Greenlam Industries launches its exclusive display center for its flagship brands in Hyderabad

Hyderabad:

Greenlam Industries, a global leader in surfacing solutions, has launched an exclusive display center for its flagship brands at SpeluX (A unit of M/s Sree Sai plywood LLP) in Hyderabad. Located at Pan Mandi Road near Aghapura, Gyan Bagh Colony, Goshamahal, Namphally, the showroom prominently features the exquisite collection of Decowood Veneers, alongside Mikasa Floors, NewMika Laminates and MikasaPly. This marks the first store in the city to offer such a diverse range of premium surfacing products under one roof.

Greenlam Industries Limited has been enhancing spaces for years by infusing creativity into every piece of work, transforming them into sheer beauty and brilliance. Renowned in over 120 countries for its surfacing products, Greenlam Industries Limited stands tall with its guiding philosophies of innovative technologies and creative solutions.

Decowood Veneers takes center stage, showcasing its extensive collection of over 200 species of wood veneers across four categories: Natural, The Specials, Engineered, and Teak. Enhanced by innovative technologies like TD technology, Decowood Veneers bring depth and sophistication to grain patterns, while its high-density hardwood and plywood ensure both durability and sustainability.
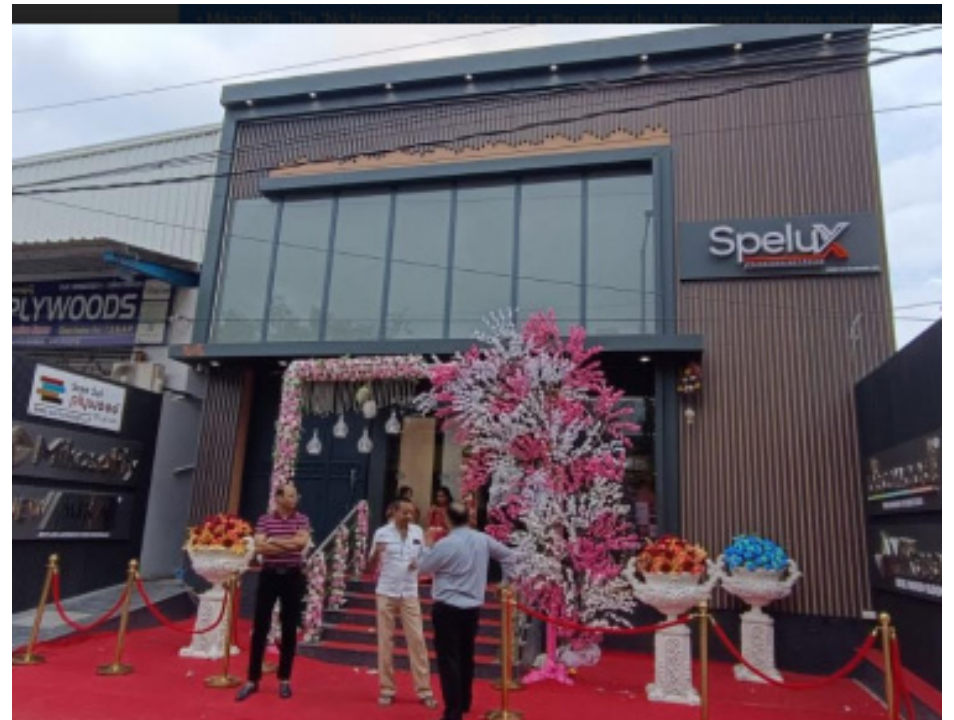
The showroom also features:

• Mikasa Floors: A wide selection of engineered wood flooring, in 15mm and 10mm thicknesses, capturing the authentic beauty of real wood in a variety of species, colors, and textures. Backed by a warranty of up to 30 years, Mikasa also provides staircase solutions and matching accessories.

• NewMika Laminates: An array of decorative laminates with bold colors, eclectic textures, and modern designs. The collection boasts 440 decors with features like anti-bacterial properties, dimensional stability, and resistance to scratches, stains, and heat.

• MikasaPly: The 'No Nonsesne Ply' stands out in the market due to its superior features and quality craftsmanship. The MikasaPly range includes 5 variants, namely: Sapphire – a superior-grade plywood that comes with a lifetime warranty, Marine Blue - crafted from 100% tropical wood, and backed by 30 years of warranty, Marine - boiling waterproof plywood crafted from tropical wood, MR+ - the machine-composed veneer perfectly calibrated plywood bonded with E1-certified resin, and Fire Guardian - treated to withstand fire for a longer duration making it an extremely safe product for sensitive areas with heavy wiring.

The showroom was inaugurated by IIID-HRC Chairperson-Architect Pallavi Anchuri, Anchuri Design World in presence of Sri S. Satish Reddy, Chairperson-Telangana Glass, Laminates & Plywood Association along with architects, interior designers, channel partners, Telangana Plywood Association members, HNI and BNI members.

Commenting on the launch, Ms. Parul Mittal, Director, Greenlam Industries Ltd. said, "We are excited to unveil our exclusive display center in Hyderabad, where we proudly showcase the finest of Greenlam's surfacing products. The showroom features Mikasa Real Wood Floors, Decowood Veneers, NewMika Laminates, and our plywood brand, MikasaPly. As part of our commitment to expanding our retail footprint, this center offers a comprehensive solution for transforming any space, ensuring our customers enjoy a seamless and immersive product selection experience. At Greenlam Industries, we are dedicated to enhancing the aesthetics of spaces, and we are confident that our focus on innovation and customer satisfaction will make this showroom a resounding success."

Mobile science laboratory helps rural students gain practical knowledge

Kothagudem: A mobile science laboratory being operated by the Paloncha-based Nava Limited has been helping rural students to sharpen their science knowledge.

