

Singareni plans to enter lithium mining sector



Hyderabad: With the Centre considering providing incentives to companies to establish lithium processing facilities in an effort to develop its lithium mining sector and bolster the supply of the EV battery metal in the country, State-owned coal mining company Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) is reportedly planning to take part in the auction and secure a lithium block.

The State government has reportedly asked the SCCL management to enter into the field of lithium mining as it would help the company in expanding its presence in other areas. Recently, during a review meeting Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka asked the Singareni officials to make efforts to get into lithium mining and other critical mineral sectors. Lithium is a crucial mineral for the manufacturing of lithium-ion batteries used in electric vehicles (EVs), smartphones, and various other battery-operated electronic devices. Hence, the company sees a great future in it. With the Centre keen to manufacture lithium ion batteries used in electric vehicles locally, the Singareni was reportedly making efforts to bag lithium blocks. Corporate companies like Adani, Vedanta, Reliance Industries, Himadri

Chemicals, Dalmia Cement, Ultratech Cement and public sector companies like NLC India are showing interest in getting lithium blocks in the auction. The Centre has identified 20 lithium blocks in eight States across the country and preparations are being made to auction them. The eight States are Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and the union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. The Center expects to generate Rs. 45,000 crore revenue through the auction of lithium blocks. Maiki South Mining Private Limited has bagged the country's first lithium block in Katghora area located in the Korba district of Chhattisgarh in June. Also referred to as "white gold," lithium is a non-ferrous metal and is used in rechargeable batteries, which power not only laptops and mobile phones but also electric vehicles (EVs) — a crucial part of the world's plan to tackle climate change. Lithium-ion batteries offer a longer life cycle as compared to traditional lead-acid batteries. Chile is the top country in the world with 9.3 million tonnes of lithium deposits, followed by Australia with 6.2 million tonnes of lithium reserves. India is in third place with 5.9 million tonnes of lithium deposits found in Jammu and Kashmir alone.

1200 properties to be affected in Old City Metro Rail construction



Hyderabad: A total of 1200 properties will be affected during road widening and station construction works being undertaken for Old City Metro Rail between MG Bus Stand and Chandrayangutta, a stretch measuring 7.5 kilometers, Manag-

ing Director (MD), HMRL, NVS Reddy on Friday said. The entire process of land acquisition for the Old City Metro, being taken-up as per the Land Acquisition Act, is likely to take about 8 months, the HMRL MD said, adding that about 103 religious and other

sensitive structures on this stretch are being protected through innovative engineering solutions and careful adjustment of metro pillars and station locations. "Out of these 1200 properties, notifications have been issued for 400 properties so far under the Land Acquisition Act 2013, which are being published in Telugu, English and Urdu newspapers," NVS Reddy in a statement said. While the main road is being widened to 100 feet as per GHMC Master Plan, the road where the Metro stations will be located is being widened to 120 feet. The current width of the road varies from 50 feet to 60 feet from Darulshifa Junction to Shalibanda Junction, while it is 80 feet

from Shalibanda Junction to Chandrayangutta. Thus, the affected portion of each property in majority cases will be about 20 to 25 feet from Darulshifa to Shalibanda; and about 10 feet from Shalibanda to Chandrayangutta.

However, the affected portion will increase at station locations and in stretches with deep curvature, NVS Reddy said. Apart from conventional survey methods, Lidar drone survey was done for a 3D view of the affected properties and the neighboring properties. Physical inspection is also being done by HAML engineers for structural valuation of the affected properties.

Court sentences imprisonment for 300 persons over drunk driving

Hyderabad: A local court has sentenced 300 persons to imprisonment in drunken driving cases. The Hyderabad traffic police in the month of August caught 4,056 motorists driving under the influence

of alcohol at various locations. The police filed charge sheet against 3,495 persons and the court sentenced 300 persons to a jail term varying between 1 and 10 days after holding them guilty.

Indian economy is on upswing: Finance Ministry Report

New Delhi: The Indian economy experienced a notable upswing across various economic indicators in July 2024, signalling strong and resilient business activities with both the manufacturing and services sectors posting a robust performance, according to the Finance Ministry's monthly review released on Thursday. "The month saw impressive milestones being reached, substantial growth in GST collections, and a significant rise in e-way bill generation, which points to an overall increase in economic activity. The stock market indices also reached record highs in July," the report states.

On balance, India's economic momentum remains intact. Despite a somewhat erratic monsoon, reservoirs have been replenished. Manufacturing and services sectors are expanding, going by the Purchasing Managers' indices. Tax collections, especially indirect taxes, which reflect transactions, are growing healthily, and so is bank credit, according to the review.

Inflation is moderating, and exports of both goods and services are doing better than they did last year. Stock markets are holding on to their levels. Foreign direct investment is looking up as gross inflows

are rising, the review states. Gross GST collections for July 2024 maintained their momentum, achieving their second-highest level since May 2023. The total gross GST revenue rose by 10.3 per cent year-on-year (YoY), bringing the total for FY 25 (April to July) to Rs 7.4 lakh crore. This increase in GST collections also highlights robust compliance and expansion of GST coverage across various economic activities.

