

Eye ailments on the rise in Telangana

Hyderabad: A concerted effort to identify vulnerable populations with visual impairment has become the need of the hour, as multiple research papers have not only indicated the rising burden of eye ailments among the general population but also linked vision loss to cognitive decline among the elderly population. While the previous BRS government had exclusive financial allocations for mass eye-screening camps in the form of Kanti Velugu, the Congress government has yet to frame a public health policy to respond to the high prevalence of visual impairment and identify vulnerable populations needing surgical intervention. Currently, the only initiative active in identifying the visually impaired in the State is the Central-government sponsored National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB).

While the last two initiatives of Kanti Velugu were led by officials from NPCB and the Directorate of Public Health (DPH), Telangana, this time around, there has been no special financial allocation in the State budget for such initiatives. "The State government has to come up with initiatives like mass eye screening programme but so far, we have not received any such directives or financial allocations," senior officials from the Health Department said. A recent study on rural population aged 40 years and above conducted by city-based L V Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI) in Adilabad and Mahabubnagar indicated that the age-adjusted and gender-adjusted prevalence of visual impairment was 15 percent among 6,150 individuals. Published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), the study said that



the odds of having visual impairment were higher among women, and cataract (55 %) was the leading cause of visual impairment followed by uncorrected refractive errors for visual impairment (VI). A similar population-based study, this time conducted on school-going children (4 to 15 years) in

Telangana by LVPEI, indicated a high prevalence of VI. According to the study, out of 7,74,184 children who were screened, the prevalence of VIS among children was 1.16 percent. Another recent study on the elderly conducted by LVPEI indicated that elderly people with vision

loss had a four times chance of cognitive impairment when compared to those without vision loss. While less than 30 per cent of elderly with mild vision impairment had cognitive impairment, this steadily increases as vision impairment worsens, the study said.

35% of new mothers struggle to breastfeed, study finds

Fortunately through this initiative, nearly 22 percent of the mothers who had problems are now able to breastfeed on account of access to better diet and counselling, says Mujtaba Hasan Askari of HHF.

Hyderabad: Nearly 35 percent of new mothers are unable to breastfeed their newborns due to various reasons, data analysis at 5 lactation centers established at different locations in Hyderabad by voluntary organization Helping Hand Foundation (HHF) in collaboration with Wipro Care. Out of the 35 percent, nearly half of them are unable to lactate at all while 30 percent of them have health issues due to which they are unable to breastfeed and 25 percent of them are unable to lactate because of frequent pregnancies, HHF on Monday said.

The lactation management centers were established to promote breastfeeding in a friendly environment at home, work,

and public spaces. To help mothers lactate better, HHF, which is organizing a series of awareness camps at the lactation centres to mark World Breastfeeding week between August 1 and 7, is providing nutritional support and counselling to new mothers. Fortunately through this initiative, nearly 22 percent of the mothers who had problems are now able to breastfeed on account of access to better diet and counselling, says Mujtaba Hasan Askari of HHF. The lactation Management centers are focusing on lactating mothers' physical and mental health, family support, Nutrition and regular counseling, says Dr. Ameena Afshan, Community Medical Officer at HHF- Wipro Primary Health care center, Pahadi Shareef.



Why tennis' once tenuous relationship with the Olympics has changed

Among the most striking images from Paris 2024 have been those of the jam-packed stands at the iconic Roland-Garros. Seat of the second Major of the year, the French Open, it is now playing host to the Olympic tennis event for only the first time in its history. The jamboree may be because of the star appeal. Five of the ATP's top-10, including four of the top-five, and eight of the WTA's top-10 featured in the draw in Paris. And there is a special following for a battered Rafael Nadal willing himself through matches, a bruised Andy Murray escaping reality and hiding the timelessness of an athlete's struggle, and an ambitious Novak Djokovic looking to add that one singles gold medal which will make his the best CV in men's tennis history. Stark contrast

This is a far cry from the late 1980s and 1990s when tennis was reintroduced as a medal sport (in 1988) after a lengthy hiatus since 1924. Though the legendary Steffi Graf won the gold at Seoul 1988 and went on to complete the 'Golden Slam' (winning all four Majors and the Olympic gold in a single season), Stefan Edberg was the only notable name among men that year. Pete Sampras, the best player of the 1990s, turned up only for Barcelona 1992, and that came when he had won none of his 14 Major titles. At Atlanta 1996, only three of the ATP's top-10 were present. Fellow racquet sports, table tennis and badminton, made their debuts as official medal disciplines in 1988 and 1992 respectively, and in no time the Olympic gold became the ultimate honour in those sports. Tennis, in contrast, gave the greatest sporting extravaganza in the universe the cold shoulder. But not anymore. Tennis' once tenuous relationship with the Olympic movement has seemingly ceased and the two are now moving hand in hand. If Naomi Osaka lit the Olympic flame at Tokyo 2020, tennis had an outsized presence at the opening ceremony in Paris, with Nadal, Serena Williams and Amelie Mauresmo all being part of the torch relay. The United States of America, which has no dearth of Olympic champions, gave debutant tennis player and World No. 2 Coco Gauff the pride of place, bestowing the opportunity to be the nation's flag-bearer alongside basketball legend LeBron James. Nadal, injured for a good part of the last two years, skipped Wimbledon to get ready for the Olympics. Murray could have had a poetic farewell at home at Wimbledon, where he won two of his three Majors, but instead chose the Olympics as the finish line. Djokovic, who has a singles bronze from Beijing 2008, braved a surgically repaired knee and a radical shift in surfaces — from clay to grass to clay, with the hard courts to follow — to go on a hunt for the singles gold. The duality of the sport Tennis has long been characterised by a certain duality. Competitors prize themselves for being 'independent contractors', defined only by their ranking and not nationality. Fan support has mirrored this, with allegiance more to the player than the country. Until Roger Federer retired, a ticket to his match was the most important possession. In recent years, the four Grand Slam tournaments — Australia



lian Open, French Open, Wimbledon and US Open — have only grown in popularity and stature despite having a negligible percentage of homegrown winners. But the sport has also been a vehicle for national identity and tribalistic fandom. In the Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup (erstwhile Fed Cup), tennis has two team competitions with decades-long history. Sampras may have once famously said that winning Slams and staying No.1 were his priorities and that if he tried to play Davis Cup, "those other things will be in jeopardy", but for the smaller nations, Cup success is the ticket to worldwide stardom. As Vijay Amritraj has repeatedly stressed, wherever he played, even at the hallowed Wimbledon Centre Court, it was not he but always "an Indian" who was playing. What we are seeing now is the shrinking of the space between these two divergent strands. The spirit of tennis is no longer torn between being global and being nationalistic but is comfortable in the skin of both. This has been primarily driven by top players' changed approach towards the Olympic Games. They increasingly cherish the camaraderie and the larger purpose of competing for one's country rather than just the individual self. "You can only play a match at the Olympics once every four years and it's a different feeling when you're wearing the outfit with the national colours," Angelique Kerber, a three-time Slam titlist, told Vogue. "Being together in the Olympic Village... you don't get that kind of atmosphere at a normal tournament — not even at the Grand Slams."

