Might renouncing such self-defeating purism open a path to a less sectarian, and more ally-friendly, nuanced, innovative, and politically effective left-wing progressivism in India? Vanya Vaidehi Bhargav is an intellectual historian of modern India, and the author of the recently published book, *Being Hindu, Being Indian*: Lala Lajpat Rai's Ideas of Nationhood

## Smartwatches can trigger anxiety

New Delhi: Nowadays, in the fitness-obsessed world, it is not an uncommon sight to see people looking repetitively at their smartwatches to meet their desired step target/burn calories etc, without knowing that this can trigger anxiety, experts said on Saturday. Wearable devices, particularly medical-grade ones, have grown in popularity, especially among the younger generation who want to stay informed about their health. And to treat the body like a temple is certainly a noble thing to do, but doing it in extremes proves counter-effective, as Oscar Wilde said, that whenever a man does a thoroughly stupid thing, it often has a noble motive. A recent study published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* on July 16, 2024, found that

patients with irregular heartbeat or atrial fibrillation (AF) used a wearable device (known as "Wearables"). Wearable users reported significantly higher rates of symptom monitoring, preoccupation, and increased treatment concerns. As much as 20 per cent of wearable users experienced anxiety, prompting them to contact their doctors in response to irregular rhythm notifications. These individuals then underwent significantly more ECGs, echocardiograms/transesophageal echocardiograms, and AF ablation (an invasive procedure to burn electrical pathways). Wearable devices like Apple Watch and Fitbit are popular for monitoring health. Still, they can also cause anxiety in users due to the unfiltered informa-

tion they provide, as many lack the knowledge or perspective to interpret it. "Wearable devices, though an attractive option for monitoring our health, however, are also a source of enhanced anxiety in some of the users. The use of medical-grade wearable devices like the Apple Watch and other brands like Fitbit etc have become a rage, especially in the younger generation eager to know it all without realising the side effects of this unfiltered deluge of information. Most individuals don't have the knowledge or right perspective to interpret the data these machines are vomiting out," Vinayak Agrawal, Senior Director and Head, Non-Invasive Cardiology, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, told IANS.

# Cold War nuke tests light up problem with present-day climate models

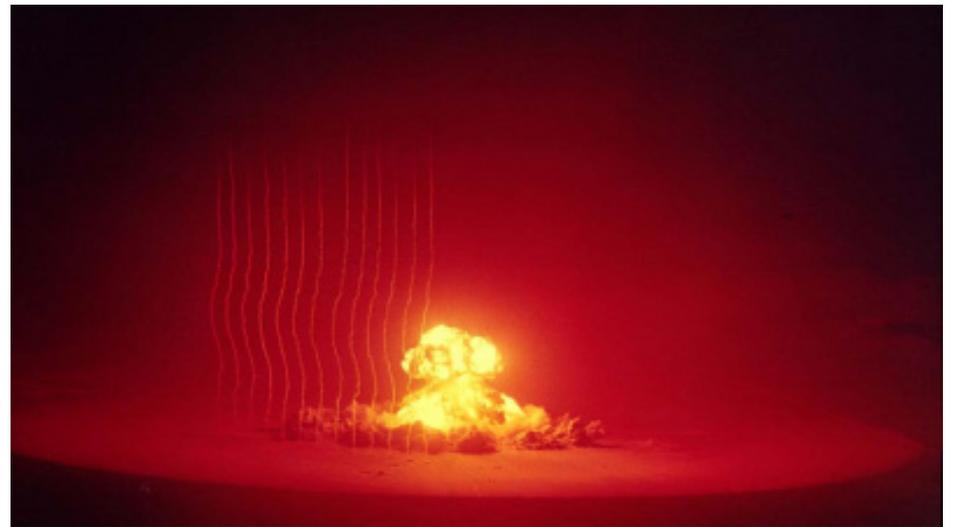
Of late, the carbon cycle has been a focus area in climate mitigation. Plants' ability to lock away carbon produced by burning fossil fuels can offer respite. Both fossil-fuel corporations and governments have subscribed to this idea as they look for ways to offset their still-rising carbon footprints. But a study recently published in the journal *Science* by an international team of researchers suggests plants absorb more CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere than expected and also store it for a shorter duration than expected, before releasing it into their surroundings. To establish their findings, the researchers investigated the remains of nuclear bomb tests the U.S. and the Soviet Union conducted in the 1960s using climate models. The dozens of nuclear bomb tests during the Cold War in the second half of the 20th century maintained an atmosphere of trepidation worldwide and, scientists later found, an opportunity for climate research.

"As terrible as they were, they've been quite useful to scientists," Heather Graven, a climate physicist at Imperial College London and the study's lead author, said. The explosions sprayed radioactive material around the planet, including a lot of it in the atmosphere. One of them was carbon-14, an isotope also called radiocarbon. Its atom's nucleus has two neutrons more than in the nucleus of the more common carbon-12. Radiocarbon is naturally found in minute quantities but the nuclear bomb tests steadily deposited more and more of it in the atmosphere. In 1963, Cold War powers signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT) that prohibited nuclear testing over land, air, and under water. The atmospheric radiocarbon concentration stopped increasing beyond this year. Dr. Graven and her team used models to track the change in this level between 1963 and 1967 and found that it dropped steadily. Often, radiocarbon bonds with oxygen to form CO<sub>2</sub>. Plants, trees, and other vegetation absorb this CO<sub>2</sub> during photosynthesis to produce food and ultimately energy. The researchers found that the models suggested the radiocarbon was moving into vegetation from the atmosphere. 'The whole system is cycling faster'