The upward level shift is reflected in the average monthly GST collections rising from Rs 1.68 lakh crore in FY24 to Rs 1.85 lakh crore in FY25. The year-on-year increase in e-way bills reached a nine-month peak of 19.2 per cent with the total number of e-way bills issued in July surging to 10.5 crore, setting a new single-month record. According to the review, the manufacturing sector has continued to demonstrate robust performance in the first four months of FY25, as evidenced by the strong performance of various high-frequency indicators. The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) Manufacturing, a crucial gauge of the economic vitality of the manufacturing sector, stood at 58.1 in July 2024, significantly above the series long-run average and among the highest recorded in



recent years. This expansion, driven by buoyant demand conditions and a surge in production volumes, bodes well for the overall health of the economy.

Similarly, the service sector continued to perform well. PMI services remained in an expansionary zone at 60.3 in July 2024, driven by expansion in international sales, an increase in new order uptakes, and a

rise in new export orders.

Despite a rise in wages and material costs which pushed up business expenses, overall sentiment in the services sector remains upbeat, driven, among others, by an upswing in the tourism cum hotel industry induced by leisure travel, business travel, and social events, the Finance Ministry said.

Sunita Williams, Butch Wilmore's fate hangs in balance even after more than two months, as NASA weighs return options



Washington: NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore arrived at the International Space Station (ISS) on June 6 and more than two and a half months later, their fate hang in balance as NASA mulls several options which can delay their return to earth to even February next year. The astronauts left for the orbiting laboratory on June 6 aboard the Boeing Starliner after lifting off on June 5 from Space Launch Complex-41 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida in the US. Originally slated to return within a week, their stay could now potentially stretch to over eight months owing to seri-

ous issues with Starliner.

According to the US space agency, if it decides to return Starliner uncrewed, Sunita and Butch would remain aboard station until late February 2025. NASA would replan the agency's SpaceX Crew-9 mission by launching only two crew members instead of four in late September. The two stuck astronauts would then return to Earth after the regularly scheduled Crew-9 increment early next year. According to reports, it Elon Musk-run SpaceX is tasked with the return of Sunita and Butch, it will a major embarrassment for its rival Boeing.

At a press event, NASA officials said they have reached a point where, in the last week in August, we really should be making a call, if not sooner. Bowersox said the astronauts were making the best of their extra time aboard the ISS but I'm sure they're eager for a decision, just like the rest of us. The US space agency is under tremendous pressure to make a quick yet safe decision regarding the astronauts' return. According to the US space agency, no final decisions have been made. NASA continues to evaluate all options as it learns more about Starliner's propulsion

system. Butch and Suni may return home aboard Starliner, or they could come back as part of the agency's SpaceX Crew-9 mission early next year, it said. The International Space Station is well-stocked with everything the crew needs, including food, water, clothing, and oxygen. Recently, a Northrop Grumman Cygnus spacecraft carrying 8,200 pounds of food, fuel, supplies, and science and a Progress resupply spacecraft carrying three tonnes of cargo arrived at the station. NASA has additional SpaceX resupply missions planned through the end of 2024.

Cognizant's new campus opened in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy inaugurated the new campus of IT major Cognizant at Kokapet in Hyderabad on Wednesday. With an office space of 10 lakh sq.ft, the new campus will provide employment to around 15,000 people, making Hyderabad its largest base in the world.

Established in Chennai in 1994, Cognizant began operations in Hyderabad in 2002 and now has five campuses in the IT corridor. The IT firm is currently the second-largest IT employer in Telangana. While workforce in Chennai currently

stands at around 55,000 to 56,000 employees, Hyderabad is all set to surpass it with 57,000 employees. The new campus will focus on advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), digital engineering, and cloud solutions. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister announced that the State government would constitute an investors task force to attract investments to Telangana. He claimed that his recent trip to the US and South Korea, attracted investments worth Rs 31,500 crore which would create around 30,750 jobs.

Gokaraju Rangaraju Engineering College Celebrates 24th Graduation Day



Gokaraju Rangaraju Engineering College (GRIET), Bachupally, Hyderabad, celebrated its 24th Graduation Day on August 24, 2024, with great enthusiasm and pride. The event was graced by the presence of VC Cheemalakonda, Vice President of Insight Software, who served as the chief guest for the program.

During the ceremony, VC Cheemalakonda presented medals and certificates to the UG & PG 2024 passed-out students, and he particularly appreciated the 12 Gold Medalists who showcased an overall exceptional performance with the highest marks. In his address, VC Cheemalakonda emphasized the importance for students to develop their skillset according to market requirements to seize the best opportunities. He highlighted that students graduating from GRIET are expected to achieve excellence. VC Cheemalakonda remarked that it is highly gratifying to study in an educational institution like GRIET and earn a degree, which can lead to securing the highest-level jobs. He further stated that the real learning of the degree students has just begun, and if they work hard as regular students, they can reach greater heights.

Cheemalakonda also encouraged the students to explore innovation and entrepreneurship, as they can obtain the best opportunities in many industries. He urged the students to set great goals, contribute to the nation's upliftment, and be good citizens. The event was attended by Col-

lege Principal Praveen Jugge, CSE Head Dr. Shankara Babu, and Program Coordinator Dr. Charles Babu. Approximately 500 students and their parents participated in the graduation ceremony.

