

Centre plans to set up 19 GW capacity solar, wind energy plants in Telangana

Hyderabad: The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is planning to set up 19 Gigawatt capacity solar and wind energy plants in the State. The State government has reportedly identified locations in eight districts to set up solar and wind energy plants. According to sources, the Energy Department has identified locations in Wanaparthy, Jogulamba-Gadwal and Nagarkurnool districts to set up 3 GW capacity (Each district) solar and wind energy plants. Similarly, locations have been identified to set up plants of 2 GW capacity (Each district) in Adilabad, Kamareddy, Mahabubnagar, Nirmal and Asifabad districts.

Energy officials, informed that the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has sent a proposal to set up solar and wind energy plants in Nizamabad, Rangareddy, and Medak districts. However, the State government informed the ministry that land rates in these districts were very high, hence it would be very difficult to acquire a

large chunk of land for the plants. Following which the centre asked the State to identify locations to set up solar and wind plants. The State government after conducting survey and field level inspections has identified locations in eight districts to set up solar and wind energy plants. Soon the Energy Department would be sending the report to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

Recently, Chennai-based National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) has come up with a report that Telangana has the potential to generate more than 4,200 megawatt of wind power at various locations such as Vikarabad, Narayankhed, Kodangal, Tandur, Zaheerabad and Parigi. In fact, Telangana is one of the eight States in India with significant wind energy potential. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy estimates the State's wind potential at 24.8 GW at 100 metres and 54.7 GW at 150 metres. Telangana's total installed capacity from wind power is 128



MW, including 100 MW from Parigi windmills and 28 MW from windmills on the Hyderabad-Mumbai highway near Zaheerabad.

EducationUSA University Fair 2024 held on August 16



The Hyderabad fair drew a large and diverse group of students seeking information about undergraduate, post-graduate, and doctoral programs in the United States.

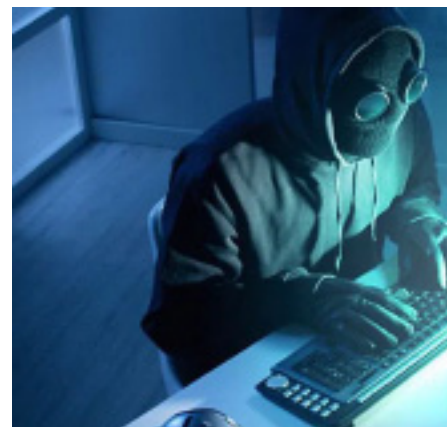
Hyderabad: The US Embassy and Consulates in India launched the 2024 EducationUSA University Fair series here on Friday. The fair, marking the beginning of an eight-city tour across India, connects students with opportunities to study at more than 80 accredited US universities and colleges. The Hyderabad fair drew a large and diverse group of students seeking information about undergraduate, post-

graduate, and doctoral programs in the United States. US Consulate General Hyderabad Public Affairs Officer Alexander McLaren said the US is proud to be the destination of choice for Indian students seeking a world-class education and added, "it is especially appropriate to kick off this annual event in Hyderabad, as so many of the Indian students studying in the United States come from Telangana and

Andhra Pradesh." Attendees at the fair engaged directly with representatives from US institutions, learned about admissions, scholarships, and campus life, and received guidance from EducationUSA advisers and

US Consulate officials on the student visa application process. The annual fair will be held in Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Pune, Mumbai, and conclude in New Delhi on August 25.

Cyber fraudsters dupe senior citizen from Hyderabad to tune of Rs. 10.5 lakh



Hyderabad: Cyber fraudsters duped a 70-year-old man from the city to the tune of Rs 10.50 lakh posing as Telecom De-

partment officials.

According to the cybercrime police, the victim recently received a phone call from the fraudster impersonating as a Telecom Department official and accusing the former of being involved in illegal activities. During a video call, the fraudster claimed the victim was implicated in money laundering and needed to verify currency notes supposedly seized in Mumbai. For this, the complainant was forced to transfer money into a bank account shared by the fraudster, who promised it would be refunded. The victim transferred the money and when tried to get in touch with the fraudster again, there was no response. Realising that he was cheated, he approached the police.

We had a good chance to play in the Paris Olympics semifinals, says Sreeja Akula

She has had a rollercoaster ride over the last month. She is thrilled for having made it to the singles pre-quarterfinals — that too on her birthday — and stretching top seed and the eventual silver medalist before bowing out of the Paris Games. She is equally disappointed at letting go of a chance to make it to the team events semifinals. If the spectacular reception she received upon her arrival to hometown Hyderabad came as a surprise, it was followed by the diagnosis of a stress fracture that has ruled her out for six weeks. Welcome to the world of Sreeja Akula, the paddler who made India proud at her maiden Olympics!

How would you sum up the fortnight in Paris?

It was a very good exposure and experience for me, especially since my singles matches went very well. I had a tough draw, but I gave my best. I played against Cristina (Kallberg) from Sweden in my first round and the second one was against the Singapore girl (Zeng Jian). I had lost to both of them recently, but I am happy that I could play my best and beat them when it mattered. Against the Chinese (top seed Sun Yingsha), I played a great match. I was leading in the first two sets. I was a bit upset that I couldn't convert them, but I think the experience also mattered then and she really played well. The team event loss was a bit disappointing. We had a good chance to play in the semifinals, so not very satisfied with the result. We all gave our best and we just have to come back stronger and learn from our mistakes. "I have to rest for six weeks due to a stress fracture. I will treat this phase as a part of my training. I will try to prepare myself mentally and get back stronger" Sreeja. Playing your first Olympics, that too with the added baggage of being the highest-ranked Indian woman. How did you soak it in? I did not have any such baggage of being the highest-ranked Indian woman or something. I never had that in my mind. I just wanted to give my 100 per cent. Ranking is just a number, I just have to focus on my game and improve each and every day.