The project was started on January 26, 2011 as part of the company's corporate social responsibility initiative. Its main objective is improving interest levels of children in education and science by imparting practical knowledge in physics, chemistry and biology subjects in Government High Schools and Upper Primary Schools.Explaining why the company embarked on the project, the company vice president, Rear Admiral LV Sarat Babu (veteran) said that most of the government schools do not have science laboratories and where there are laboratories; the science equipment is insufficient and rarely used. As a result the students do not get an opportunity to see the demonstrations of science experiments and hardly gain hands-on experience. This prevents children from understanding the subjects in depth and might lead to disinterest in science subjects.

The mobile science laboratory also aims to improve the standards of education in the rural schools where economically backward students are studying. There are mini vans modified to accommodate the laboratory equipment and each van visits one school twice a month, he informed.Students of sixth to tenth classes are first given a theory class using a computer and LCD projector, followed by the practical session for about 40 minutes. Each lab caters to the needs of 10 schools in a month, enriching their knowledge according to the government curriculum.

What is the Google 'monopoly' antitrust case and how does it affect consumers?

The story so far: Google lost a major antitrust case brought against it by the U.S. Department of Justice that sought to establish that the tech giant had a monopoly in the web search and advertising sectors. The 10-week-long case that took place last year saw high-profile tech leaders like Google CEO Sundar Pichai and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella debating the dominance of the Google search engine and arguing whether this was due to the company's merits or its unfair practices. In the end, U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta ruled, per a court record dated August 5, 2024, that Google was a monopolist.

What happened to Google in the antitrust case?

According to the ruling, Google's search dominance was majorly achieved through a strategy of exclusive distribution agreements, or default distribution. This refers to the way Google entered into lucrative contracts with "browser developers, mobile device manufacturers, and wireless carriers" so that it was the first or default search engine that users of such services or new phones were given. Google pays for this privilege and has shelled out more than $26 billion for it in 2021, per the court."After having carefully considered and weighed the witness testimony and evidence, the court reaches the following conclusion: Google is a monopolist, and it has acted as one to maintain its monopoly. It has violated Section 2 of the Sherman Act," the ruling noted, referencing a U.S. law that views business monopoly or attempts at monopolising as an offence.Per the court, Google used its monopoly power in two markets: general search services and general search text ads."Importantly, the court also finds that Google has exercised its monopoly power by charging supra-competitive prices for general search text ads. That conduct has allowed Google to earn monopoly profits," reported the filing.Furthermore, the court harshly criticised the way Google failed to preserve employee correspondence that could have served as evidence.However, some of the court's conclusions were in favour of the tech giant. It was determined that Google did not have monopoly power in the search advertising market. The court also noted there was no product market for general search advertising and that Google was not liable for actions involving its advertising platform.The court ruled that Google had monopoly power in two product marketsIn addition to this, Google will not be sanctioned for the way it failed to preserve employee chat messages, though the court warned it might not be so "lucky" in a future case.Interestingly, the judge observed that Google had brought out the "industry's highest quality search engine, which has earned Google the trust of hundreds of millions of daily users."

How do monopolistic practices harm the consumer experience?

Regulators around the world monitor how businesses use technology in their countries, to prevent the concentration of power in the hands of a few entities. This ensures healthy competition in the market segment, so that all participants are striving to do better for their customers.When a monopoly comes into existence, however, rivals may be forced out of the market while the company with the most power is able to abuse customers because they have very few other options. Such companies also lose the incentive to keep improving the quality of their product.The court ruling in the Google case even pointed to this as a risk factor."Google's indifference is unsurprising. In 2020, Google conducted a quality degradation study, which showed that it would not lose search revenue if it were to significantly reduce the quality of its search product," observed the filing, adding, "The fact that Google makes product changes without concern that its users might go elsewhere is something only a firm with monopoly power could do."

What did the U.S. Department of Justice say?

The U.S. DOJ hailed the ruling as a public victory for internet users in the U.S."This victory against Google is an historic win for the American people," said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland in a statement on the DOJ website. "No company — no matter how large or influential — is above the law. The Justice Department will continue to vigorously enforce our antitrust laws."Google is far from the only company in the regulator's line of vision, as the U.S. DOJ is also reportedly teaming up with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to act against other large tech players on antitrust grounds, including Microsoft, OpenAI, and Nvidia, per "This decision recognizes that Google offers the best search engine, but concludes that we shouldn't be allowed to make it easily available," Google's president of global affairs, Kent Walker, was quoted as saying by AP.Judge Mehta did not announce any fines for Google to pay; deciding the appropriate actions to tackle Google's dominance will take place in another set of proceedings slated to begin next month, per the news outlet.Apart from this, the U.S. DOJ and Google are set to go against each other in another antitrust trial that deals with the internet company's ad technology.

Development of the BK Enclave Colony

.""G. Narender Reddy is the president of the association ""Miyapur division BK Enclave Colony Welfare Association President G. Narender Reddy said that with the help of Corporator Uppalapathi Srikanth and MLA Arikepudi Gandhi, they are leading BK Enclave Colony on the path of development while supporting the development of BK Enclave Colony under Miyapur Division. In this context, he said."In this context, he said that he is working to make roads, drainage and infrastructure available to the people of the colony, and suggested that the residents of the colony should keep in mind the rainy season and take proper precautions to prevent dengue, malaria and fever.

Versuni India Partners with Drape Artist Dolly Jain: Elevating the Art of Indian Drapes

Versuni India, a leader in the domestic appliances industry and home to legacy brands Philips Domestic Appliances and Preethi, today announced its partnership with renowned saree draping artist Dolly Jain. Through this strategic partnership, Philips aims to become the official partner for Indian drapes, celebrating the timeless elegance of sarees, diverse in styles yet unified in cultural significance. Philips, a challenger brand in the garment care industry, has been at the forefront of innovation with cutting-edge technology and design, ensuring wrinkle-free clothes with just a few swipes for over a decade. Through this strategic alliance Philips and Dolly combine forces to revolutionize the care of sarees, one of India's most cherished traditional garments.Dolly Jain, known for her artistry in draping sarees, in partnership with Philips will provide consumers with expert advice on perfecting their saree drapes. This partnership is dedicated to helping saree enthusiasts and loyalists take better care of their cherished garments, ensuring they look impeccable on every occasion.

