

## Secunderabad railway station redevelopment works at brisk pace

Hyderabad: The works are the Secunderabad railway station redevelopment, taken up on par with the airports, is going on at a brisk pace seeking to incorporate world-class amenities and modern aesthetics. The redevelopment works, at a cost of Rs.700 crore, commenced in April 2023 and aim for completion in 36 months (i.e., towards the end of 2025). Accordingly, the works, awarded to Girdharilal Construction, commenced simultaneously on both sides of the existing station building to ensure completion in stipulated time frame.

A temporary booking office was constructed in the place of existing booking office on the north-side for facilitating construction activity, without disrupting the passenger services. Similarly, works for the new Railway Protection Force (RPF) building, structural and plumbing work have been completed. Now, other redevelopments including foundation and civil frame work were in progress. According to the South Central Railway (SCR) officials, on the south-side, major work related to foundations has been completed, while the slab works of basement-1 and basement - 2 were completed. The ground floor of the

south-side will be the drop-off zone for the departing passengers, while basement -1 will be the pick-up zone for the arriving passengers this side. The basement - 2 will have parking facility for the vehicles and with a capacity to accommodate nearly 200 four-wheelers. On the north-side, works for the construction of multi-level car parking (MLCP) are proceeding to spread out the facility over six floors. The construction work for a new foot over bridge towards Kazipet-end is also in progress. The redeveloped station will have 26 lifts, 32 escalators and 2 travelators and multi-modal connectivity is being provided to the east and west metro stations as well as bus station.

Once completed, the station will have spacious roof plaza, cafeterias, recreational facilities, retail shops mainly promoting local products. "The redevelopment works are being planned such that there is least inconvenience to the passengers. The progress of the work is being monitored continuously and instructions were given to undertake all construction works duly taking care of safety measures," a senior SCR official said. Highlights of the re-



development project: Well designed, with a horizon of 40-60 year Spacious roof plaza/concourse. All amenities at one place - retail, cafeterias, recreation. Smooth traffic flow, adequate parking facilities Segregation of arrival/departure passen-

gers. Clutter free and fully covered platforms and track 26 lifts, 2 travelators and 32 escalators Facilities for handicapped (Divyangans). Certified Green Buildings Solar energy and water conservation/recycling.

## BITS Pilani launches Centre for Research Excellence in National Security at Hyderabad campus



Hyderabad: The Birla Institute of Technology & Science (BITS) Pilani Hyderabad on Tuesday launched the Centre for Research Excellence in National Security (CRENS), aimed at enhancing the nation's security capabilities through indigenous technology development by joint research, skill development and entrepreneurship.

The centre, in collaboration with DRDO, ISRO, DAE, tri-services, police departments, Defense PSUs and industries, will play a crucial role in supporting the

country to become self-reliant in the national security domain. Launching the CRENS, DRDO former chairman and former Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister, Dr. G Satheesh Reddy emphasized the importance of developing new technologies to combat asymmetric warfare, which dominates the current global security landscape. He highlighted the geographical advantage of CRENS being located here, which allows it to collaborate with many institutions of national impor-

tance in and around Hyderabad. BITS Pilani Vice Chancellor Prof. V Ramgopal Rao said the strategic focus of CRENS, is divided into three important verticals - offer hybrid courses, both online and offline,

research to provide practical solutions to soldiers and promote innovation by encouraging startups in defence, space, and other strategic areas crucial for the nation's needs.

## Arcesium to hire 500 tech talents in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD: Arcesium, a leading provider of technology and service solutions for asset managers, announced that as part of its expansion plans, the company would hire 500 high-end tech talent in Hyderabad in the next two years. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and IT Minister D Sridhar Babu held detailed discussions with Gaurav Suri, CEO, Arcesium and senior team members at New York late on Monday.

The discussions focused on the expansion of Arcesium's Hyderabad office, which was the company's first overseas location outside of its headquarters.

The Hyderabad center plays a crucial role in supporting Arcesium's global operations, particularly in areas of data management and data strategy initiatives.



Gaurav Suri, CEO, Arcesium, said, "The rich talent pool in Hyderabad and its strong infrastructure have made it an ideal location for our international operations. We are excited to deepen our commitment to the region by expanding our presence and leveraging local expertise to enhance our data solutions and services."



# Why did courts revisit bar on sub-quotas? | Explained

The story so far: A seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court has ruled that States have the power to sub-divide Scheduled Castes (SC) into groups so that it can give sub-quotas within the quota for Dalits. In the process, the Bench overruled a 2004 judgment by a five-member Constitution Bench that said such sub-classification was impermissible as Parliament alone was empowered to modify the list of SCs notified by the President under Article 341 of the Constitution.

What was the 2004 judgment?

The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Ordinance, 1999, and the Act that replaced it created four groups — A, B, C and D — of Scheduled Castes and earmarked varying percentages of reservation for each group. The rationale was that there were differences in the level of advancement among communities under the SC list and that such sub-classification will ensure representation for the weaker castes. The Andhra Pradesh High Court rejected the challenge against the Act. However, in the Supreme Court, a Constitution Bench of five judges held the sub-classification was unconstitutional. The November 2004 judgment in *E.V. Chinnaiah vs State of Andhra Pradesh* noted that under Article 341 of the Constitution, the President notifies the list of Scheduled Castes. Once the list is notified, it shall not be modified through another notification, and the only way to include or exclude a community in that list was by an act of Parliament. The Bench then ruled that once enumerated under Article 341, SCs constitute a single homogeneous class, and that State legislatures were not competent to tinker with the list by further classifying them into groups.