The top performers in the B.Tech. and M.Tech. programs were also recognized during the event. The B.Tech. Toppers were: Civil Engineering - Ravi Teja

Pasunuthi, Electrical and Electronics Engineering - Ramineni Vyshnavi, Mechanical Engineering - Marneni Sarika, Electronics and Communication Engineering - S Nikitha, Computer Science and Engineering - Karshikalam Gouthami, Information Technology - Joginipelly Shailika, Computer Science and Business System - Sundala Harika, Computer Science and Engineering (AIML) - Mariseti Sathya

Abhijna, Computer Science and Engineering (DS) - Chidrala Sanjana.

The M.Tech. Toppers were: Structural Engineering - Mittapalli Naga Ashwini, Power Electronics - Moshina Begum, Design for Manufacturing - Palati Sanga Kiran, VLSI - Galla Navya, Computer Science and Engineering - S Soujanya, Data Science - Anugandula Tejashwi.

36 persons from Gujarat arrested for cyber frauds; Rs 32.28 lakh, gold ornaments seized

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad police arrested 36 persons from Gujarat for their alleged involvement in 20 cases of cyber frauds in the city. The police seized Rs 38.28 lakh in cash, gold ornaments, 64 mobile phones, over 100 SIM cards, credit and debit cards, cheque books, point of sale machines (swiping machines) and other articles from them.

Hyderabad CP, K Sreenivas Reddy said the 36 persons were involved in around 1,000 cyber frauds cases, which were registered across the country including 150 cases in Telangana. "In Hyderabad the fraudsters are involved in about 20 cases related to investment frauds - 11, trading fraud - 4, Fedex fraud - 4 and one KYC fraud. We have clues that they might

be involved in 10 more cases and working it out," said K Sreenivas Reddy.

The police following large scale complaints of investment, trading and Fedex fraud formed a special team that investigated the cases and arrested the 36 persons who are all from Gujarat. In a particular case, the police arrested a man who worked with chartered accountants and assisted them in handling the procedures related to maintaining the records and assisting them in filing the returns and other documents to income tax authorities. He had helped the cyber fraudsters dupe a retired person of Rs. 60 lakhs. The suspect, K Nikhunji Kishore Bhai was assisted by his friend Pravinbhai Kalubhai and two



other persons who are absconding, said the Hyderabad CP. In another case, the police arrested Sagar Goradhanbhai Prajapati and Parmar Kirit Nathubhai, who had duped a woman of Rs. 1.60 crores through Fedex fraud modus operandi. Two others involved in the case are absconding.

Health sector reduced to shambles says Harish Rao

Hyderabad: Voicing concern over the state of the health sector in Telangana, BRS leader and former minister T Harish Rao said the Congress government had reduced it to shambles in a matter of eight months. Taking to X, he said the state of affairs in the sector would have a bearing on healthcare for the poor. One out of every two was suffering from viral fever, regardless of whether it was a village or a town. There was a situation where beds were not available in hospitals. In all, 5,246 dengue cases were reported in the last one and a half month.

The official figures proved that the incidence of dengue was alarming with 36 per cent more cases reported compared to last year. What were the State government and the Chief Minister doing at a time when viral fevers were taking their toll, he asked. The State had witnessed revolution-

ary schemes implemented in the health sector during the BRS rule. The State had emerged as one of the top performers in terms of healthcare during the BRS rule. Today all the more it was different. People were hesitating once against to visit the government hospitals. There were instances of three patients sharing a single bed, pregnant women were left to labour in chair while rodents were feasting on medicines, he lamented. Harish Rao said seasonal diseases like malaria and dengue were on the rise due to lack of pre-emptive measures, lack of review on the preparedness of hospitals and lack of attention to sanitation. He contended that every death caused due to lack basic facilities and treatment in the hospital should be treated as government sponsored killing. He demanded an ex gratia of Rs.10 lakh in such deaths.



FIR filed against Palla Rajeshwar Reddy's Anurag Group

Hyderabad: Amidst allegations of the Congress government using agencies like HYDRA to settle political scores, the Pocharam IT Corridor police filed an FIR against Anurag Group of Institutions, the founder chairman of which is BRS MLA Palla Rajeshwar Reddy, accusing it of encroaching on Nadam Cheruvu, a lake in Venkatapur village of Ghatkesar in Medchal-Malkajgiri. The case was registered after a complaint from Irrigation Department Assistant Executive Engineer A Paramesh, who alleged that the Anurag Group of Institutions, under the banner of Gayatri Educational Trust, was illegally constructing a college building within the buffer zone of Nadam Cheruvu.

The lake, bearing UID: 50431201901301 and Geo ID: 786543174230, was recently restored under the Mission Kakatiya Phase-IV initiative, he said, adding that the construction was being carried out in violation of the Irrigation Act, which prohibits any alteration or construction within the buffer zone of a

water body. Following this, the Pocharam IT Corridor police filed an FIR against the institution on Friday. Meanwhile, Rajeshwar Reddy termed the official's move illegal and vindictive. He clarified that he had obtained all necessary permissions from the departments and agencies concerned before commencing construction of the college buildings.