Commenting on the partnership, Pooja Baid, Chief Marketing Officer of Versuni India, said, "Sarees are a symbol of India's rich cultural heritage and craftsmanship. For millions across the country, while sarees might be everyday attire, they are still considered prized possessions. Our endeavor as a brand has always been to empower consumers with best-in-class technology that makes everyday life convenient and comfortable, whether it be in cooking, cleaning, fashion, or overall healthy living. Staying true to our focus on constant innovation for the consumer, we understand the importance of identifying their needs and addressing their pain points. Our collaboration with drape artist Dolly Jain reflects that commitment, it underscores our dedication to preserving the tradition of sarees and ensuring each drape is wrinkle-free."

Further Dolly Jain India's beloved draping artist added, "A saree is a magical six-yard fabric that is not just an attire but a celebration of tradition and culture. Partnering with Philips allows me to share my passion for saree draping while also introducing the best tools to care for these beautiful garments. The Philips handheld garment steamer STH7020 is a game-changer for anyone who values the art of saree draping."

As part of this long-term partnership, Dolly Jain and Philips will create a series of engaging and informative videos featuring the brand's highly acclaimed STH 7020 garment steamer. This collaboration will highlight the unparalleled efficiency and user-friendly design of these steamers, making them an essential tool in modern fabric care. By combining Dolly Jain's draping expertise with Philips' innovative technology, this series will provide valuable insights and practical tips, empowering consumers to perfect their draping techniques and ensure their prized possessions remain wrinkle-free.

Featuring in Dolly and Philip's debut video is the beloved STH7020 garment steamer, designed to ensure you are always ready to step out in style. This innovative steamer allows users to de-wrinkle and refresh their clothes effortlessly, producing up to 28 g/min of continuous, powerful steam that relaxes fabric fibers and keeps garments looking pristine. Its pointed steam plate tip swiftly removes creases, while the patented OptimalTemp feature guarantees zero burns, making it safe for all fabrics. The STH7020 boasts a unique, adjustable head that allows for steaming at any angle, with a large steam plate for efficient coverage. Powered by 1500W, it heats up in just 30 seconds, providing a quick and convenient solution for last-minute touch-ups. The 100 ml easy-to-remove, and refill tank offers enough capacity to steam a full outfit without interruption. Its ergonomic, lightweight design ensures it fits seamlessly into hand baggage, making it the ideal travel companion.Philips has consistently been at the forefront of innovation in the garment care industry. The

brand has developed a robust range of products that are ergonomically designed and easy to use, helping consumers stay on top of their fashion game. This partnership with Dolly Jain further underscores Philips' commitment to offering superior garment care solutions tailored to the needs of Indian consumers.

India's First Crossover Utility Vehicle [CUV] – MG Windsor Will Feature Segment-First Aero-Lounge Seats

The highly anticipated Crossover Utility Vehicle (CUV) – the MG Windsor will feature segment-first Aero-Lounge seats, which seamlessly blends luxury and comfort.One of the standout features of the MG Windsor is its Aero-Lounge seats with a 135° recline, designed to offer an unmatched aura of luxury and relaxation. The meticulously crafted recline angle ensures that passengers can relax in style, whether on a short city drive or a long-distance journey. Inspired by grandeur of Windsor Castle, the spacious cabin in the intelligent CUV is designed with an emphasis on ergonomics and aesthetics, further enhances the sense of tranquillity and opulence.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 demonstrate 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.

About JSW MG Motor India

SAIC Motor, a global Fortune 500 company with a presence in over 100 countries and JSW Group (India's leading conglomerate with interests across B2B and B2C sectors) formed a joint venture - JSW MG Motor India Pvt. Ltd. in 2023.

The joint venture aims to build a smart and sustainable automotive ecosystem while continuing to stay focused on developing a diverse portfolio of vehicles to give car buyers better access to advanced technologies and futuristic products with attractive value propositions. JSW MG Motor India Pvt. Ltd. is committed to introducing world-class technology, strengthening the manufacturing landscape, best of innovation across its business operations, and generating significant employment opportunities through extensive localisation.

Gulammohammed Sheikh and his brush with genius

Gulammohammed Sheikh grew up in a two-room house in Surendranagar, Gujarat, with four siblings and their loving parents, Tajmohammed Sheikh, who was a commission agent, and homemaker Laduben Sheikh. Their home was in a khadki, a small group of houses built around a shared open space. The back window would be the first frame through which Sheikh would view the world. Even as a schoolboy, he was interested in art and literature. He spent hours after school at a local library. He was introduced to different cultures and traditions by friends and teachers too.

A schoolmate, Shantilal Shah, took him to a Jain temple, where he was riveted by the paintings. His Anglo-Indian teacher, Mr Thornley, introduced him to British watercolour artists. Sheikh read about Sufism in a magazine his father subscribed to. A teacher and poet Labhshankar Rawal encouraged his passion for verse. At 15, while still in school, Sheikh collaborated with Rawal on the launch of a handwritten magazine called Pragati (Progress). It would feature some of the artist's earliest work, including the illustrated advertisements that helped keep the magazine going. As Sheikh made his way to Baroda's MS University, then the Royal College of Art, London, and back again, he linked his lived experience across time and space, and expressed it in poems, prose, prints, sculptures and, of course, his paintings. "We often silo artists as sculptors, installation makers, printmakers, but Gulambhai is beyond it all," says art curator Veerangana Solanki. "In his work, there are stories within stories for the viewer to unravel," adds Dinesh Vazirani, founder of the auction house Saffronart. He occupies the #2 spot on the recently released 2024 Hurun India Art List (London-based Anish Kapoor is at #1). His acrylic-on-canvas Ark: Kashmir (2015) was auctioned in December by Saffronart for ?21 crore. Ark: Kashmir is an example of Sheikh's layering of stories within stories. The work features a vessel inspired by master miniaturist Nainsukh's A Boat Adrift on a River: Illustration to a Folk Legend (1765-75). At one end of Sheikh's ark sits the Sufi mystic Kabir (who appears frequently in the artist's work). At the other end is Sufi saint Shaikh Phul, drawn from a Mughal painting. Around the boat is a livid green sea inspired by Hokusai's Great Wave off Kanagawa. And within the vessel is a bluish expanse of placid water, holding likenesses of an apple tree, a goddess, whirling dervishes, the Shankaracharya temple, a Buddhist shrine and the Islamic Hazratbal shrine, all in Srinagar, together representing the diverse, multi-faith culture of Kashmir. "Sheikh is constantly having a conversation with himself as a writer, poet and historian. All these conversations influence one another and inform his many endeavours. Not many artists can or want to do that," says art critic, curator and historian R Siva Kumar. Admirers typically have to wait years to see his work. "Most artists show every three to five years, but Gulam