It doesn't seem to matter that the Games offer no prize money. Ranking points, which were introduced at Sydney 2000, were removed ahead of Rio 2016. The Olympics also doesn't have an exclusive slot in the calendar. The Citi Open in Washington DC, one of the key tune-ups before the US Open, is on concurrently. A prominent pit stop Yet, the big stars of the

game have made the Olympics a prominent pit stop, unmindful of the thousands of air miles to be clocked, geographies to be traversed and time zones to get adjusted to.

The last four singles gold medallists among men have been Nadal (Beijing 2008), Murray (London 2012 and Rio 2016) and Alexander Zverev (Tokyo 2020). Venus Williams won the gold at Sydney 2000, Justine Henin at Athens 2004 and Serena Williams at London 2012. Venus and Serena combined to secure back-to-back doubles gold medals in 2008 and 2012. Jack Sock, who won the doubles bronze with Steve Johnson and mixed doubles gold with Bethanie Mattek-Sands at Rio 2016, said ahead of Tokyo 2020 that those two medals would be the first things he would show his kids. "If you talk to the average person who doesn't know tennis and you say you won the Madrid 1000, they will look at you like you're talking a different language," the American opined. "If you say you won a gold medal, they will know exactly what you mean." The transforma-

tion may also be because of tennis' increasing global footprint. Australia, France, Great Britain and the United States were the early hegemonic forces and the championships in these countries form the four most important events in the calendar. Davis Cup, which began in 1900, gave players from these nations a taste of nationalistic flavour, and until 1974, there wasn't a Cup winner other than these four. But the rise of central and eastern Europe, and Asia and the rest of the Americas, has democratised the scene and given a new dimension to tennis' relationship with nationalism. Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov winning gold at Sydney 2000, Chile's Nicolas Massu at Athens 2004 and Puerto Rico's Monica Puig at Rio 2016 were examples of this. Djokovic, a demigod in Serbia, is desperate to be the next. "I had the greatest honour of carrying the Serbian flag in the opening ceremony [London 2012]," Djokovic told itftennis.com in May. "It's so special to be part of the oldest sports event in history. Winning a gold medal or any medal for my country is a great wish and desire. It is one of my greatest priorities and goals."

New cave fish discovered in Meghalaya

A group of scientists has identified a new species of loach in Meghalaya's South Garo Hills district, near Bangladesh border. Loach is a freshwater bottom-dwelling fish and found across rivers in South East Asia. The species, *Schistura sonarengaensis*, was discovered in Sonarenga, Nakama, and Chiabol caves in the district. The species is distinguished by its prominent eyes and 13-26 vertically elongated to circular black blotches on a

grayish-black mid-lateral stripe, over a dull white or pale-beige body, it added. Despite lacking the typical adaptations for subterranean life, such as complete loss of eyes or pigmentation, this species shows reduced pigmentation compared to surface-dwelling relatives. Genetic molecular analysis has confirmed its distinction from other known species in the region. While these cave-dwelling fish are somewhat pale, they are not blind like other cave species found in Jaintia and Khasi Hills.

Cure SMA India Organizes Successful 2nd Edition of "Run/Ride for SMA" Awareness Event in Hyderabad



Cure SMA India, a non-governmental organization dedicated to raising awareness of Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA), successfully organized the 2nd edition of the "Run/Ride for SMA" event on 4th August, 2024 at the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad. The event, which commenced at 6:30 AM, witnessed the participation of over 1,500 enthusiasts, including parents of SMA warriors, adult SMA patients, and members of the general public. The event featured a 5K and 10K run/ride to help raise awareness about this rare

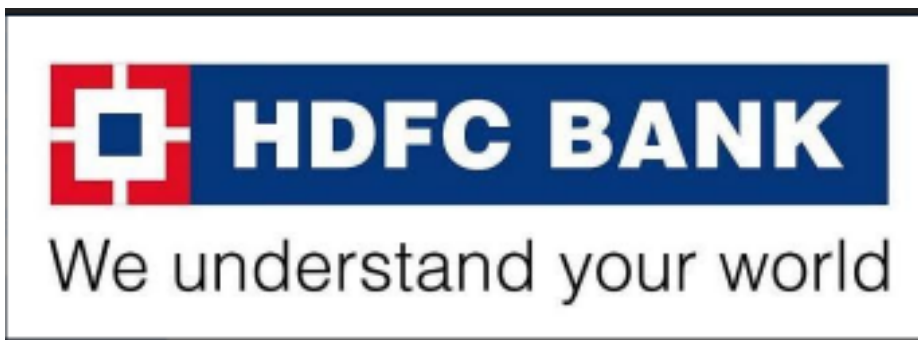
genetic disorder that affects the motor neurons. The 2nd season of the "Run/Ride For SMA" event was flagged off by esteemed guests, including Dr. A. Ramkishan, Deputy Drugs Controller (India), CDSCO Hyderabad Zonal Office, Smt. Dr. Radha Rama Devi, Senior Consultant Pediatrician - Geneticist, Rainbow Children's Hospital, Dr. Maruthi Sai, Expert Consultant in leading pharmaceutical, biotech and clinical research organizations and Ms. Archana Suresh, Director, Telangana Social Impact Group (T-SIG),



CSR wing Srilakshmi Nalam, Co-founder, Trustee and Director of Patient Advocacy at Cure SMA India, emphasized the importance of raising awareness about SMA and the need for pharmaceutical companies to collaborate in addressing rare conditions like this. She also shared the inspiring journey of her own son, who has overcome the challenges posed by SMA and is now employed in a reputable company. The event also saw the participation of several other distinguished guests, including Major General (Retd) Dr. AVK Mohan, Dr. Lokesh

Lingappa and Dr. Ramesh Konanki from Rainbow Children's Hospital, Mr. Anup Panda and Mrs. Archana Panda from Cure SMA India, and Mr. Satish, the Regional Coordinator of Cure SMA India. The event concluded with the organizers awarding medals to the participants who successfully completed the 5K and 10K runs/rides. Cure SMA India's unwavering commitment to improving the lives of SMA patients and their families is commendable, and this event stands as a testament to their efforts in raising awareness and fostering a supportive community.