It was a different feeling entering the arena. The entire stadium was fully packed and there was so much noise. But once I entered the arena, I didn't have anything in my mind. It was just the opponent, the ball and me on the table. That's it. I was just focusing on that. I thought that I'll play the game I have learned. The cheering motivated me a lot and I enjoyed that. Let's talk about July 31st. You are used to playing on your birthdays, but this time around it started with the joy of making it to the pre-quarterfinals and ended in despair despite stretching the top seed. It was a mixed feeling. I was happy that I could make it to the pre-quarterfinals... I gave my best in the last 16 and I had no regrets. But now feel I could have done something else. I did all that I can and kudos to her (Sun, who saved nine game points in the first two games combined). She played really well when even though she was 5-10 down (in the second game). It was a great learning for me the way she played at that time. She took so many risks, it was a learning experience for me. I was very disappointed af-

ter that match. I just went to the bed crying. But when I look back, I can take those learnings and can now say it was a good day. Sreeja Akula and Archana Girish Kamath of India speak with each other during their match against Yuan Wan and Shan Xiaona of Germany. Sreeja Akula and Archana Girish Kamath of India speak with each other during their match against Yuan Wan and Shan Xiaona of Germany. | Photo Credit: PTI

Did you cut a birthday cake?

Not really. On that day, I couldn't. I didn't find any time but my friend and teammate Archana (Kamath) got a small cupcake for me. I cut it while having dinner. It was very sweet of her to get it for me. There is a lot of chatter about the support staff appointment for the Olympics, with all three of you being allowed to travel with your personal coach. Despite the limited access to training facilities, can you elaborate on the benefits of having your personal coach around? Somnath (Ghosh) sir being around right throughout, and even during the camp, helped me a lot. He was there for every practice session and also in Paris. We reached almost a week before our matches and he was around all along to motivate and guide me. I play with him before every match and I was doing the same in Paris as well. Playing with him gives me that extra boost in confidence and I was able to do the same in Paris. Although he was not there in the match, I was looking at him in the gallery so many times and his presence was a boon. Olympics felt like just another tournament since he was there. That way, it was very helpful for me and I thank the Federation for helping us get accreditation for the personal coach.

What matters more to you personally: making it to the singles pre-quarterfinal or the team event quarterfinal?

Um.... Both are really good. Based on the draw, we could have made it to the team semifinals. We did our best, there's no doubt in that, but we are not that satisfied with our result. Everybody's expectations were more and we can understand that. It would have been nice if we could have entered the semifinals in team. So yeah, that's what I can say.

Can you give us a sense about being a part of the Olympic village?

It was something very different. It had a very different feeling. You get to see so many other athletes. I was lucky to have met (Rafael) Nadal, (Carlos) Alcaraz and Serena Williams. They are some of the best athletes in the world. I got to see them and it was very inspiring to see other athletes. You go to the gym and you see so many athletes working hard. It was a totally different feeling altogether.

Can you tell us the goals you have set for yourself with an eye on LA 28?

For now, I have to rest for six weeks due to a stress fracture. I will treat this phase as a part of my training. I will try to prepare myself mentally and get back stronger. Once I recover, there are two Champions tournaments and then Asian Championship and the China Smash. Besides the international calendar, we also



have the domestic calendar coming up. So, I will strive to improve every day. I'll just try to keep improving my skills, and also physically I need to improve. I learned that I have to get better a lot on my speed and reflexes

and I'll also be working on that. I was ranked 21 at the last world rankings update. My aim will be to keep improving, enter the top 20 and then the top 15 in the world.

CrowdStrike president Michael Sentonas accepts 'Most Epic Fail' award after global Microsoft IT outage



CrowdStrike president Michael Sentonas accepted the 'Most Epic Fail' award at the Pwnie Awards event this year during DEF CON 32 in Las Vegas, after a faulty bug update by his cybersecurity company in July caused a Microsoft outage that brought down airlines, payment systems, hospitals, and other industries across the globe.

The Pwnie Awards is an annual event "celebrating and making fun of the achievements and failures of security researchers and the wider security community," according to their official X account. "This award will honor a person or corporate entity's spectacularly epic fail — the kind of fail that lets the entire infosec industry down in its wake. It can be a singular incident, marketing piece, or investment — or a smoldering trail of whale-scale fail," said part of a notice on Pwnie Awards website. Video clips from the event showed Sentonas sportively accepting the giant award as he acknowledged CrowdStrike's mistakes and promised to do better. The Pwnie Awards also

encouraged users to be compassionate to the company's employees. While it's necessary to hold companies accountable, remember there's real people on the other side of it! Please be kind to the CrowdStrike employees in your life. If there's ever a time for a community to support each other it's in times like these. "We got this horribly wrong," said Sentonas, adding that he would display the trophy in a place where CrowdStrike employees could see it. "...you know, our goal is to protect people, and we got this wrong and I want to make sure that everybody understands these things can't happen and that's what this community is about," Sentonas said to the gathering of technologists as he accepted the award. CrowdStrike's faulty bug update on July 18/19 affected people from Australia to India and the UK to the U.S. Thousands of flights were delayed or cancelled, airports moved to manual boarding processes, digital transactions failed, and sick patients had to deal with postponed treatments.