usually takes longer. He meticulously plans his shows," says Sonia Ballaney of Delhi's Vadehra Art Gallery, which represents him. Sheikh's latest show, Kaarawaan and Other Stories, held from February to May, was his first in Mumbai in 20 years and his first in Delhi in more than a decade.

Kaarawaan (2019-23). In this recent work, a huge boat, afloat on turbulent waters, is filled with hundreds of people, animals, trees and hills culled from his own paintings or paintings from the past, all travelling together. 'It is a metaphor for life; not just this life, but many lives, many ages,' says Sheikh's friend and fellow artist, Sudhir Patwardhan. (Photo courtesy Vadehra Art Gallery Kaarawaan (2019-23). In this recent work, a huge boat, afloat on turbulent waters, is filled with hundreds of people, animals, trees and hills culled from his own paintings or paintings from the past, all travelling together. 'It is a metaphor for life; not just this life, but many lives, many ages,' says Sheikh's friend and fellow artist, Sudhir Patwardhan. (Photo courtesy Vadehra Art Gallery) While preparing one of its large paintings for display, it turned out an inch would have to be folded inwards to fit the frame. Sheikh wouldn't allow it, Ballaney says, smiling. He had the frame adjusted to fit instead. Why? "Every part of a painting is crucial in a work of art, as every limb is in a body," Sheikh says. "Severing any part of a painting is a violent act." Unlike his paintings, which seek to encompass the complexities of the world, his poetry is personal. "This is one space where Gulam works alone," says friend and fellow writer

Prabodh Parikh. "There is no Gulam Gharana," he adds, referring to Sheikh's artistic practice of engaging junior artists and assistants to paint parts of his works.

As a guru, Sheikh has moulded generations of artists. He taught at Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, from 1960 to 1963; took a break for the fellowship in London; returned to teach in Baroda from 1967 until his retirement from formal teaching, in 1993. He continues to work with young artists and apprentices at his studio in Vadodara. Parikh believes Sheikh's ability to befriend new generations has compensated somewhat for the many losses he has suffered. In a 65-year career, he has seen deep bonds with artists such as Nasreen Mohamedi and Bhupen Khakhar snapped by death. What anchors him, in addition to his art, he says, is his family:

wife Nilima Sheikh, also an artist; and their two children. Things are coming full circle now, in Vadodara, the city that has nurtured him since he moved there as a teen to study art on a scholarship. His next work will be a 15-ft-tall winged brass figure that will stand atop a 50-ft-high pillar, outside the Ark Museum that is currently being built here by industrialist and art connoisseur Atul Dalmia. "Baroda has many public sculptures, most notably by Nagji Patel, my lifelong friend. I hope this work will add to that legacy," says Sheikh. He is also planning to publish a book of essays on art, written in English over the past 50 years. He is working to finalise Hemang Ashwinkumar's English translation of his memoir, Gher Jataan (On the Way Home; 2018), which will be published by Seagull Books later this year.

KNRUHS university announces MBBS counselling under Children of Armed Personal reservation

Hyderabad: Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences (KNRUHS) in a notification on Friday informed that candidates who have registered for reservation under Children of Armed Personal (CAP) to appear for physical verification of their original certificates for admission into MBBS/BDS courses under Competent Authority quota for 2024-25.

The verification centre will be at the Director, Sainik Welfare office, Raj Bhavan road, Somajigida.

Eligible candidates under this category can report for certificate verification from 9 am to 12 noon on August 13 for NEET ranks between 1 to 2,50,000 and for ranks after 2,50,000 till last the last rank on August 14, the notification said.

The debate continues over 'creamy layer' in India's reservation system

The laws or any policy, on the reservation system, have been implemented to address the historical and social inequalities faced by marginalised communities. Even after 75 years of independence, there is a constant dilemma about who should fall in the reserved category as the inclusion of individuals from affluent families within these marginalised groups has time and again raised concerns about the fairness and effectiveness of the system. The Scheduled Caste (SC) designation in India finds its roots in the historical context of untouchability and the treatment of certain groups as "depressed classes." As early as 1916, discussions in the Indian Legislative Council suggested that the "depressed classes" should encompass criminal and wandering tribes, aboriginal tribes, and untouchables. Then, the Government of India Act of 1935 formally recognised these "depressed classes" as "Scheduled Castes," solidifying their connection.

The historical connection between "depressed classes" and "Scheduled Castes" underscores the continued impact of social hierarchies and the persistence of disadvantage faced by these groups, prompting specific constitutional provisions aimed at their protection and upliftment.