RBI Policy Preview: Time for some dovishness?



The central bank is expected to keep its policy rate unchanged at 6.5% at its upcoming meeting on 8th August. However, we do see an increasing possibility of either a change in stance to neutral (current stance at "withdrawal of accommodation") or a dovish pivot in the RBI's rhetoric in this policy. Although, it does remain a close call.

The Why?

Fed rate cut in September highly likely: For one, expectations of a rate cut by the Fed have increased significantly over the last few weeks, with calls of a 50bps rate cut as early as September and cumulative rate cuts of 115bps expected in 2024. While some of these expectations do seem overstretched at this stage, we do see a high chance of the Fed starting its rate cut cycle in September – delivering a cut of 25bps. This could have implications for the rupee and the RBI could start aligning its monetary policy with the global rate cycle to reduce any significant future policy deviations.

Monsoon progress has improved – bodes well for food inflation: Monsoon

progress has been healthy with overall rainfall at +6% above the long period average. There are deviations across different regions – with the south recording excess rainfall and the North-west seeing deficient rainfall – but the distribution is expected to improve as the monsoon season progresses. Kharif sowing is also above last years' level for major crops like rice and pulses. To this extent, food inflation risks seem broadly manageable and "not increasing in persistence" at this stage.

Core inflation has been low: Core inflation has been moderating for over 12 months now and while we could see some pick-up over the coming months (due to base effects, telecom tariff increases and some recovery in demand) it is still expected to average between 4-4.5% for FY25.

Liquidity balance has improved: Over the last month, system liquidity balances have moved into a surplus due to higher government spending and as the RBI absorbed dollar inflows -- injecting rupee liquidity -- to manage rupee volatility. While the RBI has regularly conducted VRRR op-

erations to absorb surplus liquidity, the WACR (weighted average call rate) has averaged below the policy rate at 6.44% in July 2024 and the central bank seems to be a little bit more comfortable with some liquidity surpluses in the system.

Bottom-line is that the RBI could use this policy to set the stage for an eventual rate cut later this year. If this were to happen, we could see further down moves in bond yields with the 10-year yield moving towards 6.80% levels.

Can a protein-rich diet cause gastric problems or harm kidneys?

New Delhi: Increasing protein intake may not be linked with gastro issues and kidney problems but a high-carb diet can cause severe harm, contended health experts on Monday. In India, protein intake is generally low, and a high-protein diet does not harm healthy kidneys.

According to the latest meta-analysis, published in the journal *Frontiers in Nutrition*, a high protein diet is associated with lower Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD).

The study led by Nanchang University researchers showed a lower CKD risk significantly associated with higher-level dietary total, plant, or animal protein (especially for fish and seafood) intake. "A high-carb diet often causes acid reflux, while increasing protein intake can mitigate this by lowering carbohydrate consumption. Conversely, a high-carb diet can lead to uncontrolled blood sugar in diabetics, potentially causing chronic disease," Shashikant Iyengar, Metabolic Health Coach, told IANS. "Having the recommended amount of protein is not hazard-

ous for healthy kidneys," added Dr. Sudhir Kumar from Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad, in a post on X. The top neurologist explained that "for adults (above the age of 18 years), the recommended protein intake is 1 gm, 1.3 gm, and 1.6 gm per kg body weight for people engaged in minimal, moderate and intense physical activity, respectively". According to the recent guidelines issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research and National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN), the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) for protein intake is 0.83g protein/kg/day for healthy men and women (requirements of 97.5 per cent of the population. However, the target is rarely met by most Indians, said the experts. Dr Piyush Ranjan, Senior Consultant & Vice Chairman, Department of Gastroenterology, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, told IANS that Dr Ranjan said "overall a balanced diet should include good quality and quantity of proteins. But excess intake especially of animal proteins and commercial supplements may be detrimental."

Madhapur witnessed grand Bonalu and Palaram Bandi celebrations



The Bonalu and Palaram Bandi celebrations, organized by E. Shanmukh Yadav, was a resounding success, attracting over 10,000 plus devotees who gathered to seek the blessings of the deity at Ayyappa Society, Madhapur, Hyderabad.

The event was graced by the presence of MLA Arikepudi Gandhi, Venkatesh Yadav, and local authorities. This year's festival, held on 04th August, was the sixth consecutive year that Shanmukh Yadav has organized the event, which has become a



highlight of the cultural calendar. The night was made colorful and vibrant by musical bands and Telangana's local art forms, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of the region. The festival's success is a testament to Shanmukh Yadav's dedication to pre-

serving and promoting the cultural traditions of Telangana.

The event's popularity has grown significantly over the years, with devotees coming from far and wide to participate in the festivities.

IEEE SEFET'24 Conference Concludes with Resounding Success



A 4-day IEEE SEFET'24 conference successfully concluded at The Plaza in Begumpet, Hyderabad. This outstanding event was orchestrated by the dedicated organizing committee from the Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering at Gokaraju Rangaraju Institute of Engineering and Technology (GRIET).

The 4-day conference served as a dynamic platform, uniting renowned experts, industry leaders, and passionate participants to explore the latest advancements in sustainable energy and future electric transportation. The event featured insightful tutorials, engaging industry ses-

sions, technical presentations, and keynote addresses from prestigious speakers, including IEEE Fellow Prof. Lalit Goel, Prof. Andy Knight, Prof. Subhashish Bhattacharya, Prof. Kaushik Rajashekara, Prof. Fred Wang, Prof. Pat Wheeler, and Prof. Biplab Sikdar, among others. The conference was further enriched by the Student and Young Professional (SYP) Programme, which included a panel discussion on academia-industry collaboration in electrification. The event also hosted a memorable cultural night and a gala dinner, fostering networking among participants and speakers. "The IEEE SEFET'24 conference was a tremendous success,

showcasing the latest advancements and facilitating meaningful discussions on sustainable energy and future electric transportation," said Dr. Phaneendra Babu Bobba, the convener of SEFET-2024. "We are grateful to the management of GRIET, the organizing committee, speakers,

panellists, and participants for their invaluable contributions to this outstanding event." The conference concluded with a valedictory session, where Chief Guest Dr. Rajkiran V Bilolikar, Director of the Administrative Staff College of India, and other distinguished guests shared their insights and appreciation for the event's impact.