His organisation had obtained a 'No Objection Certificate' duly indicating buffer zone extent to their land in survey number 813 of Korremula (Venkatapur) village, Ghatkesar mandal. Revenue and Irrigation officials had jointly inspected the site and observed that no part of land in survey number was affected under full tank level and buffer zone of Nadam Cheruvu. The organisation had also got approval for the multistoried building permission to set up a medical college from Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority, he said. "We have obtained all the necessary permissions before commencing construction. The government was unnecessarily trou-

bling us. This is nothing but political vindictiveness," he said, adding that six cases were filed against him after the election, four in Jangaon and two in Hyderabad.

Anurag University was regularly searched by Vigilance and Enforcement, Intelligence, Irrigation Department, Education Department and Revenue department for the last nine months.

"Nothing has been found so far, now they are putting pressure on the officials of the drainage department who had given the permissions in 2017 and registered another case against me and are troubling Anurag University, the students studying in it and me. No matter how much pressure is put by this government, no matter how many illegal cases are filed, I will follow the law," he asserted.

Now all-women Durga Puja committee rejects Trinamool's Rs 85K grant



Kolkata: Apart from triggering nationwide protests, the ghastly rape and murder of a junior doctor at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata seems to have also cast a shadow on this year's Durga Puja celebrations in West Bengal scheduled from October 9-13.

Two days after the Uttarpara Sakti Sangha in Hooghly district became the first to reject the Rs 85,000 annual festival grant given to all the community Durga Puja committees in the state by the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government, an all-women association in the same town on Saturday turned down the dole which has been raised from Rs 70,000 to Rs 85,000 this year.

As a mark of protest against the R.G. Kar incident, the office-bearers of Bouthan Sangha, an all-women Durga Puja committee in Uttarpara, on Saturday forwarded a communique to the district administration conveying their decision to reject the state government's annual festival grant.

The organisers also coined the tagline 'Meyer Bichar Din, Mayer Pujro Nejera Bujhe Nebo' (Give justice to the daughter, we will take care of Mother's worship). An office-bearer of Bouthan Sangha said they had been accepting the state government's annual donation since the time the Mamata Banerjee-led government introduced it a few years back.

SICA conducts Carnatic Vocal Concert in memory of late Vinjamuri Varadaraja Iyengar

Hyderabad: South Indian Cultural Association (SICA), the noted cultural organization of twin cities conducted a Carnatic Vocal Concert, in memory of late Vinjamuri Varadaraja Iyengar, the renowned musician and musicologist of yesteryears, recently at Ravindra Bharathi in Hyderabad.

Dr. NJ Nandini, well-known Carnatic vocalist from Trivandrum and hailing from a family of musicians, performed in the event. The noted singer has already performed over 900 concerts in India and abroad. Dr. Nandini chose to present Kambhoji raga as main item with pleasant and elaborate aalaapana by bringing out various nuances of the raga and presented 'Sri Subrahmanyaya Namaste' a Deekshitar krithi with an impressive neraval at 'vasavadi sakala deva vandithaya'. The swarakalpana was euphonic with innovative swara phrases and jathis. Violin support by Nanda Kumar elevated the concert. Thani Avarthanam by Jayabhaskar on mrudangam and Chandrakanth on ghatam enthralled the audience. The artists were felicitated by Sandhya daughter of late Vinjamuri Varadaraja Iyengar and Dr. S. Chakravarthy, president of SICA. Mahidhara Seetaram engaged the audience with his brisk and free flowing style of introduction. The concert was attended by a large number of twin cities music lovers.



COVID-19: anosmia as a marker for susceptible brain damage



A large body of studies has found how even mild COVID-19 impacts the brain of people. One of the most common ailments seen among people who had COVID-19 was the loss of smell, otherwise called as anosmia. In most cases, people recover their sense of smell after a few weeks to months. Many studies have found that months after recovery from COVID-19, some people continued to experience neurological and cognitive effects. While persistent cognitive symptoms have been linked to brain alterations, patients recov-

ering from mild COVID-19 without cognitive symptoms presented with cortical thickness alterations and changes in white matter integrity.

A small study from Chile recruited 73 adults with a mild to moderate COVID-19 without signs of respiratory failure and 27 people without any history of COVID-19. The 73 participants who had COVID-19 and recruited for the study had an average of nine months after diagnosis. Participants with COVID-19 and the control group were subjected to cognitive screening, a deci-

sion-making task, and MRI evaluations. The team used loss of smell and need for hospitalisation as proxies for potential markers of neurologic involvement and disease severity, respectively. The study, published in the journal Scientific Reports, has found that people who suffered from loss of smell had behavioural, functional, and structural brain changes. "Given the significant global incidence of COVID-19, identifying factors that can distinguish individuals at risk of developing brain alterations is crucial for prioritizing follow-up care," the authors write. Since the anosmia "correlated with brain measures, including decreased functional activity during the decision-making task, thinning of cortical thickness in parietal regions, and loss of white matter integrity", the authors say that anosmia could be used as a criterion when identifying at-risk populations for follow-up.