Balaji Gold & Diamond Jewellers to launch its First Store in Hyderabad on August 19, 2024

Hyderabad based, Balaji Gold & Diamond Jewellers, proudly announces the grand opening of its first store on August 19, 2024, a landmark event in the world of fine Jewellery. The store is located in Road No.4, Film Nagar, Hyderabad., this new boutique redefines luxury with a dazzling collection of lab-grown diamonds and silver gold Jewellery. The pre-launch event set the stage for an opulent preview of Balaji Gold & Diamond Jewellers' latest offerings. The highlight of the event was a stunning fashion show featuring top models adorned in the brand's exquisite gold and diamond pieces. Each model's ensemble was carefully curated to highlight the intricate craftsmanship and timeless beauty of the jewelry. Balaji Gold & Diamond Jewellers introduces a refreshing approach to fine adornments. The store showcases a sophisticated range of lab-grown diamonds, known for their ethical sourcing and exceptional quality. These diamonds offer the brilliance and elegance of natural diamonds while supporting sustainable practices that align with modern values. In addition to its remarkable diamond collection, the store features a stunning assortment of silver gold Jewellery, blending classic elegance with contemporary design. Each piece is crafted to perfection, combining timeless aesthetics with innovative techniques to cater to a diverse clientele.

Speaking to the media, Dr. G Madhusudhan, MD of Balaji Gold & Diamond Jewellers, said "We are thrilled to open our first store on August 19, 2024 and present our unique offerings to the community, "Our commitment to excellence is



reflected in our curated selection of lab-grown diamonds and silver gold Jewellery. We believe that luxury should not only be beautiful but also responsible and accessible."

The grand opening event will be cel-

ebrated with a special in-store experience, offering guests the opportunity to explore the exclusive collection, enjoy personalized consultations, and receive a special gift with their purchase. The store will also feature a live demonstration of the crafts-

manship behind lab-grown diamonds, providing a behind-the-scenes look at the artistry involved in their creation. Balaji Gold & Diamond Jewellers invites all to join on this momentous occasion and discover the perfect piece to celebrate life's special moments.

FTCCI Celebrates 78th Independence Day with Patriotic Fervor

The Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FTCCI) celebrated the 78th Independence Day of India with great enthusiasm and patriotism at its building in Red Hills, Hyderabad.

Mr. Suresh Kumar Singhal, the President of FTCCI, hoisted the Indian flag in the presence of FTCCI members and past presidents. In his address, Mr. Singhal emphasized the sacrifices made by our freedom fighters to attain independence and called upon the members to work hard and unite to make India a developed nation by 2047.

"Today, we celebrate the 78th Independence Day, which reminds us of the immense sacrifices made by our freedom fighters," said Mr. Suresh Kumar Singhal, President of FTCCI. "We must honor their legacy by striving to make India the third-

biggest economy in the world. I urge all the members to work tirelessly, hand in hand, to achieve this goal and take our country to new heights of development."

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Immediate Past President Meela Jayadev, Past Presidents Harish Chandra, Ravindra Modi, Anil Reddy, S Rajeev, Rupesh Agarwal, KK Maheshwari - Vice President of FTCCI, MC Member Subhash Chandra Agarwal, and Dr. Ajai Kumar Agarwal - Public Relations Committee Chairman of FTCCI, along with the FTCCI staff. Established in 1917, FTCCI has been providing unwavering support to trade and industry in the region for over a century.

The organization continues to work towards the betterment of its members and the growth of the industry as a whole.



Youth for Anti-Corruption Calls for Widespread Adoption of Honest Living

Founder Rajendra Palnati Unveils Flag, Emphasizes Importance of Questioning Culture

In a bid to combat corruption and foster a more transparent society, the Youth for Anti-Corruption organization today called for a widespread adoption of honest living. The organization's founder, Rajendra Palnati, unveiled the group's flag during the 78th Independence Day celebrations at their central office in Somajiguda, Hyderabad.

"The dreams of our nation's founders can only be realized if we all commit to living an honest life," said Rajendra Palnati, Founder of Youth for Anti-Corruption. "It is our responsibility to inculcate a spirit of questioning in students, both in villages and colleges, to create a corruption-free society."

In addition to promoting a culture of questioning, the organization has also

taken on the task of identifying and introducing honest officers and leaders to the younger generation. This initiative aims to inspire and empower the youth to become active participants in the fight against corruption.

The Independence Day celebrations were attended by the Youth for Anti-Corruption team, including Dr. Ravi Shankar, Ashok Kumar, Dr. Sravanti, Jayaram, Dr. Snigdha, Geetha, Konne Devender, Varikuppala Gangadhar, Komati Ramesh Babu, Rajesh, Ramesh, Prashanth, and Nagendra. "By fostering a strong sense of integrity and a willingness to question the status quo, we believe we can create a society where the dreams of our nation's founders become a reality," concluded Rajendra Palnati.



Sunita Williams may face risk of potential brain damage due to extended stay in space

NASA is grappling with an unprecedented situation as the return of astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore from the International Space Station (ISS) hangs in the balance. Originally scheduled for a brief mission aboard Boeing's Starliner capsule, technical issues have forced the space agency to consider extending their stay in orbit until early 2025. This unexpected development has raised concerns about the safety and well-being of the crew, and the implications for future space missions.

According to experts, the risks associated with space travel extend far beyond the weightlessness and radiation commonly discussed. A critical, yet often less emphasised, concern is the potential for brain damage caused by oxygen deprivation, said neurologist, and stroke specialist Dr Bhupesh Kumar at Medharbour Multispeciality Hospital. Understanding the Space Environment Space is an unforgiving environment where the absence of atmospheric pressure and the extreme vacuum conditions necessitate careful life support management. Astronauts rely on spacecraft systems to provide a controlled atmosphere, including oxygen levels necessary for human survival. Any failure in these systems can lead to serious health consequences. Dr Shailish Jha, Consultant Psychiatrist, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, explained that the unique environment of space leads to fluid shifts in the body, where fluids redistribute towards the

upper body, potentially increasing intracranial pressure. This condition can result in headaches, visual impairments, and pressure on the brain, which would be a concern for long-term health.