Weirdest things you can find on Google Earth

The service compiles images from various sources, from satellites in geosynchronous orbit that snap low-resolution photos from tens of thousands of miles above Earth, to satellites closer to Earth that capture higher-resolution shots, and even aerial photos taken from airplanes, kites, drones and even balloons

There are many, many weird things seen on Google Earth. The service compiles images from various sources, from satellites in geosynchronous orbit that snap low-resolution photos from tens of thousands of miles above Earth, to satellites closer to Earth that capture higher-resolution shots, and even aerial photos taken from airplanes, kites, drones and even balloons. The imagery is available to anyone who downloads the software, and archaeologists have taken advantage of this rich

resource. Here's a look at some of the strangest

Scientists discovered more than 50 geoglyphs across northern Kazakhstan in Central Asia, including this swastika-shaped design. Though the swastika symbol was created from timber, many of the geoglyphs were made of earthen mounds. The geoglyphs seem to date back 2,000 years. At the time, swastikas were not uncommon across Europe and Asia and were not of course affiliated with any political beliefs. This Google Earth image is an eye-full and a mouthful, as it's an island-in-a-lake-on-an-island-in-a-lake-on-an-island. Yes, Google Earth captured this image showing a tiny island that resides inside a crater lake on an island called Volcano Island in a lake called Taal lake on the Philippine island of Luzon.

Haryana becomes the only state in the country to procure all crops at MSP

Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), August 5: In an historical decision in the interest of farming community, the Haryana Government has decided to procure all crops at Minimum Support Price (MSP). Now 10 crops namely Ragi, Soybean, Kalatil (Nigerseed), Safflower, Barley, Maize, Jowar, Jute, Khopra and Moong (Summer) will also be procured at MSP in the state. A decision to this effect has been taken by State cabinet which met under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saini here on Monday. The Haryana Government will bear all the expenses of procuring these crops at MSP. In this regard, the Chief Minister had made the above announcement in a public meeting held at Thanesar Vidhan Sabha of Kurukshetra district on August 4, 2024. The approval given by the Cabinet just 24 hours after the announcement shows the commitment of the state government. The objective of increasing the scope of MSP for these crops is to stabilize market prices, ensure constant income for farmers and promote the cultivation of diverse crops. The main objective of the Haryana government is to stabilize and increase the income of the farmer. This decision of the government will also promote crop diversification.

In another move aimed at providing relief to the farming community, the Haryana Cabinet took a landmark decision to discontinue the levy of Abiana from farmers, effective April 1, 2024. This decisive action will result in a substantial one-time waiver of approximately Rs. 133.55 crore, benefitting farmers across the state. Abiana, which is currently imposed on farmers for irrigation purposes, has been a significant financial burden. The discontinuation of Abiana will also provide annual relief amounting to Rs 54 crore, positively impacting farmers in 4,299 villages throughout Haryana. It was also decided in the meeting that the notices sent to farmers for depositing Abiana after April 1, 2024, will also be withdrawn. Apart from this, if any farmer has deposited Abiana after April 1, 2024, then that amount will also be refunded to the farmer.

A release of the state government claims that this decision underscores the government's commitment to supporting the farming community and alleviating their financial pressures. By removing this levy, the state aims to ease the economic burden on farmers and enhance their overall well-being. Showing a hopeful future to the Agniveers, Haryana Cabinet has also approved the Haryana Agniveer Policy, 2024, which aims to provide comprehensive employment and entrepreneurship opportunities to Agniveers after their completion of service in the Armed Forces. The Haryana Agniveer Policy, 2024, offers significant benefits in government recruitment, including a 10% horizontal reservation for Agniveers in direct recruitment for positions such as Constable, Mining Guard, Forest Guard, Prison Warder, and SPOs. The Agniveer shall be exempted from the written exam in case of these posts.

Apart from this, there will be a 5% horizontal reservation for Group C civil posts and a 1% horizontal reservation for Group



B posts related to the Agniveers' skill specializations. The policy also includes age relaxation of three years for Group B and C posts, with a five-year age relaxation for the first batch of Agniveers. Furthermore, Agniveers will be exempted from the Common Eligibility Test requirement for Group C posts. They shall be exempt from both written test and skill test in case they have been awarded the requisite skill certificate. For self-employment and entrepreneurship, the policy provides a subsidy

of Rs. 60,000 annually to industries employing Agniveers, provided they are paid a salary exceeding Rs. 30,000 per month, including the subsidy amount. Agniveers will receive priority for gun licenses provided they fulfil conditions set out in Arms Act, preference in deployment through the Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam Limited (HKRNL), and interest-free loans for up to three years for principal amount up to Rs. 5 lakhs to start their own businesses. It is worth noting the fact that in the financial

year 2022-23, a total of 1,830 Agniveers were selected from Haryana, and around 2,215 were recruited in 2023-24. After their four-year engagement, Agniveers will have the opportunity to apply for enrolment in the regular cadre of the Indian Army, with up to 25% of each batch being considered based on objective criteria, including performance during their service period. The policy will be implemented in 2026-27 when the first batch of Agniveers is relieved from the defence forces.

What life feels like when earth's temperatures soar to record highs

In the unrelenting heat of Morocco's Middle Atlas, people were sleeping on rooftops. Hanna Ouhbour needed refuge too, but she was outside a hospital waiting for her diabetic cousin who was in a room without air conditioning. On Wednesday, there were 21 heat-related deaths at Beni Mellal's main hospital as temperatures spiked to 48.3 degrees C in the region of 575,000 people, most lacking air conditioning.

"We don't have money and we don't have a choice," said Ouhbour, a 31-year-old unemployed woman from Kasba Tadla, an even warmer city that some experts say is among the hottest on Earth. "The majority of the deaths were among people suffering from chronic diseases and the elderly, as the high temperatures contributed to the deterioration of their health condition and led to their death," Kamal Elyansli, the regional director of health, said in a statement. This is life and death in the heat.