Plants need food to survive and they make it themselves. They absorb CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere during photosynthesis and use it to make glucose. A plant consumes some of the glucose and some it stores as starch in its leaves. In this process, some carbon is also lost when the plant exhales CO<sub>2</sub> as it respirates. Scientists don't have a direct way to measure the rates at which vegetation loses and gains carbon. But they have been able to use satellite data to estimate how much carbon vegetation around the world hosts. The researchers behind the new study used climate models to estimate the amount of carbon stored in vegetation around the planet in a year. Previous studies had shown this value to be at least 43-76 billion tonnes of carbon per year worldwide. But the study team said it could be around 80 billion tonnes per year, with most of the carbon being stored in leaves and finer roots, i.e. the non-

woody parts of the plant. If the higher value is accurate, plants must also be shedding their carbon sooner than thought. Otherwise, the researchers figured, they would have more carbon than estimated based on satellite data. The findings also shed light on how quickly carbon is exchanged between vegetation and the atmosphere. "The whole system is kind of cycling faster than what we thought before," Dr. Graven said. But Raghuram Murtugudde, a climate scientist at IIT Bombay who wasn't involved in the study, advised caution. "To say what the actual impact on the carbon cycle is would be a challenge," he told *The Hindu*. "Theoretically you want to include all the details [in the models] but there are missing understandings and lack of data and irreducible uncertainties." He said the models simulating carbon stored in vegetation in the study make assumptions that, if tweaked, could change the results significantly. The study's co-author Will Wieder, a climate scientist with the U.S. National Center for Atmospheric Research, said Dr. Murtugudde's statement was "accurate" but also "short-sighted". Radioactive representation In 1995, the World Climate Research Program set up the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP), which prepares climate projections that inform the U.N.'s climate reports. For the CMIP, scientific institutions in several countries pool their individual climate models together to produce better projections. But most of these models haven't been tested with radiocarbon data. It's not difficult to input this data, according to Dr. Graven. "Some of them haven't really bothered to do so." In fact, only one model, the 'Community Earth System Model 2' developed by the U.S. University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, accounted for radiocarbon in its simulations — but it also predicted plants had absorbed much less radiocarbon than Dr. Graven & co. found they should. Climate models have always had uncertainties.

"They are not wrong. They are imperfect," Dr. Murtugudde said. "It's like a car that pulls to one side but it can be driven. So it needs to be looked at by a mechanic to make sure it eventually drives straight." The CMIP models used in the study included some of the latest versions (5 and 6). The short-falls highlighted in the study are more of a stepping stone for future research into climate modelling, according to Dr. Wieder. "This kind of information is critical as we work to improve the models for CMIP 7 and beyond." This said, all these climate scientists agreed radiocarbon needs to be represented better in climate predictions. So far, radiocarbon inclusion has been plagued by "limited resources, both funding and effort, available for model development and observational research," Govindasamy Bala, a climate physicist at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru not involved in the study, told *The Hindu*. "Representation of isotopes, ice sheet dynamics, permafrost, etc. in models is likely to gain momentum in the future," he added. Karthik Vinod is a



freelance science journalist and co-founder of Ed Publica. He has masters'

degrees in astrophysics and science, technology and society.

## China test-flies biggest cargo drone as low-altitude economy takes off

China flew its biggest-yet unmanned cargo aircraft designed for civilian use, as the world's top drone-making nation steps up test flights of autonomous aerial vehicles (UAVs) that could ultimately ferry everything from takeouts to people. Packing a payload capacity of 2 metric tons, the twin-engine aircraft took off on Sunday on an inaugural flight, state media said, citing developer Sichuan Tengden Sci-tech Innovation Co., for a trip of about 20 minutes in southwestern Sichuan province. China's civilian drone makers are testing larger payloads as the government pushes to build a low-altitude economy, with the aviation regulator seeing a 2-trillion-yuan (\$279-billion) industry by 2030, for a four-fold expansion from 2023.

The Tengden-built drone, with a wingspan of 16.1 m (52.8 ft) and a height of 4.6 m (15 ft), is slightly larger than the world's most popular light aircraft, the four-seat Cessna 172. The trial run followed the maiden flight in June of a cargo drone developed by state-owned Aviation Industry Corp of China (AVIC), the leading aerospace enterprise.

The AVIC's HH-100 has a payload capacity of 700 kg (1,543 pounds) and a flight radius of 520 km. Next year, AVIC plans to test its biggest cargo drone, the TP2000, which can carry up to 2 tons of cargo and fly four times farther than the HH-100. China has already begun commercial deliveries by drone. In May, cargo drone firm Phoenix Wings, part of delivery giant SF Express, started delivering fresh fruit from the island province of Hainan to southern Guangdong, using Fengzhou-90 drones developed by SF, a unit of S.F. Holding.

Cargo drones promise shorter deliv-



ery times and lower transport costs, Chinese industry insiders say, while widening deliveries to sites lacking conventional aviation facilities, such as rooftop spaces in heavily built-up cities.

In April, aviation authorities issued a production certificate to UAV maker EHang Holdings, based in the southern city of Guangzhou, for its passenger-carrying drone, China's first such document for an autonomous passenger drone. In a report this year, the government identified the low-altitude economy as a new growth engine for the first time, with vertical mobility seen as a "new productive force" in areas such as passenger and cargo transport. On Saturday, a manned commercial passenger helicopter took off for the first time from Kunshun, a city in Jiangsu province, headed for Shanghai Pudong Airport, about 100 km (62 miles) away, state media said. For one-way fares of up to 1,800 yuan,

Shanghai NewSky Heli Co aims to cut travel time between the cities to 20 minutes from several hours. As many as 30,000 passengers a year are forecast to use the route, which opens on August 18. Shanghai aims to expand low-altitude routes to cover other cities in the Yangtze River delta.