He added that exposure to cosmic radiation in space poses a risk of DNA damage, which can increase the likelihood of developing cancer and other neurological conditions. "NASA closely monitors radiation levels, but the extended duration of Williams' mission raises concerns about cumulative exposure and its potential effects on cognitive functions and overall brain health," he said. Space is an unforgiving environment where the absence of atmospheric pressure and the extreme conditions of vacuum necessitate careful life support management (File Photo)

The Importance of Oxygen Oxygen is vital for brain function. The brain is highly sensitive to changes in oxygen levels, and even short periods of deprivation can have profound effects, explained Dr Kumar. "Even a few minutes of oxygen deprivation can result in the death of brain cells, which is a permanent condition, also proving fatal sometimes," he said. In the context of space travel, astronauts are supplied with oxygen through a life support system that is designed to ensure a constant supply. However, if this system were to fail or if there were an emergency leading to oxygen depletion, the risks would be significant. Hypoxia and Its Effects: Immediate Im-



mediate Im- pact: Hypoxia, or insufficient oxygen reaching the brain, can cause dizziness, confusion, and impaired cognitive function. In severe cases, it can lead to unconsciousness. Long-Term Damage: Prolonged hypoxia can result in irreversible brain damage, Dr Kumar said. The brain's neurons are particularly vulnerable because they require a constant supply of oxygen to function and repair themselves. Chronic hypoxia could lead to cognitive deficits, memory loss, and other neurological impairments. Space-Specific Concerns: Microgravity Complications: The effects of hypoxia in a microgravity environment might differ from those on Earth. The lack

of gravity can affect blood flow and respiration, potentially exacerbating the effects of oxygen deprivation, he said. Radiation Exposure: Space radiation can compound the risks of brain damage. While radiation doesn't directly affect oxygen levels, its presence adds to the overall risk of neurological issues for astronauts. What about emotional blowback? Neurologist Dr Sudhir Kumar talked about how an unplanned stay like Sunita's, which also doesn't seem to be ending anytime soon, can lead to issues like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Astronauts on unplanned extended missions face prolonged isolation from family, friends, and society.

Space holds the key to empowering people with disabilities on Earth, says this Canadian scientist

“Space is a disabling environment,” says Dr Farhan M Asrar, a Canadian physician and researcher of South Asian origin. When we think of space exploration, we normally perceive regular humans or able-bodied people in space suits pirouetting in the void that is our universe. Dr Asrar has been working towards changing this perception. His research throws light on how space exploration can empower persons with disabilities on Earth. This in itself is challenging the long-held belief that space exploration is only meant for able-bodied people, and is opening new doors of inclusivity. “Unfortunately, there’s this preconception we call ableism, where people subconsciously assume that space exploration is tough, the environment is intense, and that only able-bodied individuals can handle it,” Dr Asrar told indianexpress.com. This mindset, he notes, goes beyond space exploration and affects various aspects of our society, including healthcare and employment.

Dr Asrar, who holds faculty appointments at the prestigious University of Toronto, McMaster University and the International Space University, is pioneering this research, essentially an intersection of space medicine and public health. His work gives a unique perspective on how the challenges of space exploration can be a boon and lead to innovations that can benefit people with disabilities on Earth. His interest in this field comes from his passion for equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA). During our conversation, he emphasised the importance of fostering diversity not only in terms of disability, but also among individuals from visible minorities and equity-deserving groups. “We’re trying to encourage more people to enter STEM fields, education, academia, and areas like space,” said Dr Asrar, who has collaborated with a Nasa expert and an expert from the European Space Agency (ESA).

Shifting paradigms Dr Asrar cited the ESA’s Parastronaut programme as a significant milestone in this direction. “This was unheard of, and it was a big step forward. Dr John McFall, a highly accomplished British paralympic sprinter and surgeon, was selected as the first parastronaut,” said Dr Asrar, highlighting this ground-breaking mission. The ESA’s Parastronaut programme created waves when it was announced as it is the first big movement towards making space exploration inclusive. It not only opens up possibilities for differently-abled astronauts, but also holds significant potential for the healthcare system on our home planet. McFall was selected by ESA to become the first ‘astronaut’. McFall, who suffered an amputation of his right leg following a motorcycle accident at the age of 19, has been a staunch advocate of inclusivity. According to Dr Asrar, the ESA’s programme inviting individuals with dis-



abilities to apply to become astronauts, marks a significant shift in the space sector’s approach to inclusion. “It just shows that individuals, even with disability, there’s nothing that you cannot achieve,” he said. This initiative is not just about sending people with disabilities to space; it’s about changing perceptions and inspiring a new generation. “It’s really kind of removing, really, the barriers where people who kind of had that ableism, that pre-notion that, ‘Oh, someone with a disability is not able to do this,’” Dr Asrar noted.

Space as a catalyst for change During the conversation, Dr Asrar asserted that this new shift is extending far beyond space, and holds significant potential to transform healthcare and other industries back on Earth. He pointed out that space technology has already contributed significantly to healthcare innovations on Earth. Some of the common medical devices such as infrared thermometers and portable ultrasound machines, have their origins in space technology. Col Jeremy Hansen with Dr Farhan Asrar Dr Asrar with Canadian astronaut Col Jeremy Hansen (left), who will board the Artemis 2 flight that will circle the Moon in 2025. (Express Image) Dr Asrar firmly believes that the development of specialised equipment for parastronauts will lead to new lightweight and durable prosthetics, and accessibility aids for people with disabilities on Earth. The research done in space on parastronauts would likely yield valuable insights for healthcare professionals treating patients with disabilities on Earth. “By all means, there is a wealth of information that we will be gaining, which, as a physician, I can share with my patients to help them better enhance their nutritional requirements and improve their daily physical activities,” Dr

Asrar explained. Dr Asrar’s work reveals the following ways space exploration can benefit people with disabilities on Earth. **Challenging perceptions**