The Supreme Court's ruling in the State of Punjab & Ors. v. Davinder Singh & Ors. has shed further light on the complexities surrounding the exclusion of the creamy layer from the reservation system as it examines the constitutionality of sub-classifying SCs for reservations in public services. The reference to a larger bench was made to determine whether the "creamy layer" principle, which excludes the most socially and economically advanced members of a backward class from reservations, applies to SCs. The most significant effect of this judgment is that it overturns the precedent set by E.V. Chinnaiah v. State of A.P. and Ors., where, it was held that the sub-classification within Scheduled Castes was impermissible within the Constitution. The present judgment found this interpretation flawed and while analysing various constitutional provisions, including Articles 14, 15, 16, 341 and 342, it held that sub-classification among SCs is permissible to provide more beneficial treatment to the most disadvantaged groups within the Scheduled Castes category. rticle 341 and Homogenous Classification The connection between Article 341 and the concept of homogenous classification is complex as the crux of the issue lies in whether the categorisation of certain castes as SCs under Article 341 creates a rigidly homogenous class, or whether it allows for the recognition of internal differences and the possibility of sub-classification. Article 341 empowers the President of India to specify, through public notification, the castes, races, or tribes deemed to be SC for the Constitution. This process of specification creates a distinct legal category—the "Scheduled Castes"—entitled to certain benefits and protections. Earlier, in Chinnaiah's judgment, the concept of "deeming fiction" was central to the argument against sub-classification, where it was held that recognising sub-categories

within SC would be tantamount to "tinkering" with the Presidential List, thereby undermining the purpose and authority of Article 341. However, the present judgment rejects this interpretation, finding that Article 341 does not create an absolute, integrated homogenous class for all purposes. Instead, it contends that the "deeming fiction" in Article 341 serves the limited purpose of identifying and distinguishing SCs from other groups for constitutional protection. The judgment emphasizes that while Article 341 creates a specific legal category, it does not erase the historical and social realities of internal differences within this group.

Justice Bela M. Trivedi's dissenting judgement The judgment pronounced by Justice Bela M. Trivedi upheld the precedent set in E.V. Chinnaiah's case and emphasised the potential dangers of permitting states to modify the Presidential list of SCs. She emphasises the importance of judicial discipline and the doctrines of precedent and stare decisis, which discourage overturning settled law without compelling reasons. She asserts that overturning such precedents without robust justification can create uncertainty and weaken the legal system. Trivedi underscores that the Constitution, specifically Article 341, grants the President the sole authority to identify and specify the groups recognised as SCs. Allowing states to further sub-classify these groups, she argues, essentially empowers them to modify the presidential list, thereby exceeding their constitutional authority. Further, she contends that the reliance on the Indra Sawhney case to justify the need for sub-classification within SCs is misplaced. She highlights that the Indra Sawhney judgment, which dealt with reservations for Other Backward Classes, explicitly stated its inapplicability to SC and Scheduled Tribes. Trivedi also raises concerns about potentially misapplying Article 142 of the Constitution. This article grants the Supreme Court the power to deliver complete justice. She argues that while well-intentioned, using Article 142 to allow state-level sub-classification of SCs would, in effect, be condoning the violation of a specific constitutional provision (Article 341) in the pursuit of a broader societal goal. Sub-classification within SCs: Advantages and disadvantages

The judgment permitting sub-classification within SCs, while aiming to address internal disparities, has certain advantages as well as disadvantages. The judgment aims to ensure that the most disadvantaged among SCs receive the benefits of affirmative action, promoting a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities and also acknowledges the existence of a "creamy layer" within SCs who have advanced socio-economically, thus allowing the state to focus its efforts on those who remain marginalised and truly in need. Further, the requirement for empirical data to justify sub-classification ensures that decisions are based on objective criteria rather than arbitrary distinctions, promoting fairness and transparency. On the contrary, instead of moving towards a more equitable and casteless society as envisioned in the Constitution, the decision

might exacerbate caste consciousness and solidify these social classifications. Allowing sub-classification within SCs could open the floodgates to further legal challenges and disputes as the process of defining and justifying the criteria for sub-categorisation could lead to prolonged litigation and create uncertainty for both the government and the communities involved. The concern also arises that the process of sub-classification might be susceptible to political manipulation. It could be exploited by political parties seeking to appease specific communities or consolidate their vote banks, potentially undermining the intended objective of social justice.

Moreover, sub-classification could create a system where certain groups develop a vested interest in maintaining their disadvantaged status to continue benefiting from reservations.

The judgment has highlighted the need to strike a balance between the commitment to equality and the imperatives of compensatory discrimination and to refine and improve the reservation system to better serve the most disadvantaged. At the same time, it also introduces new complexities and potential for intra-community conflicts that need careful management. Sanya Singh is a practising lawyer based out in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal

New AI model has 'medium risk' for political persuasion via text: OpenAI

San Francisco: Sam Altman-run OpenAI has admitted that its new artificial intelligence (AI) model shows "medium risk" when it comes to persuading political opinions via generated text.

The company evaluated the persuasiveness of GPT-4o's text and voice modalities. GPT-4o was launched publicly in May this year. "Based on pre-registered thresholds, the voice modality was classified as low risk, while the text modality marginally crossed into medium risk," the company revealed in a research paper.

For the text modality, the AI company evaluated the persuasiveness of GPT-4o-generated articles and chatbots on participant opinions on select political topics. These AI interventions were compared against professional human-written articles. "The AI interventions were not more persuasive than human-written content in aggregate, but they exceeded the human interventions in three instances out of twelve," said OpenAI. An OpenAI survey found that AI audio clips were 78 per cent of the human audio clips' effect size on opinion shift while AI conversations were 65 per cent of the human conversations' effect size on opinion shift. "When opinions were surveyed again 1 week later, we found the effect size for AI conversations to
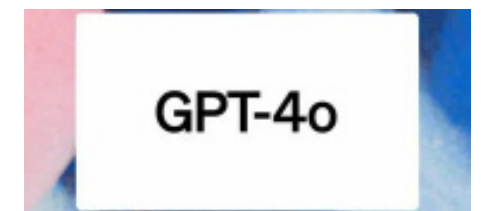
be 0.8 per cent while for AI audio clips, the effect size was -0.72 per cent," it added. The company has thoroughly evaluated new models for potential risks and build in appropriate safeguards before deploying them in ChatGPT or the API. "Building on the safety evaluations and mitigations we developed for GPT-4, and GPT-4V, we've focused additional efforts on GPT-4o's audio capabilities which present novel risks, while also evaluating its text and vision capabilities," said the AI company. Some of the risks evaluated include speaker identification, unauthorised voice generation, the potential generation of copyrighted content, ungrounded inference, and disallowed content. "Based on these evaluations, we've implemented safeguards at both the model and system-levels to mitigate these risks," OpenAI informed. The findings indicated that GPT-4o's voice modality doesn't meaningfully increase "Preparedness risks".