Of the 73 participants with COVID-19, 22 (30.1%) individuals reported experiencing varying degrees of attention and memory issues, which persisted at the time of the cognitive test administered as part of the study. Relatively minor indications were headache in seven participants, fatigue in six people, and four with persistently impaired sense of smell lasting, on average, 1.3 months. Of these patients, a complete loss of smell (anosmia) was experienced by 68% (29 participants), while 32% (14 participants) experienced differing degrees

of changes in their sense of smell (hyposmia/microsmia). Both these categories were clubbed together as 'patients with anosmia'. While no significant differences in cognitive performance between groups based on COVID-19 diagnosis, anosmia, or hospitalisation requirements, "intriguing patterns" emerged in behavioural task performance. Participants with a loss of smell displayed a distinct decision-making strategy characterised by more impulsive behaviour and were more likely to make a choice that is different when the earlier result was negative when performing a behavioural task. But the participants who were hospitalised displayed less strategic thinking and unlike those who were not hospitalised repeatedly made the same wrong choice.

Loss of smell was positively associated with decreased functional activity during the decision-making task, thinning of cortical thickness, and loss of white matter integrity. "Hence, anosmia could be a factor to be considered when identifying at-risk populations for follow-up," the authors write. "Only six patients present indicators of persistent olfactory deficit; thus, our results are not due to actual deficit. Hence, anosmia could serve as both a potential marker of virus-induced damage to neuronal tissues and a marker for individuals susceptible to brain damage," the authors note.

Do you have knee pain from osteoarthritis? You might not need surgery. Here's what to try instead

Most people with knee osteoarthritis can control their pain and improve their mobility without surgery, according to updated treatment guidelines from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. So what is knee osteoarthritis and what are the best ways to manage it? More than 2 million Australians have osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis is the most common joint disease, affecting 2.1 million Australians. It costs the economy A\$4.3 billion each year. Osteoarthritis commonly affects the knees, but can also affect the hips, spine, hands and feet. It impacts the whole joint including bone, cartilage, ligaments and muscles. Most people with osteoarthritis have persistent pain and find it difficult to perform simple daily tasks, such as walking and climbing stairs.

Is it caused by 'wear and tear'? Knee osteoarthritis is most likely to affect older people, those who are overweight or obese, and those with previous knee injuries. But contrary to popular belief, knee osteoarthritis is not caused by "wear and tear". Research shows the degree of structural wear and tear visible in the knee joint on an X-ray does not correlate with the level of pain or disability a person experiences. Some people have a low degree of structural wear and tear and very bad symptoms, while others have a high degree of structural wear and tear and minimal symptoms. So X-rays are not required to diagnose knee osteoarthritis or guide treatment decisions. Telling people they have wear and tear can make them worried about their condition and afraid of damaging their joint. It can also encourage them to try invasive and potentially unnecessary treatments such as surgery. We have shown this in people with osteoarthritis, and other common pain conditions such as back and shoulder pain. This has led to a global call for a change in the way we think and communicate about osteoarthritis.

What's the best way to manage osteoarthritis?

Non-surgical treatments work well for most people with osteoarthritis, regardless of their age or the severity of their symptoms. These include education and self-management, exercise and physical activity, weight management and nutrition, and certain pain medicines. Education is important to dispel misconceptions about knee osteoarthritis. This includes information about what osteoarthritis is, how it is diagnosed, its prognosis, and the most effective ways to self-manage symptoms. Health professionals who use positive and reassuring language can improve people's knowledge and beliefs about osteoarthritis and its management. Many people believe that exercise and physical activity will cause further damage to their joint. But it's safe and can reduce pain and disability. Exercise has fewer side effects than commonly used pain medicines such as paracetamol and anti-inflammatories and can prevent or delay the need for joint replacement surgery in the future. Many types of exercise are effective for knee osteoarthritis, such as strength training, aerobic exercises like walking or cycling, Yoga and Tai chi. So you can do whatever type of exercise best suits you. Increasing general physical activity is also important, such as

taking more steps throughout the day and reducing sedentary time. Weight management is important for those who are overweight or obese. Weight loss can reduce knee pain and disability, particularly when combined with exercise. Losing as little as 5–10% of your body weight can be beneficial. Pain medicines should not replace treatments such as exercise and weight management but can be used alongside these treatments to help manage pain. Recommended medicines include paracetamol and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Opioids are not recommended. The risk of harm outweighs any potential benefits. Increasing general physical activity is also important, such as taking more steps throughout the day and reducing sedentary time. (Source: Freepik)

What about surgery?

People with knee osteoarthritis commonly undergo two types of surgery: knee arthroscopy and knee replacement.

Knee arthroscopy is a type of keyhole surgery used to remove or repair damaged pieces of bone or cartilage that are thought to cause pain. However, high-quality research has shown arthroscopy is not effective. Arthroscopy should therefore not be used in the management of knee osteoarthritis. Joint replacement involves replacing the joint surfaces with artificial parts. In 2021–22, 53,500 Australians had



a knee replacement for their osteoarthritis. Joint replacement is often seen as being inevitable and "necessary". But most people can effectively manage their symptoms through exercise, physical activity and weight management. The new guidelines (known as "care standard") recommend joint replacement surgery only be considered for those with severe symptoms who have already tried non-surgical treatments.

I have knee osteoarthritis. What should I do?