In recent years, space exploration has been pushing the envelope when it comes to challenging some of the preconceived notions about disabilities. “To go from that extreme to now having a specific program inviting individuals with disabilities to become astronauts is a huge leap,” Dr Asrar notes. This shift in perspective can help combat discrimination and ableism in various fields. Technological innovations Over the years, space exploration has been seen as a provenance of new technologies. “Space has always been known for developing portable, accessible, lightweight, innovative devices,” he said. According to the researcher, these innovations often find applications on Earth, benefiting people with disabilities. He said that, for instance, materials and designs developed for space could be used to create lighter, more durable, and accessible aids for people with disabilities. Adaptive equipment Dr Asrar noted that ESA’s parastronaut program has been exploring how to modify space equipment to suit individuals with disabilities. “They are looking into how space suits, the ISS, sleeping bags, and training manuals need to be adapted for someone with a disability,” he said, adding that these adaptations could lead to improvements in accessibility equipment on Earth. More insights on health and fitness Dr Asrar explained that space research provides some valuable insights on how to maintain one’s health in the most challenging environments. The Canadian physician suggested that the health and fitness routines developed for astronauts could be adapted for individuals with dis-

abilities on Earth, potentially improving the health and performance of para-athletes and others. **Space: A disabling environment** On being asked why his paper termed space as a ‘disabling environment’, Dr Asrar explained, “when we talk about space as a disabling environment, we mean that even the healthiest astronauts are affected by space conditions.” According to him, the microgravity, radiation, intense isolation, and limited nutrition options in space can be incredibly challenging for anyone. He added that this perspective offers a unique way to understand disabilities. “In space, where you’re floating and not walking, the lack of legs might not be a disadvantage—it might even level the playing field,” he said, adding that this concept challenges the notion that people with disabilities are less capable in all environments and emphasises on a context-dependent nature of disabilities. When asked what advice he would give to policymakers and academic institutions in India to advocate space inclusivity, Dr Asrar enumerated the achievements of individuals with disabilities. He went on to cite popular figures like Terry Fox, Helen Keller, or Stephen Hawking, emphasising that individuals with disabilities can achieve far more than people might expect. He said that it was important to give them equal opportunities and encourage their interests. Dr Asrar said that fostering inclusivity isn’t about making life harder for everyone else. “It’s about making simple adjustments that can significantly improve accessibility and inclusivity.” Dr Asrar’s three advices for Indian youth with disabilities: Pursue your dreams and follow your passion. Don’t be afraid to challenge stereotypes and break barriers. Seek resources, technologies and community/networks.

The trial that progressed rapidly towards Independence

Seventy-nine years ago, a sunset accompanied the dawn of Britain's victory in the Second World War. Having cast the shadow of her domination over a quarter of the globe for much of the previous three centuries, Britannia, shattered by the rigours of war, began descending into darkness. The sun was finally setting on the British Empire. Winston Churchill lost the general election of 1945, which swept Clement Attlee and his Labour Party into 10 Downing Street. Plans were soon afoot to facilitate, as King George VI announced, "the early realisation of full self-government in India". Churchill chafed at this, but he and the Tories could do little to prevent it. So insolvent was Britain after Second World War that John Maynard Keynes, the chief architect of Britain's postwar economy, acridly told Attlee that the country, trapped in infrastructural breakdown and soaring national debt, was facing a "financial Dunkirk". Her Treasury having run dry, Britain had no option but to seek aid from the United States — and cut her losses by divesting herself of the Empire.

The process moved rapidly towards Independence — and Partition. In the Indian general elections of 1945-46, the Muslim League, which had expanded and consolidated its support while the Congress leadership was in jail during the war, secured 75% of all Muslim votes — a colossal increase from the less than 5% it had mustered in all previous elections. India's freedom struggle was splintering on the question of whether religion should be the determinant of nationhood. Despairing for the future of their plural and progressive idea of India, the Congress began searching for an issue that could not only reinvigorate the freedom struggle but also rekindle the flame of religious harmony in the hearts of all Indians. Almost on cue, the British, after practising the cynical politics of divide et impera for nearly a century and enabling the demand for Pakistan, unwittingly provided that issue. In a gesture so counter-productive that it could almost have been an act of expiation, the Raj clumsily gave the clashing factions a last chance of unity. Charging the Indian National Army with treason during the war, they placed on trial at the Red Fort three valorous soldiers — a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Sikh — of Subhas Chandra Bose's Azad Hind Fauj/ Indian National Army (INA), thus indicting representatives of 98% of India's population, and uniting all of it. The result was a national outcry that spanned the communal divide. Whatever the errors and misjudgements of the INA men (and Nehru believed freedom could never have come through an alliance with foreigners, let alone foreign fascists), they had not been disloyal to their motherland. Each of the three defendants became a symbol of his community's proud commitment to independence from alien rule. "The punishment given them," thundered Jawaharlal Nehru on August 20, 1945, "would in effect be a punishment on all India and all Indians ... a deep wound would be created in millions of hearts." Delhi's Red Fort had been an enduring symbol of India's quest for freedom ever since the Revolt of 1857. This is



Decades after the Red Fort trial, it is hoped that India's leaders find the wisdom to commit themselves again to what unites us citizens as a people

why the East India Company, upon crushing the resistance, decimated two-thirds of the Fort's spectacular inner structures, displacing them with a hideous cantonment, complete with barracks, office buildings, sheds, and godowns. In a rousing speech delivered in Singapore in July 1943, Bose had spurred his Azad Hind Fauj to march onward, immortalising in the battle cry, "Chalo Dilli!", his aspiration of seeing the Indian tricolour flutter over the Red Fort. But when the heroes of the INA finally reached the Red Fort, it was to face charges of treason, punishable by death.