The man who knew too little: Life Hacks by Charles Assisi

Once upon a time, I felt compelled to opine; wouldn't people think me an idiot if I didn't? Over time, I figured out that attempting to offer an opinion on everything actually makes one look like an idiot. There are times when it is simply best to admit ignorance of a kind. A few days ago, I came upon a thread on X that took these thoughts forward. George Mack, an author and influencer of some consequence, posted some statistics to make the case that there is literally too much content out there. At least 500 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every day, 500 million tweets are generated.

"The 24 hours allotted to you each day isn't even capable of consuming 0.0000001% of the world's events," he wrote. When looked at from this perspective, deploying what is called "strategic ignorance" becomes a sign of strength. Because it takes courage to acknowledge one's limits and decide to use one's resources more wisely. As Mack put it (paraphrasing Oscar Wilde): "We are all in the ignorance gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars." Any attempt then to stay "on top of it all" qualifies as "low-agency ignorance", which is a time sink and an exercise in futility. We cannot know everything there is to know. By choosing strategic ignorance, we move into the zone of "high-agency ignorance", taking tough calls on what we need to know, wish to know, and wish to walk away from.

By way of example, I figure that as a business journalist who earns a living from exploring the intersections of technology and public policy, there are boundaries to the subjects I can delve into, the people I can meet, literature I can read, and therefore, the valid and informed opinions I can hold. What do I think will happen in the general election? The honest answer is: I haven't a clue. You may as well ask my neighbour, the nearest petrol-pump attendant, or my local chaiwallah. Mind you, embracing high-agency ignorance does not give one the licence to remain uninformed. Instead, it means that one prioritises depth over breadth, and then chooses the areas into which to delve deeply. This selective engagement is crucial, for instance, if I am to produce content that matters and adds value in my professional role; as well as if I am to have a well-rounded personal life. And this is true for all of us. I think of it as curating a personal museum of knowledge. A half-decent curator will tell you that one does not attempt to fill the given space, or display every artefact available. In much the same way, a journalist need not clutter their mind with every bit of information. And neither should a businessperson, a stockbroker or a homemaker. Practising strategic ignorance makes it easier to navigate the sea of data and information, because one now has focus and purpose. It guards against the mental fatigue that comes from trying to keep up with every trend and hashtag. The activities one substitutes instead — reading, debating, contemplating — are not just more rewarding intellectually, they are more likely to lead to genuine knowledge, perspective and growth. The focused approach helps one combat the tyranny of the urgent, which prioritises the newest information over the most important. In journalism, the pressure to react quickly can often pre-empt the need to respond thoughtfully. When strategic ignorance comes into play, I feel empowered to resist this pressure. Ultimately, the practice of strategic ignorance is about recognising that our cognitive resources (including attention and enthusiasm) are limited, and choosing to invest them wisely. It is about understanding that in the information age, being selectively knowledgeable is more valuable than being indiscriminately informed. It might even eventually allow one to stand out, in a good way. Heaven knows there are enough indiscriminately informed people around to fill any museum.

4 in 10 cancer cases related to obesity: New study

In what shows the growing menace of obesity, a latest study has found the number of cancers related to excess weight multiplying. Being obese can put one at a greater risk of cancer than ever thought. A new research that was done over four decades involving 4.1 million participants, has found out that obesity-related cancers could now be detected in 4 out of 10 people. The study also linked 30 types of cancer to obesity. As against 13 types of the much-dreaded disease linked with obesity earlier, the number has now climbed to 32.

Even as society is prospering as a result of economic growth and new opportunities, diet pattern among a significant number of people worldwide is becoming less healthy thus amplifying the obesity related concerns. Given that massive medical expenses could turn a deep hole in the pockets of people suffering from serious ailments, the problems associated with obesity are threatening to turn into national public health emergency. The way poor diet is taking heavy toll on health, Indian health authorities also recently issued an advisory to cut junk from daily meals and adopt

a healthy lifestyle.

The research conducted by Lund University in Malmo, Sweden, studies the weight and lifestyle of over 4.1 million participants for a period of four decades. Researchers examined 122 types and sub-types of the disease in a study and pinpointed 32 forms of cancer with an obesity link. 13 were already identified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer in 2016 including breast, bowel, womb and kidney cancers.

Is tomorrow here already?: Here's what science-fiction predicted for 2024

Nuclear war hasn't materialised, in our world; unbridled industrial pollution has, but it hasn't ended hope (far from it). Extreme virtual reality is in the making; well-funded efforts are striving to prove we live in a simulation.We aren't yet a world where all recreational drugs are legal; we aren't, at least not this year, a world in which our species is barely holding on.But there are deep truths hidden even in the more outlandish films made over half a century ago. There are a few happy endings too. It is the movies, after all. From Beyond the Time Barrier (1960) to Narcopolis (2015), take a look.

In Beyond the Time Barrier (1960), the year 2024 looks bleak. Competitive nuclear-weapons testing has damaged Earth's atmosphere and let in dangerous cosmic rays. The rays have caused disease, rendering everyone sterile except one telepathic woman named Trirene, granddaughter of the Supreme, leader of the underground city known as the Citadel.Everyone except the Supreme and his second-in-command, the Captain, is also deaf and mute.Into this world crashlands US Air Force pilot William Allison, who was on a sub-orbital test flight in 1960 when he zoomed through a tear in the space-time continuum. (This was nearly a decade before the Moon landing, and some were still clearly a little hazy on what was possible in sub-orbital flight.)