As the warming Earth sizzled through a week with four of the hottest days ever measured, the world focused on cold, hard numbers that showed the average daily temperature for the entire planet. But the 17.16 degrees C reading recorded on Monday doesn't convey how oppressively sticky any one particular place became at the peak of sunshine and humidity. The thermometer doesn't tell the story of warmth that just wouldn't go away at night so

people could sleep. The records are about statistics, keeping score. But people don't feel data. They feel the heat. "We do not need any scientists to tell us what the temperature is outside as this is what our body tells us instantly," said Humayun Saeed, a 35-year-old roadside fruit seller in Pakistan's cultural capital of Lahore. Saeed had to go to the hospital twice in June because of heat stroke.

"The situation is much better now, as it was not easy to work in May and June because of the heat wave, but I have been avoiding the morning walk," Saeed said. "I may resume it in August when the temperature will go further down." The heat was making Delia, a 38-year-old pregnant woman standing outside a Bucharest, Romania, train station, feel even more uncomfortable. Daytime was so hot she was drowsy. With no air conditioning at night, she considered sleeping in her car like a friend had.

"I've really noticed a very big increase in temperatures. I think it was the same for everyone. I felt it even more because I am pregnant," said Delia, who only provided her first name. "But I guess it wasn't just me. Really everyone felt this." Self-described weather nerd Karin Bumbaco was in her element, but then it became just a little too much when Seattle had day after day of much warmer than normal heat. "I

love science. I love the weather. I have since I was a little kid," said Bumbaco, the deputy state climatologist for Washington. "It's sort of fun to see daily records get broken. ... But in recent years just living through it and actually feeling the heat has become just more miserable on a day-to-day basis."

"Like this recent stretch we've had. I wasn't sleeping very well. I don't have AC at my home," Bumbaco said. "I was watching the thermostat every morning be a little warmer than the previous warm morning. It was just building up the heat in the house and I just couldn't wait for it to be over." For climate scientists around the world, what had been an academic exercise about climate change literally hit home. "I've been analyzing these numbers from the cool of my office, but the heat has started to affect me as well, causing sleepless nights due to warmer urban temperatures," said Roxy Mathew Koll, a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology in Pune, Maharashtra, which normally has a relatively mild climate. "My children return home from school during the peak hours exhausted," Koll said. "Last month one of my colleagues' mother died from heat stroke in north India." Philip Mote, a climate scientist and dean of the graduate school at Oregon State University, had moved in junior high to California's Central Valley and its triple digit summer heat.

The problem with the early landslide warning Kerala did or did not receive

The Hindu's fact check of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's claims in Parliament found Kerala may not have had much inkling that landslides as devastating as those on July 31, in Wayanad, were going to occur, at least based on the content of forecasts the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and Agromet issued. But recall an important lesson the COVID-19 pandemic taught us: a new virus in a population will lead to more morbidity and mortality if the population is unhealthier. If more people fall ill, it does not necessarily mean the virus has become stronger: we will have to eliminate the confounding factor of population health first. In the same way, a "small landslide" of the kind the forecasts asked Kerala to expect could still have led to the loss of hundreds of lives and infrastructure worth crores of rupees because, over many years, people have set up shop in a dangerous place — and in many cases successive State governments have simply let them.

In fact, this has been an important lesson of climate change as well: if something goes wrong and anomalous weather is found to have had a part, a political narrative often emerges to demand the weather shoulder all the blame. Yet, the travails of anomalous weather will sooner impose on thatched roofs than brick-and-cement ones, for example, because what 'travail' or 'devastation' looks like depends on communities' and infrastructure's ability to resist abrupt changes to their material conditions. Our governments are responsible for inculcating this resilience, and the Wayanad landslides are an acute symptom of Kerala's shortage of it. The claim that Kerala had sufficient early warning of a deadly landslide in Wayanad, as Mr. Shah staked in Parliament, may have been false. Yet, the fact remains that if there had not been villages, hotels, homestays, roads, and railway tracks in the path of the Chaliyar river — whose fury destabilised the land — questions of the landslides' "bigness" or "smallness" may not be as important as they are today. Simply speaking, successive governments in the State have been neglecting the same actions for some time now. Ecologist and Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) chairman Madhav Gadgil told The Hindu "the disaster in Wayanad [was] a man-made tragedy" and attributed it to "the Kerala government's failure to implement crucial ecological recommendations". He also "criticised the State government for not adhering to the panel's guidelines designed to prevent such disasters amid extreme climate changes". The Kasturirangan Commission followed by diluting the WGEEP's recommendations, especially its estimate of the prevalence of 'ecologically sensitive areas': from 64% of the Western Ghats to 37%. The Kerala government had rejected the WGEEP's recommendations a decade ago over Wayanad's long-standing population of agricultural workers, whom the State could not readily move away. In fact, climate change expanding the zones of threat to new areas warrants a State-level mechanism to plan and control the migration of people to and settlements in different parts of Kerala — includ-



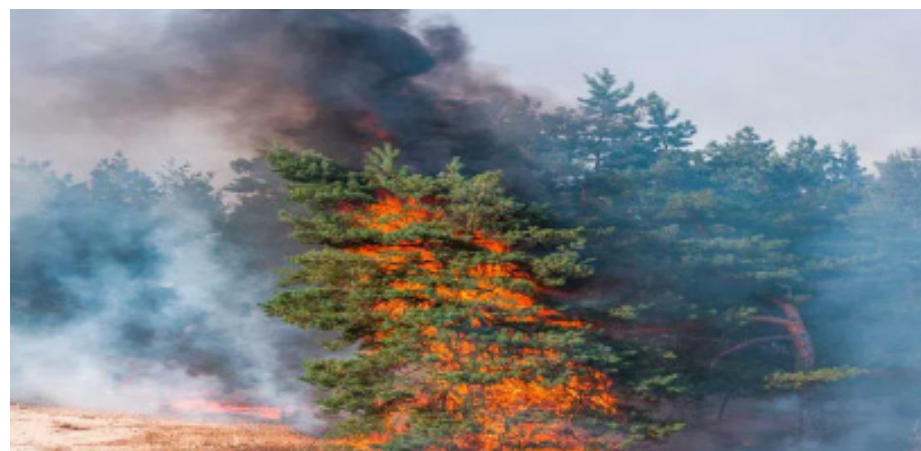
ing internally and based on the needs of specific communities, for example, tribals. The State also has a dense population distribution, meaning poor planning quickly places a large number of people in harm's way. A people-cum-place management policy may be the need of the hour. In parallel, the infrastructure development for tourism, resource extraction, and renewable energy projects are more recent as are the particularly deadly landslides. Even if their coincidence in time may be just that, a coincidence, Kerala needs to evaluate links between the two and act on its findings.