Protests that spread across India. The historic court martial commenced on November 5, 1945. On trial — charged with waging war against the King-Emperor, murder, and abetment of murder — were Captain Shah Nawaz Khan and Lieutenant Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon of the Punjab Regiment, and Captain P.K. Sahgal of the Baluch Regiment. As the hearing proceeded, throngs of Indians encircled the walls of the Red Fort, demanding justice for the lionhearts and roaring on and on: "Laal Quila se aayi aawaaz, Sahgal, Dhillon, Shahnawaz!" Condemning the trial and demanding that all INA soldiers be exonerated, the All-India Congress Committee had, in September itself, constituted an INA Defence and Relief Committee, which ultimately formed the triumvirate's glittering 17-member defence team. This dream squad of eminent Congress barristers included one whose disinclination to practise law had coincided with the nationalist rejection of such institutions of the Raj as its judiciary. Donning

after 25 years his barrister's gown and wig, Nehru leapt to the defence of these men, who had fought for India's liberation alongside Bose, his former comrade. Both the Congress and the League rose to the trio's side; as slogans of "Death to British Imperialism!" and "Hindu-Muslim Unity Zindabad!" suffused the air, the flags of both the Congress and the Muslim League waved above the protests. Pro-INA protests, spearheaded primarily by the Congress, fanned out across India. Holding aloft banners that bore such slogans as "They are Patriots, not Traitors", Indians of all faiths marched shoulder to shoulder, hurling clenched fists into the air and thundering "Jai Hind!". While in Madras the police opened fire on protesters, killing five, Calcutta, Bose's hometown, became the epicentre of these protests, with students from several political organisations virtually encamping in the streets for four days in late November, only to be joined afterwards by factory workers and Sikh taxi drivers. Eventually, the police opened fire and 97 protesters perished. The residents of Delhi, Lahore, Bombay, Patna, and Lucknow turned out in droves to support the triad on trial at the Red Fort. Beginning of the British end-game

But the moment passed: the defence of three patriots was no longer enough to guarantee a common definition of patriotism. The ferment across the country made the conviction of the trio almost irrelevant: freedom was inevitable, but so was Partition. By the time the trial got under way, it was apparent that the ultimate treason to the British Raj was being contemplated in

its own capital. London, under the Labour Party, exhausted by war, was determined to rid itself of the burdens of its Indian empire. In February 1946, Prime Minister Attlee announced the dispatch of a Cabinet Mission to India "to discuss with leaders of Indian opinion the framing of an Indian Constitution". The endgame had begun. Today, as we mark the 77th anniversary of our Independence, facing again an India that some politicians would divide on religious grounds, let us not forget that glorious flicker of national unity that marked the Red Fort Trials. The Empire descended into discredit from that moment, its extinction made inevitable by its own flailing attempt to assert itself over rebellious Indians. As Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the tricolour over the Red Fort for the first time in free India, against the dazzling sky in which fluttered the flag of freedom, he was standing at the site of a glorious failure — a testament to what we, the people of India, are capable of aspiring to when we stand together, united and undeterred, in the service of a larger cause, and yet a moment of rebirth that was also an abortion, with the nation torn into two. Let us hope that, eight decades later, our leaders find the wisdom to commit themselves again to what unites us as a people, rather than promote the forces of division. This time at the Red Fort, all of us are on trial. Shashi Tharoor is the fourth-term Lok Sabha Member of Parliament (Congress) for Thiruvananthapuram and the bestselling author of 25 books, including the Sahitya Akademi-award winning *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India*

What is the status of Hindus in Bangladesh?

Muhammad Yunus, head of Bangladesh's caretaker government, visited the Dhakeshwari Temple in Dhaka on Tuesday, and assured leaders of the Hindu community that "we are all one people", and "justice will be given to all". Bangladesh's minority Hindus have faced more than 200 attacks in 50-odd districts since the fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government on August 5. As policing collapsed, at least five people were reported killed in attacks on Hindu families, institutions, and temples. The largest minority Bangladesh's 2022 census counted a little more than 13.1 million Hindus, who made up 7.96% of the country's population. Other minorities (Buddhists, Christians, etc.) together constituted less than 1%. Muslims were 91.08% of Bangladesh's 165.16 million people. The share of Hindus in the population varies widely across Bangladesh's eight divisions — from just 3.94% in Mymensingh to 13.51% in Sylhet in four of Bangladesh's 64 districts, every fifth person is a Hindu — Gopalganj in Dhaka division (26.94% of the district population), Moulvibazar in Sylhet division (24.44%), Thakurgaon in Rangpur division (22.11%), and Khulna in Khulna division (20.75%). Hindus were more than 15% of the population in 13 districts, and more than 10% in 21 districts, according to the 2022 count.

What is the status of Hindus in Bangladesh? Data on Hindus in Bangladesh.

Declining share in population Historically, Hindus had a much bigger share of the population in the Bengali-speaking region that makes up today's Bangladesh. At the beginning of the last century, they constituted about a third of the population of this region (See chart). There has been a significant demographic shift since then. Every census since 1901 has indicated a decline in the share of Hindus in the population of what is today's Bangladesh. This decline was the steepest between the censuses of 1941 and 1974, i.e. when Bangladesh was East Pakistan. Notably however, only the 1951 census reported a significant fall in the absolute numbers of Hindus compared with the previous (1941) count — from about 11.8 million to about 9.2 million. The number recovered gradually to reach the pre-Partition level of 11.8 million in the 2001 census. The population of Muslims in this region rose from about 29.5 million in 1941 to 110.4 million in 2001. The increase in the proportion of Muslims in the population — from an estimated 66.1% in 1901 to more than 91% today — corresponds to the percentage decline in the Hindu population during this time. Multiple factors — including some that predate the Partition — are behind this change. Fertility rates differential

According to estimates by scholars, the fertility rate among Muslims has historically been higher than that of Hindus in Bengal. Data from the first census of India (1872) onward support this hypothesis, primarily based on a comparison between