Allison is first imprisoned, then released as a vital resource, with the mission of repopulating the city. He has other plans. First, of course, he falls in love with Trirene. Together, they frame a new mission: to help him return to his own time.There is a grand battle, a grand betrayal, a heart-breaking death and an almost-happy homegoing. Can he alter history enough to change 2024?The (very)-low-budget sci-fi effort was directed by Edgar G Ulmer.

Given today's rising incidence of skin cancer and falling fertility rates, his low-fi effort may have had the cause wrong, but was rather on the money on at least some of the effects. As for the deaf and mute detail, he could have substituted it with blind and got that largely right too.The sci-fi black comedy A Boy and his Dog (1975) follows a teenager and his telepathic canine as they scramble to survive in a post-apocalyptic 2024.Wipe thoughts of Pixar and This is Us from your mind. These are neither do-or-die heroes nor even etched-in-shades-of-grey anti-heroes; they are violent, amoral miscreants. They don't even like each other very much, but depend on each other to survive in their wasteland of a world, populated by military robots gone rogue.Eighteen-year-old Vic (played by a young Don Johnson) cannot tell right from wrong. He steals; kills; attacks and rapes women. The dog, Blood, is supremely intelligent, but suffering the quirks of imperfect genetic engineering.As the plot unfolds, it turns out that one of Vic's victims, a teenage girl, is from an underground settlement that has achieved some degree of stability. They need someone to help add to the gene pool.Vic's dream of sex with multiple women is short-lived; he is to provide his contribution through the excruciating method of electroejaculation (currently used on cattle and certain other animals, mainly endangered ones).Vic eventually escapes, even begins to feel real love. Then he kills his love interest so he and his now-starving dog can eat her.

The movie was based on a wild ride of a novella, written in 1969 by fantasy author Harlan Ellison. We've avoided the nuclear war that was so feared in this time. There are Vics in our world, but they are not unique to our time. One thing the movie got wrong: There are no bad dogs (at most, misunderstood ones).The Highlander film series (there were six movies made between 1986 and 2007) started out strong.Starring Christopher Lambert (as Connor MacLeod) and Sean Connery (as Juan Sánchez-Villalobos Ramírez), the first film told the story of a group of immortals born with an energy called the quickening. It centred on MacLeod, as he discovered he was immortal and prepared to fight another immortal to the death.Then came Highlander II: The Quickening (1991). Set in 2024, it veered off into so many new directions, muddying the waters as it went, that it was called one of the worst movies of all time. To begin with, it announced that the immortals were really aliens expelled from another planet for leading a rebellion against their corrupt leader.It then dove into a plot that was dense and plodding; punctuated by special effects that hinged on explosions, sparks and lightning bolts."If there is a planet somewhere whose civilization is based on the worst movies of all time, Highlander 2: The Quickening deserves a sacred place among their most treasured artifacts," the film critic Roger Ebert wrote, in the Chicago Sun-Times.Look closely, though, and it does offer prescient lessons in corporate greed.In this 2024, the ozone layer has been destroyed by industrial pollution (the film was released six years after the ozone hole was first noticed over Antarctica). An electromagnetic shield invented by MacLeod, but now owned and run at immense profit by the Shield Corporation, has replaced it.The shield blocks out light and retains humidity, so no one's really happy.Then, MacLeod comes upon new research that indicates the ozone layer has repaired itself (as indeed it has been doing, thanks to policies that targeted chlorofluorocarbons decades ago) and the shield may no longer be necessary. Shield Corporation is determined to keep this news from getting out.Highlander II was considered so bad that part three took off from part one, ignoring it completely. But in this cheesy, action-packed, unhinged mess are echoes of where we are today, and how we got here.

The Thirteenth Floor (1999) starts out as a relatively straightforward murder mystery. A tech billionaire named Hannon Fuller is murdered.He had been building a virtual-reality simulation called 1937 Los Angeles, populated by characters who believe they are real people. (This film was released in the same year as The Matrix, so a fairly good year for this subgenre).Fuller's protege and heir, Douglas Hall, also chief scientist on the project, finds a message his mentor left for him in the simulation. Jane Fuller, an estranged daughter, is trying to destroy it.Hall deciphers the cryptic message to learn that his own world is unreal too. It is really 1999 Los Angeles, another simulation, one of thousands.Hall is now determined to find the people running these programs. His first step: to reach the world running his simulation, 2024 Los Angeles. Here, he meets the real Jane Fuller. She wants to tell him all about the universe of simulations, but our screens collapse into black, like an old-school TV set switching off. Make of that what you will.Narcopolis (2015) is a noir time-travel thriller that starts off in the distant future, 2044, before quickly shooting back to a 2024 London in which all narcotic substances have been legalised.The recreational drugs industry is controlled, as one would expect, by big pharma. The black market is still out there, but quickly shrinking. As companies peddle addictives, addicts are everywhere. A murder at the headquarters of Ambro, the world's biggest drug company, leads a policeman and recovering addict named Frank Grieves to a secret new drug they have been testing. It seems to have played a role in multiple mysterious deaths and disappearances.The drug, it turns out, lets humans travel through time, but they only survive at their destination for a few minutes, then die. The company is racing to fix the formula, but Grieves intends to expose them first. Especially after he discovers that the corpse at Ambro is his grown son Ben, come back from the future, murdered as he was about to blow the whistle. Can Grieves save himself, and his son?As it turns out, whistleblowers, in real and fictional 2024, all too often turn up dead.