This conundrum has another important piece: whether the models based on which the IMD and its subscribers learn about potential impending disasters such as landslides and floods account for infrastructure development at specific sites or, importantly, whether they account for previous natural events in the same place. For example, as The Hindu's editorial on August 1 said, "heavy rains ... in 2020 had caused the Chaliyar to strip swaths of its upstream areas of plant cover, leaving more rocks and humus vulnerable to being displaced". The river brought these rocks and sediment tumbling down this year, rendering the resulting flood and landslide deadlier than they might have been without the heavy rains in 2020. Did the models account for this local quirk? Because they should. This said, a follow-up question: would it matter for Kerala's sake if the models had not accommodated the effects of the 2020 rains? Kerala desperately needs to bolster its ability to resist shocks. While Mr. Shah was wrong, fixating on his claims and the subsequent counterclaims could distract us into thinking the early warning Kerala did or did not receive last week could have ameliorated the devastation. Perhaps it could have; perhaps local authorities could have been mobilised to relocate people to safer ground. But these warnings can be hit-or-

miss given the vagaries of hyperlocal conditions and by virtue of being piecemeal in

the face of threats that simultaneously endanger people and places.

Defensive mechanism: Trees hold their breath



When wildfire smoke fills the air, doctors advise people to stay indoors to avoid inhaling harmful particles and gases. But what about trees and other plants that can't seek shelter?

When wildfire smoke fills the air, doctors advise people to stay indoors to avoid inhaling harmful particles and gases. But what about trees and other plants that can't seek shelter? Interestingly, some trees react similarly to humans by closing off their openings and essentially holding their breath. In the fall of 2020, during a severe wildfire season in the western US, researchers observed thick smoke passing through a field site in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. They measured the leaf-level photosynthesis of Ponderosa pines and discovered that the trees had completely

closed their pores, resulting in nearly zero photosynthesis. The researchers also checked the leaves' emissions of their usual volatile organic compounds and found very low levels, indicating that the leaves were not "breathing." They weren't taking in the carbon dioxide needed for growth nor releasing their usual chemicals. Surprised by these findings, the researchers attempted to restart photosynthesis by altering the leaves' temperature and humidity. This intervention cleared the leaves' "airways," leading to a sudden improvement in photosynthesis and a burst of volatile organic compounds. The data collected over months revealed that some plants respond to heavy wildfire smoke by shutting down their exchange with the outside air, effectively holding their breath.

Does Joe Root have the legs to scale Mount Tendulkar?

The name Charles Bannerman may not ring a bell. Neither would the relevance of a March day at Melbourne, way back in 1877. But for those invested in the classicism of Test cricket and for statisticians obsessed with numbers, March 15 of that year should have a resonance. On that day, which ushered in cricket's inaugural Test, Australian opener Bannerman scored the first ever run in the game's longest format. He went on to score 165 before retiring hurt and the host eventually defeated rival England by 45 runs. Since those old days, cricket has grown and evolved, and also dealt with disruptions like the two World Wars and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Numbers and obsessive fandom

Tests and the two limited-overs variants of ODIs and Twenty20s presently co-exist, carving out distinct loyalties and granular commercial muscle. While results matter as they define the yardstick for judgement in a team sport, individual numbers offer relevance, trivia and also fuel obsessive fandom. Readers of a certain vintage would have maintained a scrapbook, jotting down numbers stacked up by batters and bowlers. In the 1980s, it may have been a notepad with tables listed for Sunil Gavaskar, Vivian Richards, Javed Miandad, David Gower, Allan Border, Gordon Greenidge and Dilip Vengsarkar, with their individual scores in a Test noted down diligently, and then it would boil down to the whole thrill of finding out who was heading the batting race. Gavaskar scaled 'Mount 10,000' with that dainty late cut of Pakistani spinner Ijaz Faqih at Ahmedabad in 1987. At that time it seemed too high a peak for anyone to scale again. It was presumed as being akin to Sir Don Bradman's Test average of 99.94, a miracle that perhaps will remain untouched for eternity.

But cricket always presses forward, building new forts, moving past old ones, and triggering debates about different eras. Gavaskar's world records, be it 10,122 Test runs or 34 centuries, eventually gave way to the modern stars even if it was his contemporary Border who first went past his Test tally. Presently the Mumbai legend is placed 13th in the run-getters' list and is joint-sixth when it comes to hundreds. In both wings, a fellow Mumbaikar, Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar, reigns supreme with 15,921 runs and 51 tons. Again Tendulkar's numerical accomplishment is seen as a bridge too far to cross for batters, who have followed his path towards greatness.

But then change is a constant and Tendulkar's record in ODIs — 49 centuries — had to cede territory to Virat Kohli's current tally of 50! But as for Tests, Tendulkar's rarefied heights are seen as too far up in the stratosphere for mortals to ascend. Yet, whispers have begun with an incredulous air about a Yorkshire man perhaps having Tendulkar in his sights. At 33, Joe Root is still doing what he does best: accumulating runs. All this while staying under the radar, unlike the 'look at me' swag of a Kohli, the 'ain't I cute' aura of a Kane Williamson or the 'twitch and turn' hyperactivity of a Steve Smith. Against the West Indians, Root was among the runs, includ-

ing a 122 at Nottingham's Trent Bridge. Importantly, he now has 12,027 runs from 143 Tests, averaging 50.11, and with 32 hundreds to boot. He is 3,894 runs away from Tendulkar's peak and the fine print says much could change in the coming years. Limbs may tire, form could evaporate, desire might wane, but still remember this, there is a possibility. That could fuel Root's hopes, presuming he is thinking about it but not telling any of us. The sporting 30s is seen as a senior citizen zone, when in real life, at that same age, men and women are still finding their way, be it careers, hearts, matrimony or the whole purpose of life. However, modern fitness and medical standards and the assistance of support staff ranging from physios to nutritionists have aided the greatest of sportspersons to keep that twilight zone hanging around for long.