The care standard links to free evidence-based resources to support people with osteoarthritis. These include: — education, such as a decision aid and online course; — self-directed online exercise and yoga programmes; — weight management support; — pain management strategies, such as MyJointPain and painTRAINER. If you have osteoarthritis, you can use the care standard to inform discussions with your health-care provider, and to make informed decisions about your care. (The Conversation)

All about Sitopaladi, and its effectiveness against cold and cough

Considered to be an "excellent Ayurvedic herbal remedy used during monsoons to boost immunity and improve bronchial health", Sitopaladi is a herb made of a bamboo plant (Vanshlochan), long pepper (pippli), cardamom, cinnamon, and sugar candy (or misri). According to Dr Dimple Jangda, ayurveda coach and gut health expert, it has anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, and antioxidant properties that help improve health and fight the common cold, cough, sinus, and monsoon allergies.

Owing to the increase in humidity and the presence of bacteria in the atmosphere during the rainy season, many people — both children and adults — may experience cold, cough, and asthma. "Sitopaladi helps fight these symptoms by reducing the kapha imbalance in the body. Kapha dosha is the building block that helps provide structure and form to the body, but when it gets imbalanced or in excess, it can trigger mucus accumulation that becomes a breeding ground for bacteria and viruses. Sitopaladi helps clear this mucus, and reduces congestion and, thus, bronchial health issues," said Dr Jangda. Dr Swati Darade, B.A.M.S. DYA, Ayush Dispensary, Satara, Maharashtra listed the ingredients. It contains:

Sitopala (sugar candy powder) – 16 parts
Vamshalochana (inner white part of bamboo tree) – 8 parts

Pippali (long pepper) – 4 parts Ela



(cardamom) – 2 parts

Twak (cinnamon) – 1 part

During monsoons, the air becomes cold and dry. "As a result, respiratory issues like cold, cough, throat congestion, irritation, and pain abound. In this a situation, Sitopaladi churna has shown very promising and quick results," said Dr Tejas Lokhande, consultant ayurved and panchkarma physician, Mumbai. "Anyone suffering from frequent cold, cough, asthma, or bronchial health issues must consider including this herbal preparation in their diet. You can source some of these ingredients from your kitchen," said Dr Jangda.

Sitopaladi is also excellent for diges-

tive health, as it "improves the metabolic fire and appetite due to its heaty properties". "This is especially good for those who may experience loss of appetite during sickness. It also helps boost immunity by improving the body's ability to fight infections and viruses. Cinnamon, long pepper and cardamom have anti-inflammatory properties which help reduce inflammation and fight oxidative stress and free radicals in the body. It also helps in detoxifying the body by eliminating toxins," said Dr Jangda. Generally, this churna is administered with cow ghee for dry cough and with honey for expectorating the cough. "Speak to an Ayurvedic doctor before incorporating this into your diet," said Dr Lokhande.

What Justice Hema Committee report says, why its release was delayed

The Kerala High Court on Thursday (August 22) ordered the state to place before it in a sealed cover the entire Hema Committee report, including sections redacted for confidentiality. This order comes while the court considers a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) demanding the initiation of criminal proceedings against the offenders named in the report. The Justice Hema Committee report was released by the Kerala government on Monday (August 19), four-and-a-half years after it was submitted to the Chief Minister. The 233-page document provides a damning indictment of the discrimination and exploitation faced by women in the Malayalam film industry.

What led to the formation of the Justice Hema Committee?

On February 17, 2017, a leading Malayalam film actress was abducted and sexually assaulted in her car by a group of men. A prominent actor would later be implicated in the case which sparked outrage across Kerala, and brought under the scanner the discriminatory treatment faced by women in the Malayalam film industry. The Women in Cinema Collective (WCC), comprising women actors, producers, directors and technicians, was formed in response to this incident. On May 18, 2017 the WCC submitted a petition to the Kerala Chief Minister demanding an inquiry into the incident, and larger gender issues plaguing the state's film industry. In July, the state government formed a three-member committee headed by Justice K Hema, a retired Kerala High Court judge, to look into issues of sexual harassment and pervasive gender inequality in the Malayalam film industry. After speaking to multiple women in the industry on a variety of issues, the Committee submitted a 295-page report to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in December 2019.

What was the reason behind the delay in the release of the report?

Many have criticised the delay in the release of the Hema Committee report. On Monday, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said "It is utterly shameful and shocking that the government sat on this report for nearly five years now". Congress' V D Satheesan, the Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly, alleged that the Left government was protecting powerful individuals in the film industry. "Whose interest did the government want to protect by hushing up a chain of atrocities?" he said. The government has, however, maintained that the delay in publishing the report was due to the sensitive information it contained, and the privacy concerns which it raised. "Justice Hema had written to the government on February 19, 2020, urging that the report not be released due to the sensitive nature of the information," the Chief Minister said on Tuesday. In March 2022, Kerala Cultural Affairs Minister Saji Cherian, while responding to a question in the state Assembly, had said that the confidentiality of multiple respondents would be violated if the report were to be released.

Why has the report been released now?

In January 2022, the Kerala government formed a panel to work out a plan to



implement the recommendations of the Hema Commission report. This panel came up with vague draft recommendations in May 2022. Subsequently, five Right to Information activists and media personnel approached the Kerala State Information Commission (KSIC) for more details. The KSIC on July 6, 2024, ruled in favour of a controlled release of the report to the petitioners. Sixty three pages of the report were redacted before its scheduled release on August 14. The Kerala High Court stayed the report's release following a petition by film producer Saji Parayil, who argued that its publication would violate the right to privacy of individuals (including himself), and possibly expose them to retaliation and harassment. This petition was eventually dismissed. A plea to the High Court by actress Ranjini, who had deposed before the Committee, further delayed the report. In her plea, she said: "I have the legal right to know how my statement has been recorded on the report". This petition too was dismissed, and the report was finally released on Monday.