Hindu-majority West Bengal and Muslim-majority East Bengal. The American anthropologist David Mandelbaum argued that the impact of religion on the differential fertility rates in Bengal was indirect, and acted primarily through educational and economic factors. (Human Fertility in India, 1974) Muslims across Bengal belonged to the lower socio-economic strata and lagged in education — both factors associated with higher fertility rates. They were also more rural, and engaged in agriculture, again a factor associated with larger family sizes and consequently, fertility when compared to urban households. This trend continued after Partition. The total marital fertility rate (a lifetime measure of marital fertility) of Muslims was 7.6 children per woman compared with 5.6 for Hindus, demographers J Stoeckel and M A Choudhury wrote in their 1969 paper 'Differential Fertility in a Rural Area of East Pakistan', published in the journal The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly. While fertility rates in both communities have fallen since, the total fertility rate of Hindus was 1.9 children per woman compared with 2.3 for Muslims in 2014, M Moinuddin Haider, Mizanur Rahman, and Nahid Kamal wrote in their 2019 paper 'Hindu Population Growth in Bangladesh: A Demographic Puzzle' published in the Journal of Religion and Demography. Partition and migration

Bengal and Punjab were the two provinces of British India that were divided between India and Pakistan on the lines of religion. The division was haphazard, often arbitrary, and left a trail of violence and trauma whose reverberations can be felt even now. However, in Bengal, unlike Punjab, there was no massive, state-facilitated exchange of population across the new border in 1947. Historian Gyanesh Kudaisya wrote that 11.4 million Hindus (42% of the Hindu population of undivided Bengal) remained in East Bengal after Partition. "In 1947, only 344,000 Hindu refugees came into West Bengal, and the hope lingered among the minorities of East Pakistan that they could continue to live there peacefully," Kudaisya wrote. ('Divided

Landscapes, Fragmented Identities: East Bengal Refugees and Their Rehabilitation in India, 1947-79' in The Long History of Partition in Bengal: Event, Memory, Representations, 2024)

The movement of refugees took place through the 1950s and 1960s, and volumes varied based on community relations between Hindus and Muslims. Even when major riots were not taking place, Hindus in Bangladesh faced what scholars Sekhar Bandyopadhyay and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury called "conjunctural violence" caused by the specific circumstances of Partition". This did not amount to "more than verbal abuse and minor physical intimidation, prompted by an unusual resource crunch and severe scarcity of space caused by the steady flow of Muhajir migration from India". (Caste and Partition in Bengal: The Story of Dalit Refugees, 1946-1961, 2022). Kudaisya wrote: "1948 saw an influx of 786,000 people into India, and in 1949, over 213,000 Bengali refugees crossed over the border into West Bengal... An estimated 1,575,000 people left East Bengal in 1950... another 187,000 refugees came [in 1951], followed by another 200,000 in 1952... 76,000 persons coming to India in 1953, 118,000 in 1954,

and 240,000 in 1955... In 1955, when Pakistan adopted an 'Islamic' constitution, the number of incoming refugees again mounted to 320,000... This process of gradual displacement continued throughout the 1960s." Assam (including present-day Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram), West Bengal, and Tripura recorded unprecedented increases in population between 1951 and 1961, which scholars attribute entirely to the arrival of refugees from East Pakistan. Another wave of migration took place in 1971, as the Pakistani Army and its collaborators went on a murderous campaign against Bengalis before the Liberation War. According to Indian estimates, approximately 9.7 million Bengalis sought refuge in India during the conflict, around 70% of whom were Hindu. "The West Pakistani generals had calculated that by forcing millions of East Pakistani Hindus to flee to India they would weaken Bengali nationalism as a political force," Sanjib Baruah wrote for The Indian Express in 2021. Since the formation of Bangladesh, migration of Hindus into India has decreased. Porous borders, well-established familial and kinship networks in India, and periodic inter-religious tensions in Bangladesh are drivers of this migration.

Swiggy integrates UPI for in-app payment in 5 seconds

New Delhi: Online food delivery platform Swiggy on Wednesday announced the launch of 'Swiggy UPI', integrating National Payments Corporation of India's (NPCI) digital payments solution to deliver faster in-app experience for customers.

Users can now complete UPI transactions without leaving the Swiggy app, reducing the payment process from five steps to just one, the food aggregator said in a statement. "This feature aligns with Swiggy's mission to enable unparalleled

convenience to consumers as UPI emerges as one of the most preferred payment methods," said Anurag Panganamula, Head of Revenue and Growth at Swiggy. The new feature is powered by Juspay's HyperUPI Plugin and eliminates the need for the redirection to third-party UPI apps. In April this year, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted that India recorded approximately 131 billion UPI transactions. As UPI continues to gain popularity, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is encouraging more entities to integrate UPI services.

With freedom in 1947, the birth of the people's Constitution

About six months after India gained Independence, and shortly after the draft Constitution was published in February 1948, the social activist and journalist P Kodanda Rao, criticised its length. The draft ran to 209 pages, 315 articles and eight schedules. "The Indian Constitution," he suggested, "may be so short that it may even be made the National Anthem and even inscribed on the National Flag. Only such a document will grip the imagination and evoke sentimental or emotional response, and not one with three hundred clauses which no one will ever know." The final Constitution of 1950 was, however, even longer, with 395 articles, and 10 schedules, and it has continued to expand since then. Nonetheless, the Indian Constitution has become an anthem and a rallying point for its citizens. This may look and feel new, but in fact, the everyday relevance and invocation of the Constitution has never waned in India from the moment of its making. This could not have been achieved by merely promulgating the Constitution in the name of the people. How, then, has the Constitution become from the time of its making, a site of struggle through which citizens assert their rights and claim remedies? Publics across India, we discovered based on new archival materials, saw the Constitution-making as pregnant with possibilities for changing their lives for the better. Thousands of diverse groups, associations and individuals from across the length and breadth of the country developed a fever of constitutional expectations, articulating demands of the future Constitution, firing off missives to the Constituent Assembly, putting forward a range of constitutional ideas, wants and aspirations for what was to be, in their word, "our Constitution".