Years ago, there was a time when South African Graeme Smith was making waves in his debut season. Runs were plundered at will and the usual 'Oh, will he chase down Sachin?' talk did the rounds. Sport is a combination of a set history, a twitchy present and a future abounding with surprises. Speculation about the new challenger was rife even when Tendulkar was the reigning god of the willows, despite Brian Lara, Ricky Ponting, Rahul Dravid and Jacques Kallis being his shadows. There was also a phase when Imran Khan, just to perhaps inspire Inzamam-ul-Haq, said that the latter is a better player than Tendulkar. But Smith was seen as being cut from a different cloth and it so happened that Tendulkar was training at Bengaluru's Chinnaswamy Stadium.

It was a day with its slivers of sun, puffs of clouds and birdsong from Cubbon Park, but the maestro was in his zen mode, striking the ball both with care and vigour. Once the nets concluded and the sweat dried, Tendulkar began to stride towards the pavilion. A few scribes walked beside him and one television presenter asked the legend: "So Sachin, what do you think about Graeme Smith?" Tendulkar paused, a half-smile creasing his face, forehead wrinkled in thought, and then said: "He looks good, is scoring runs but we have to wait a bit, we have to give him some time". This was a man speaking after deep introspection and never was there a hint of envy.

He was right too because players making a splash on debut often tend to struggle in their second and third seasons, as by then the bowlers have observed their flaws, which then get lashed with boiling oil and rough salt in full public glare. Smith, having retired in 2014, is now 17th on the list with a tally of 9,265. Root has dealt with the vagaries of form, survived various Ashes battles, scored runs all over, against varying attacks and on diverse surfaces. He also has seemingly bolted well ahead of (Steve) Smith, Kohli and Williamson. Devoid of the pressures of captaincy, which is the preserve of Ben Stokes, Root can lengthen his career in the pursuit of runs and triumphs for England. In the years ahead, there will be tussles with the Indi-



ans and Australians, tough rivals adept at flipping pressure. Additionally, Root has to keep his head clear on the approach he wants to follow. Coach Brendon McCullum's 'The horses should gallop all the time' instruction may not always sit easy. Busy Root is from the obdurate soil of Yorkshire that in the past threw up a

Geoffrey Boycott, who used to compete with Gavaskar for batting glory. It is delicious that decades down the line, the Yorkshire-Mumbai joust has pitted Root against Tendulkar's jaw-dropping Test runs. Bannerman, resting in his grave, would never have imagined what he has unleashed.

US sues TikTok, claims endangerment of children's safety

New York: The US government has sued Chinese-owned social media giant TikTok, alleging that it endangered the safety of children by illegally collecting information from them and allowing them to share messages and videos with adults.

The US Justice Department announced on Friday that it had filed the lawsuit in a California federal court alleging violations of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) and failure to implement earlier court orders to comply with the law. "TikTok knowingly and repeatedly violated kids' privacy, threatening the safety of millions of children across the country," said Lina Khan, the head of the Federal Trade Commission, which joined the Justice Department in suing the short video behemoth.

The complaint against TikTok and its parent company ByteDance alleges that from 2019 onwards TikTok allowed children to create regular TikTok accounts and create, view, and share short-form videos and messages with adults. TikTok also collected personal information from even accounts in the Kids Mode, a limited version for children under 13, the complaint said.

The personal information included children's email addresses. When parents discovered their children's accounts and asked TikTok to delete the accounts and information, the company frequently did not honour those requests, the complaint added. Moreover, TikTok had "deficient and ineffectual internal policies and processes for identifying and deleting TikTok accounts created by children," the Justice

Department said. The government sued TikTok's predecessor, Musical.ly, in 2019 for COPPA violations, and the court ordered it to undertake specific measures to comply with the law, which they have not, according to the department. "The Department is deeply concerned that TikTok has continued to collect and retain children's personal information despite a court order barring such conduct," Acting Associate Attorney General Benjamin Mizer said. The lawsuit comes as a new, even more stringent law, the Kids Online Safety and Privacy Act, was approved by the Senate on Tuesday and is pending before the House of Representatives. This would extend some of the protections in COPPA to teenagers under 17 and also add more protection for children and teens.

TikTok, which was banned in India in 2020, has faced calls in the US for a similar ban from legislators and privacy advocates. Because it is a Chinese company under the jurisdiction of Beijing there are fears that the humongous trove of information it collects about Americans could be seized by the Chinese government and misused. In addition, TikTok has been accused of exploiting children by addicting them to its short videos. TikTok claimed that it had segregated US data and kept them in the US, but The Wall Street Journal reported in January that sometimes data is shared with the China-based parent company. Responding to the filing of the lawsuit, TikTok's Spokesperson Michael Hughes said the allegations pertained to past events and practices and were inaccurate.

What next for Wayanad?

Five years ago, in August 2019, a landslide killed 17 persons in Puthumala, a village in Kerala's Wayanad district. Houses, places of worship, shops and other establishments were wiped out, turning Puthumala into a deserted valley. Instead of these structures, which gave an address to Puthumala, this village has been reduced to a carpet of weeds. On July 30 this year, tragedy struck again, a few hillocks away, at Chooralimala and the nearby villages of Mundakkai and Attamala. However, the magnitude was manifold — as of August 2, the toll stands at 210 dead and 218 still missing. With near-zero chances of finding survivors, these villages under Meppadi panchayat have turned into a valley of the dead. While the survivors are for now lodged in relief camps in Meppadi panchayat, the government realises that its next big challenge would be to rehabilitate those rendered homeless by the landslides. However, the magnitude was manifold — as of August 2, the toll stands at 210 dead and 218 still missing. A day after the calamity, urging people to contribute generously to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF), Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said, "More resources are required to rebuild that region. Many people have promised assistance, but that is not enough. Generous contributions are required."

Kerala Public Works Department Minister Mohammed Riyas, a member of the Cabinet sub-committee on the matter, told The Indian Express, "Rehabilitation plans will be decided only after detailed discussions... For many survivors, we have to give them counselling to make them mentally strong. The education of their children will also have to resume at the earliest."