What does the Hema Committee report say?

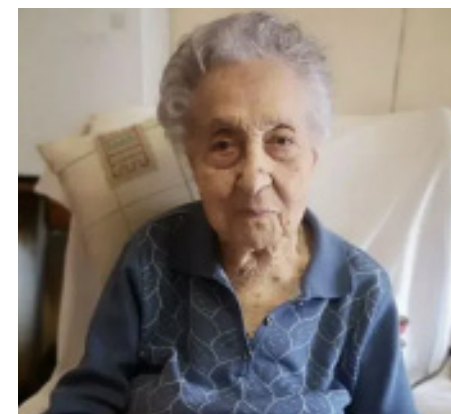
Some key takeaways from the report are: * A culture of sexual harassment pervades the Malayalam film industry. The Committee reported the existence of casting couch (wherein powerful men demand sexual favours from women in return for opportunities in films), frequent suggestive and vulgar comments made by men at the workplace, and drunk male co-actors forcing themselves into rooms of women, among other things. * A fear of retribution prevents sexual harassment from being reported. Justice Hema writes in the report: "Many who were examined before the committee were afraid to reveal things which they experienced... we realised that

their fear is well-founded." Beyond direct retribution, the report also mentions the fear of cyber harassment, especially from toxic fan clubs, as a means by which women are forced into silence. * An all-male "mafia" of influential actors and producers calls the shots across the industry, and wields their power with impunity. "No man nor woman dare to utter any word which may offend anyone belonging to the power group, because such a person will be wiped off the

industry by the powerful lobby," the report says. * A male-dominated industry has failed to offer even basic facilities to women, including the lack of toilets and changing rooms on sets. The report says that women staff on film sets continue to remain at the mercy of open spaces or shared bathrooms to relieve themselves, often risking UTIs and hospital admission. * Lack of gender parity with respect to remuneration is primarily due to the absence of written contracts.

Maria Branyas, world's oldest person, passes away at 117 in Spain

Madrid: Maria Branyas, an American-born Spaniard considered the world's oldest person at 117 years old, has died, her family said. In a post on Branyas' X account, her family wrote in Catalan: "Maria Branyas has left us. She has gone the way she wanted: in her sleep, at peace, and without pain." The Gerontology Research Group, which validates details of people thought to be 110 or older, listed Branyas as the oldest known person in the world after the death of French nun Lucile Randon last year. The next oldest person listed by the Gerontology Research Group is now Japan's Tomiko Itooka, who is 116 years old. Branyas was born in San Francisco on March 4, 1907. After living for some years in New Orleans, where her father founded a magazine, her family returned to Spain when she was young. Branyas said that she had memories of crossing the Atlantic Ocean during World War I. Her X account is called "Super



Catalan Grandma" and bears the description: "I am old, very old, but not an idiot." At age 113, Branyas tested positive for Covid-19 during the global pandemic, but avoided developing severe symptoms that claimed tens of thousands of older Spaniards.

Iran's electronic confrontation with Israel

ZIV HOSPITAL is nestled at the bottom of Safed, the highest city in Israel, not far from the border with Syria and Lebanon. In November the hospital acknowledged that hackers had penetrated its computer systems. An Iran-backed hacking group would later claim to have gained access to 500 gigabytes of patient data, including 100,000 medical records linked to Israeli soldiers. That is hardly unusual. Hackers regularly target and breach hospitals, usually to extort ransoms. The digital assault on Ziv, however, embodied the cyberwar raging between Israel and its enemies in the aftermath of Hamas's massacre of Israelis on October 7th. The attack was novel in several respects, says Gaby Portnoy, the head of the Israel National Cyber Directorate (INCD), the country's defensive cyber-agency, in an interview with *The Economist*. For one thing, it was a joint operation conducted by Iran and its ally Hizbullah, the militia and political party that dominates Lebanon. "They didn't work so well together until October 7th," he says. "We now see them...exchanging targets, exchanging capabilities. They are almost the same."

The choice of target also broke with the past. Iran and Hizbullah had not previously attacked Israeli hospitals, says Mr Portnoy, a retired brigadier-general. After October 7th Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, ordered cyber-operations against Israel to be expanded, he says, citing Israeli intelligence. The result has been a barrage both more intense and more refined. The rate of cyberattacks against Israel rose three-fold after October 7th. Iranian ones have grown more sophisticated, with less spillover beyond the intended target. "They are more accurate, they collect better intel and they go to the right places," says Mr Portnoy. "They know more about Israel, sometimes, than we do." Previously it would take Iran weeks to exploit software vulnerabilities that had become public, he adds. That has fallen to days. None has succeeded in disrupting Israel's critical infrastructure, such as power or water systems, in part thanks to digital sensors placed inside the networks of crucial facilities after October 7th. Most of the intrusions are, in essence, a form of harassment rather than anything resembling an armed attack. Some are meant for espionage rather than subversion. But many are also a form of information warfare. Know your enemy

Some Iran-linked hackers have masqueraded as the families of hostages captured by Hamas, with the aim of widening divisions in Israeli society. Iranian hackers have developed a sophisticated understanding of Israel's social and political fractures, notes a recent study by the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, with separate messages aimed at proponents and opponents of the war. In some cases, hackers intending to frighten Israelis need not even hack anything, notes James Shires of the European Cyber Conflict Research Institute. For example, an Iranian group leaked footage purporting to be from outside Israel's Nevatim air base. It was, in fact, from an unrelated site on a road of the same name in northern Israel. "You get the effect by getting attention on it," he says.