Adivasi Gond students, to take one example, convened a conference in Nagpur three weeks after the Constituent Assembly first met with the object of uniting "aboriginal students". They sent 16 demands to the Assembly, which included free and compulsory education, special scholarship, guarantees of government employment to incentivise education and representation in the university governance. The public engagement with the Constitution-making generated a churn of innovative rights claims. Informed by their daily life-experiences, the Indian public thought beyond conventional constitutional ideas, addressing, for example, disability, sexual violence, child rights and the right to food.

The public-intense engagement with the Constitution-making was unplanned and came as a surprise to the Constituent Assembly. Indeed, just ahead of the beginning of the constitutional debates, Assembly member K M Munshi suggested that the Assembly proceedings should be held behind closed doors to ensure the experts work efficiently, free from public pressure. The Indian public, however, had a different idea. They insisted on having a say and in participating. The scale of their demands ultimately forced the Constituent Assembly to open the Constitution-making

process to the public. The draft Constitution of February 1948, which was now circulated for public comments, became a best seller with several reprints being sold even on railway stations. The public made it their own by producing unauthorised translations of the draft in numerous Indian languages, including Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, and Hindustani. Through this process, the Indian public was working out the Constitution's potential implications for their lives. They criticised its limits, such as on civil liberties, and attempted to change it. At the same time, they already demanded that the government abide by the draft Constitution.

The Deaf and Dumb Society of India, as one example, pointed out to the Constituent Assembly that granting equal citizenship for all had little value to disabled people unless discrimination built into existing laws were removed, and the disabled were granted reservations in education and government jobs. The Constituent Assembly Secretariat assured them that universal adult franchise in the future Constitution would protect their rights. They responded furiously, stating that adult franchise would mean little to them unless there were constitutional guarantees for education, employment, anti-discrimination and their inclusion in the census.

Despite high levels of illiteracy, poverty, scarcity and the uncertainties wrought by the Partition, the Indian public was not a passive recipient of the Constitution, nor were they absent in its making. The process of making the Constitution animated their imagination. They understood what they were getting. And, most importantly,



through collective public struggles, Indians made themselves the real protagonists in the theatre of constitutionalism. For the Indian public, therefore, the Constitution was not a sacred book or a textbook, to be interpreted only by "priests" — be they judges or legislators. Indians made themselves constitutionalists ahead of the Constitution coming into force in 1950. As the tricolour was hoisted on August 15, 1947, their Constitution was already alive. Indians collectively owned the Constitution-in-the-mak-

ing, reimagining freedom as a transformation of their lives — social, economic, and political. As they have demonstrated during the time of the constitution making and since, they have mobilised in pursuit of this transformative vision persistently. De teaches at Yale University. Shani teaches at the University of Haifa. Their forthcoming book *Assembling India's Constitution* will be published in 2025 with Cambridge University Press, and Penguin Random House India

India, a beacon of democracy

Today, India is one of the last beacons of democratic hope among the nations of the Global South. Despite the rise of global pessimism towards liberal democracies, the re-emergence of anti-democratic forces in South Asia, and India's own ongoing confrontation with polarisation, the Indian experiment with democracy that began this day 78 years ago boldly sustains. India and its neighbours But as India's democratic journey modestly thrives and the country looks to play a larger role in the world order, its own backyard is riddled with problems. Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Bangladesh all find themselves on the brink of political and economic disaster accompanied by breakdown of democratic rule of civilian authority.

Unlike the neighbourhood, the Indian state's constitutional setup has withstood the complications that an independent, democratic society with diverse castes, linguistic groups, and religious communities, faces. The diversity of our electoral politics represents the system of social and cultural asymmetry in the region. India succeeded, unlike its neighbours, in successfully bringing substantive democracy to its

polity as opposed to other nations where only procedural democracy was established. Elections alone cannot ensure genuine democratic movements. Indian society has faithfully imbibed the democratic spirit of its constitutional order. Independent India has built successful robust welfare delivery mechanisms such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and the Public Distribution System, constituted affirmative action programmes to overcome historical inequities of the caste system of the Indian subcontinent, succeeded in the partial devolution of governance to local institutions such as the Panchayati Raj system, and given economic freedom to the masses with free trade. The armed forces have also played a storied role in the democratic journey of independent India. Time and again, our brave hearts at the borders have beaten back threats to India's territorial integrity. But unlike its counterparts in the region, the Indian military has maintained its sacrosanct faith in the constitutional and democratic ideals of the nation. The Indian soldier has been a guardian angel both at the border and internally, in maintaining the constitutional setup of the Indian state.

An incomplete journey Despite these

successes, India's democratic journey as yet is incomplete. The promise of the Constitution remains unfulfilled. A gradual erosion of rule of law continues unabated due to widening economic inequality, religious-caste based identity, polarisation, corruption, and the subsequent apathy among the youth towards our democratic values. It is time for the nation to move beyond the goals of early independent India to those of modern aspirational India. It is time for a renewal and strengthening of the social contract between the Indian state and its citizens. We must reframe our national ethos to replace the culture of silence with a culture of transparency, the culture of violence with a culture of peace, and the culture of exclusion with a culture of inclusion. India's politically astute electorate has become hyper focused on electoral politics and has forgotten issue-based politics. From the Dandi March to the recent farmers' protest, issue-based movements have had a critical role in improving our governance models and societal values. We must engage proudly as citizens of an inclusive and inspirational Indic civilisation, which has crossed its original hurdles and shall now take flight to the zenith of the global order.