Puthumala, the village that was wiped out in the 2019 landslide and which now lies largely deserted, frames the government's rehabilitation challenge for Chooralimala, Attamala and Mundakkai, the three villages in Meppadi panchayat that have borne the brunt of the latest landslides. Most families left Puthumala after the 2019 tragedy, never to return, and no buildings were allowed by the panchayat in the area destroyed by the landslide. Aboobacker, the lone tea shop owner at Puthumala, says around 90 families lived here before the 2019 tragedy. "Now, less than a dozen families live here. Many had very good houses, which were abandoned after the landslide. People do not return to look after their agricultural land even where the landslide did not deposit rubble," he said. Survivors of the latest tragedy, now lodged in temporary camps, too, are resigned to the fact that they may have to start all over again. With nightmares of the landslide still lingering in their minds, many are reluctant to return to their now ravaged village, where hundreds of houses have been damaged, either completely or partially. With nightmares of the landslide still lingering in their minds, many are reluctant to return to their now ravaged village, where hundreds of houses have been damaged, either completely or partially. With nightmares of the landslide still lingering in their minds, many are reluctant to return to their now ravaged village, where hundreds of houses have been damaged, either completely or partially.

partially. 'There is a school at the foot of Vellarimala, by the side of Punnappuzha, dressed in white snow, standing tall, to impart the sweetness of knowledge, lifeline to the land' — these are the lyrics of a song released for the annual day celebrations of Vellarimala Government Vocational Higher Secondary School (GVHSS) in 2023. The school was razed to the ground in the July 30 landslide and more than 20 of its students are feared dead.

The song has emerged on social media once again, leaving the landslide survivors teary-eyed. "I saw the video on social media after the disaster (on July 30). It was painful to watch. My daughter Tanmaya studied there in Class 4. Now, we don't know if she will ever be able to go back to a school she loved so much. All I wanted was for her to get a good education, but now we are stuck here (at the relief camp)," says Janeesh. He says his daughter is yet to learn that at least three of her classmates are either dead or missing. "She knows that one of her friends is in hospital, but not that she is critical. I don't know how she will react once she learns about all these losses," says Janeesh. Vikas, a former student of the school who is now in his third year of college, says his friends and he would head to the school every evening to play football. "We even played there the evening before the landslide," says Vikas. As he shows a photograph on Instagram of the now-ravaged school and the ground after the landslide, Vikas's eyes grow damp. Some of his friends, he says, are lost to the disaster, others are still missing.

His father Ponnayyan, 60, a tailor-turned-lottery seller, too, has lost several neighbours and friends. "I don't know what's in store for us. I have two sons and they are yet to get jobs. We have to move to a new place now and start afresh. We have no savings either. All these years at Chooralimala, we lived as a community, helping each other. Now we have no option but to move away," says Ponnayyan. Mahadevi, in her late 60s, came to Wayanad from Karnataka several decades ago to work on the tea estates. She lost all three of her sons and their families in the tragedy. "There is no one left to do my last rites. I don't know what's the point of my life now. There is nothing left for me to look forward to," says Mahadevi. Like Mahadevi, Manickyam came to Wayanad from Salem in neighbouring Tamil Nadu in 1984. Like Mahadevi, Manickyam came to Wayanad from Salem in neighbouring Tamil Nadu in 1984. "I did several menial jobs after I came here and married a woman from Wayanad. We have four children, all of whom studied in Wayanad. This is now my home," says Manickyam, 66, who in 1999 bought 10 cents of land at Chooralimala for Rs 16,500 to build his house.

He is unsure of what the future holds for him. "Even if I want to go back to Salem, I can't sell my property here because no one will buy it," he says. After August 2019, the government rehabilitated 54 families from Puthumala on seven acres at Kottapadi village in Wayanad. The Mathrubhumi Charitable Trust bought this land from a tea plantation and handed it over to rehabilitate people from Puthumala.



A people's committee was formed under the leadership of the Meppadi panchayat. It obtained sponsorships from several charitable trusts to construct houses for these 54 families. The construction was completed in 2020. Another section of the survivors got a compensation of Rs 10 lakh each from Kerala government to purchase new land and houses.

"The biggest difference between life at Puthumala and Poothakolly is the cost of living. Here, we are closer to the town. I still go to Puthumala to farm cardamom and coffee on my two-acre plot. Our official documents still bear the address of our house in Puthumala. We even cast votes in Ward 9 there," says Alavi, who moved to Poothakolly along with his wife.

"We came here (Poothakolly rehabilitation project) with no resources. The government and sponsors did all this for us. We are grateful for what we have here and to have survived the 2019 landslide. We were saved because the landslide happened during the day; otherwise, our fate would have been the same as that of those in Mundakkai and Chooralimala," says Beeran, another resident. Despite multiple smaller landslides in the region, tourism has been a growing industry in these eco-

logically fragile Western Ghat villages. According to industry sources, Meppadi panchayat has 600-odd registered resorts/home stays. "After plantations started running into losses, people turned to tourism to earn their livelihoods. Despite repeated natural calamities, tourism was never hit. Cancellations of bookings in the region were only temporary," source said.

While tourists may return, the residents are a different story. Anand, from Chooralimala, says, "The region has become uninhabitable. At Puthumala, the panchayat did not allow any new building permits in places where houses were destroyed (in August 2019). The same situation is likely to happen here since the landslide has changed the profile of the village. Perhaps those who have agricultural land in the hills may return to look after their fields," he says.

Kavungal Hamza, 60, whose house in Chooralimala was washed away, says his family doesn't want to return to the village. "My house was destroyed — not a single brick is left on the five cents of land we owned. My two schoolgoing children have lost their books. We lost all our household items and belongings. How do I rebuild my life at this age," he says.

Workshop on Drug Discovery and Development begins

Hyderabad: A two-week virtual workshop on Drug Discovery and Development being organised by the Federation of Asian Biotech Association (FABA), in collaboration with the University of Hyderabad (UoH) and Science Gurus, USA, commenced here on Saturday.

In his opening address, UoH Vice Chancellor Prof. BJ Rao highlighted the critical need for interdisciplinary approaches and importance of molecular interactions in phenotypic changes. "The path of drug discovery is intricate and requires more than traditional biology. It demands a concerted effort across various scientific disciplines," he said.

Dr. Chakk Ramesh, a seasoned pharmaceutical scientist, provided a compre-

hensive review of the drug discovery process, underscoring the distinctions among small molecules, biologics, and vaccines.

The workshop also discussed the emerging vision of personalized medicine, focusing on genetic engineering and the stratification of patients to enhance treatment efficacy. The importance of understanding the analytical differences between small molecules and biologics was highlighted.

Over 140 participants from various countries registered for the event featuring more than 40 experts from across the globe. The experts will share insights into the complex and interdisciplinary nature of drug discovery, covering a range of topics from translational biology to drug manufacturing and regulatory affairs.