Hamas itself, apart from some early hacking of surveillance cameras in Israel,



has been almost irrelevant as a cyber force since December, says Mr Portnoy. He chalks that up to Israel's war in Gaza, which has disrupted the group's hackers as well as its fighters. More broadly, Mr Portnoy, a veteran of Unit 8200, an elite intelligence unit that conducts offensive cyber-operations, acknowledges that protecting Israel's computer networks requires penetrating enemy ones: "You cannot do defence without offensive acts." That is partly to identify the sources of attacks. But it is also to punch back. Consider Predatory Sparrow, a hacking group suspected to be a front for the Israeli government. In 2021 it disrupted the rail network and petrol stations across Iran, and hacked into digital billboards to display messages mocking Mr Khamenei. A follow-up in 2022 damaged three Iranian steel factories, spewing molten steel across the floor of one plant. In December it struck again, bringing down 70% of the petrol stations in Iran, declaring: "This cyberattack comes in response to the aggression of the Islamic Republic and its proxies."

Israeli officials do not publicly acknowledge their role in these attacks. But Mr Portnoy insists that Israel shares the same "norms and values" as Western offensive cyber-agencies. "We will not do things that our enemies are doing to us," he says. "We are very concerned not to harm people, not to influence civilian life too much." Predatory Sparrow attacks—unlike Russian or North Korean attacks on critical infrastructure in the past—show signs of restraint and careful design, notes J.D. Work of the National Defence University in Washington. He cites features that prevent the malware from spreading to unrelated networks and the decision to use "well-known, extensively documented" tools rather than novel ones, which could result in the proliferation of advanced cyber capabilities. The result is a lopsided cyberwar of "very unequal actors", says Mr Shires. Israel has repeatedly shown it can do spectacular harm to the computer networks controlling some of Iran's key infrastructure. Despite its progress, Iran's capabilities are "not much better than mid-

level organised crime gangs", says a source. Israeli officials fear that could change suddenly. Iran has provided drones, shells and other arms to Russia for use in Ukraine; a concern is that Russia might reciprocate with cyber tools or know-how. That would be a surprise. Russia has

long used those tools to snoop on Iran itself, sometimes cannily pocketing intelligence that has been collected by Iranian spies. Even so, the lack of precedent does not reassure Israeli officials. "Iran," says Mr Portnoy, "in a click of a button could have superpower capabilities".

Scoot wants more Indian airports to be included in India-Singapore air services agreement

The current bilateral air services agreement between India and Singapore allows for connectivity between the city state and 24 Indian cities, which include the six major Indian metropolitan cities and 18 other cities. (File Photo) The current bilateral air services agreement between India and Singapore allows for connectivity between the city state and 24 Indian cities, which include the six major Indian metropolitan cities and 18 other cities.

Singapore Airlines group's low-cost airline Scoot is excited about the market potential in tier two and three cities in India and hopes that the bilateral air services agreement between India and Singapore will be expanded to allow direct flights between the city state and more Indian cities. With rapid growth in air travel in India and a large number of Indians now travelling overseas, a number of markets in the country have significant growth potential from Scoot's perspective but are not part of the India-Singapore air services agreement, said Brian Torrey, General Manager – India and West Asia at Scoot. Torrey did not list any of these high-potential Indian airports or markets that currently do not have direct connectivity with Singapore. He said that as India builds more airports in the near future, "hopefully" there will be changes in the air services agreement to include more airports. The current bilateral air services agreement between India and Singapore allows for connectivity between the city state and 24

Indian cities, which include the six major Indian metropolitan cities and 18 other cities. Torrey added that while Scoot and Singapore Airlines have the expansion of bilateral rights in their wishlist, the decision rests with the governments of the two countries. Scoot and Singapore Airlines currently operate flights to a total of 13 cities in India. Scoot operates over 40 weekly flights from Singapore to six Indian cities—Chennai, Amritsar, Tiruchirappalli, Coimbatore, Thiruvananthapuram, and Visakhapatnam. Parent Singapore Airlines, which is a full-service carrier, operates flights to the major Indian metros and a few other cities. Torrey said that Scoot is constantly evaluating network expansion opportunities in India, but there is no plan to launch a new service in the immediate-to-near term. India is among the top four markets for Scoot, in addition to Singapore, China, and Australia. According to senior executives at Scoot, the India's fast-growing middle class is a key market segment for the airline as a growing number of upwardly mobile Indians are now travelling to overseas destinations. Apart from being a popular destination among Indians, Singapore also serves as a major international hub with significant volumes of transfer traffic to other international markets. According to estimates, around 40 per cent of Scoot's passenger traffic from India is connecting traffic to destinations beyond Singapore. These include popular destinations in Southeast Asia, China, and Australia.