National-level robotics event held in MLRIT

Hyderabad: A national level robotic event showcasing the cutting-edge advancements and innovations in the field of robotics was organized by Robotic Club, Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering at MLR Institute of Technology.The event showcased the innovation and creativity driving the robotics industry in our country. Participants demonstrated ingenious solutions to real-world problems,

leveraging robotics technology to address challenges in areas such as healthcare, agriculture, disaster response, and environmental conservation.Approximately 100 participants hailing from Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry,

Unravelling secrets of the elusive snow leopard

In uncovering the secrets of the snow leopards, we can take a step closer towards understanding a green-eyed silent cat standing in a remote Himalayan area.They are called guardians of the mountains; now we have a number for them. In a first-of-its-kind effort, India has estimated snow leopard numbers from the Eastern and Western Himalayas. The numbers, gleaned from animal signs and camera trap images, are encouraging – we have around 781 individuals found across four states and two Union Territories. Educated guesses made earlier assumed we have upwards of 400 snow leopards in India.

Snow leopards are mysterious apex predators of high mountain ecosystems. They are large cats with masterful camouflage that blends into the sparse high mountain and trans-Himalayan landscape they belong to. Understanding snow leopard numbers, density, and distribution is thus attempting to fathom the status of the inaccessible places they live in and the wildlife they share these places with. The snow leopard estimation is the result of walking 13,450 square kilometres of trails and 1,80,000 camera trap nights. It was found that there are 477 snow leopards in Ladakh, 124 in Uttarakhand, 51 in Himachal Pradesh and nine in Jammu and Kashmir. It is well known that there are many snow leopards in Ladakh – watching them is an eco-tourism attraction. But it's the eastern Himalayas that throw up a surprise. Both Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim have sizeable numbers of snow leopards: 36 and 21, respectively.The particularly rugged terrain of Arunachal Pradesh posed significant challenges for conducting snow leopard studies. Here, the survey was possible only because of the dedication of local community volunteers, forest department staff and WWF-India's field biologists. Almost 700,000 camera trap pictures were taken between June and December 2021. Difficulties posed by the landscape are also a reason why we have had nationwide estimates of other iconic mammals like tigers and elephants, but not for snow leopards until now.

Establishing baselines of snow leopard population density equips us with the knowledge to monitor and respond to shifts in snow leopard numbers. Crucially, it can also help pinpoint areas where snow leopards face the greatest threats, such as regions with elevated poaching rates or habitat degradation. In many ways, snow leopards present completely different challenges when compared to other big cats. They live in areas that are difficult, almost impossible, to access, lined by cliffs, gorges, avalanches and low oxygen conditions. This area is also struck by the climate crisis, with extreme weather events increasing. As mountain areas warm, the tree line has been observed going up the mountain. Yet, an animal's ability to go up the slope is limited. For instance, snow leopards cannot possibly exist above 5,500 metres – these areas effectively don't have much wildlife or prey animals. Another unique aspect is that nearly 70% of snow

leopards are outside protected areas.

What, then, is the future of the snow leopard? It is clear that the future lies in community stewardship. For this, we need to further understand the social drivers of snow leopard conservation. And while we may not know the full impacts of the climate crisis on the area yet, we do know one thing. Communities need help with climate adaptation and livelihood strategies — and we must work to strengthen their resilience and livelihood options. Unlike the protected area approach we have taken for tigers, snow leopard persistence will need a different conservation paradigm — a bottom-up approach for rangeland management and conservation, which may not necessarily involve protected areas. This underscores the importance of forging strong partnerships with local communities and recognising their vital role as land stewards. We can foster mutual understanding through collaborative efforts, pav-

ing the way for innovative coexistence strategies that benefit humans and wildlife.Ecologically, the next step is to see what is driving snow leopard densities. On the face of it, it seems wild prey availability is the primary determinant, but there is also an interplay of factors, like topography and terrain, which need to be understood. This estimation shows us valuable steps forward.

Now that we have a sense of numbers, we need to better understand and tackle threats. Poorly planned infrastructure and the presence of free-ranging dogs are pervasive threats throughout the snow leopard range. Other threats vary across regions. For instance, in the Eastern Himalayas, snaring and unintentional killings pose the primary threat in Arunachal Pradesh, while poaching of wild ungulates is a concern in Sikkim. In the West Kameng and Tawang districts of Arunachal, retalia-

tory killing is the primary threat — the snow leopards are targeted when they kill livestock. Another aspect is that other wildlife is also responding to warming conditions. In Kargil, for instance, brown bears are emerging mid-hibernation or have shorter hibernation periods. This means that the habitat of the bear and the snow leopard overlap for a longer time. This will create novel interactions, which could also end in conflict.Our imagination has traditionally been captured by tigers in forests, birds in wetlands, and whales in seas. In uncovering some of the secrets of the snow leopards, we can take a step closer towards understanding a green-eyed silent cat standing in a remote Himalayan area. This is our chance to celebrate a mountain species.Neha Sinha and Rishi Sharma are with WWF-India. WWF-India was the partner of state forest departments in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim for snow leopard estimation. The views expressed are personal

Self-empowerment tips for women in leadership roles

Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence and the most effective way to do it is to include women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamic, reshape the conversation, to make sure women's voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored because women are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world. Women in leadership roles face a myriad of challenges, from navigating corporate hierarchies to breaking through glass ceilings yet, there is this whole playbook of self-empowerment strategies

that can propel women towards success.

In an interview with HT Lifestyle, Shradha Thapa, Regional Head – OTT India at Infobip, shared, "Take building networks, for instance. Rather than sticking to one type, it should include both women and men. Mixing it up will bring a new level of support and insights. Women's networks offer a safe space for sharing experiences and seeking mentorship from female leaders on issues such as career management and salary negotiations. Meanwhile, mixed networks offer opportunities for collaboration and learning from diverse perspectives."She added, "Secondly, we

can never underestimate the power of ongoing training. Women can acquire up-to-date leadership skills and connect with executives across various sectors, gaining valuable insights and making new contacts. Peer mentors, both male and female, offer invaluable advice and guidance, particularly when navigating new sectors or positions."According to Shradha Thapa, visualising goals and stepping out of comfort zones are essential practices for women leaders. She advised, "By clearly defining their aspirations and embracing challenges, women can harness their energy and conviction to achieve success.