How did it come up before a larger Bench?

The Punjab Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes (Reservation in Services) Act, 2006, provided for 25% reservation for SCs and 12% for backward classes in direct recruitment to services. Half the jobs under the SC quota, the law said, would be given as first preference to Balmikis and Mazhabi Sikhs, if candidates were available. When this was challenged, the Punjab and Haryana High Court cited the judgment in *E.V. Chinnaiah* to hold that the relevant section on preference to two communities among SCs was unconstitutional. Similarly, in 2006, the High Court also struck down the Haryana government's notification dividing SC communities into two blocks and earmarking 50% of the SC quota to each block. In 2009, the Tamil Nadu Assembly enacted a law to provide a sub-quota in services and educational institutions for Arunthathiyars, a group of sub-castes considered the weakest among the Scheduled Castes in the State. This was challenged directly in the Supreme Court. In 2020, a Constitution Bench doubted the correctness of the *Chinnaiah* judgment, noting that the nine-judge Bench in *Indra Sawhney* (1992) had permitted sub-classification of backward

classes. However, in *Chinnaiah*, the Bench had declined to use that as a precedent for sub-division of SC communities as *Indra Sawhney* was only concerned with OBC reservation. Hence, a larger Bench was constituted to revisit the earlier verdict.

What is the reasoning behind it?

Six of the seven judges have now ruled that the 2004 judgment was wrong. In his judgment on behalf of himself and Justice Manoj Mishra, Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud has held that SC communities are not a homogeneous class as ruled in the earlier judgment. He disagreed with the view that the act of notifying a list of SCs creates a deemed fiction that all of them have a similar status. It is true that they get a common constitutional identity as Scheduled Castes based on their experience of untouchability and discrimination, but this does not mean that there is no heterogeneity among them. He cited historical and empirical evidence to show that there were inter se differences among SC communities. There were even instances of some sections of SCs being discriminated against by other SC communities. Therefore, sub-classification was permissible, but it should be based on an "intelligible differentia" (a clear characteristic that will mark one group as different from another) and should have a rational nexus to the purpose of doing it. Further, such sub-classification is subject to judicial review, and the State should be able to justify it using empirical data. The CJI also held that sub-classification will not in any way amount to tinkering with the Presidential list and that it will not violate Article 341, which confers the power to notify Scheduled Castes exclusively on the President. The function of Article 341 was to identify who came under the category of Scheduled Castes, but States are free to identify those with different degrees of backwardness and make special provisions or extend reservation benefits to them. The new ruling is expected to encourage States to earmark sub-quotas for the most marginalised sections of Dalits who have not enjoyed the fruits of reservation so far.

In her dissent, Justice Bela Trivedi stands by the *Chinnaiah* doctrine that it is impermissible to sub-classify a homogeneous class and that it would amount to tinkering with the President's list under Article 341.

What about creamy layer exclusion?

The creamy layer concept is now applicable only to OBCs and so far has not been extended to Dalit communities. Justice B. R. Gavai, in a separate opinion in which he concurs with the Chief Justice, has written in detail about the need for identifying the more advanced among the Scheduled Castes and excluding them from the benefits of affirmative action. Noting that equality would mean that unequals cannot be treated as equals, Justice Gavai has wondered whether the children of IAS or IPS officers could be treated the same way as children in remote villages even though they may belong to the same com-



munity. Underscoring the differences in access and resources to those in urban and rural areas, and those attending elite institutions and those in schools with limited facilities, he has said putting them in the same bracket would obliterate the equality principle. However, he also notes that the parameters for excluding the

creamy layer for the SCs cannot be the same as those used to identify the well-off among the OBCs. Three other judges have agreed with his view. However, the opinions do not constitute a direction to the government to implement the creamy layer concept, as the issue did not directly arise in this case.

## CCMB researchers unravel 'SNCA' gene role in Parkinson's disease

Hyderabad: In a ray of hope for the elderly suffering from Parkinson's disease, the progressive disorder that impacts the nervous system and parts of the body controlled by nerves, a group of researchers from Hyderabad have unraveled the intricate mechanism and the important role that a gene known as Alpha-synuclein (SNCA) plays in the disease.

It turns out that there are two-forms of alpha-synuclein (SNCA) structures including amyloid filaments and smaller aggregates. And if, both of them are balanced, then the Parkinson's disease among individuals can be managed, the cutting-edge research by geneticists of Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) led by Swasti Raychaudhari, published in *Journal of Cell Sciences* (April, 2024), indicated. Out of the two forms of SNCA, the aggregates are known to break proteins and they eventually degrade the SNCA gene itself. According to CCMB researchers, there is no safe balance between the aggregates and amyloid filaments among patients with Parkinson's disease, which indicates that there is a need to find a treatment modality that strikes a balance between the two.

While geneticists from CCMB have managed to link the role of SNCA and its two forms including amyloid filaments and aggregates in Parkinson's Diseases, at present, they are in the process of checking how to reduce to the load of SNCA. There are multiple studies in the past that have linked the role of alpha-



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synuclein behind movement disorders including Parkinson's Disease, Multiple System Atrophy (MSA) and neurodegenerative diseases like dementia. With the role of SNCA gene behind such diseases becoming important, the focus by researchers worldwide is to develop therapies centered-around it. The CCMB researchers are now trying to figure out a way to activate aggregates to reduce the load of SNCA gene that are apparently behind neurodegenerative disorders. The CCMB research on SNCA gene paints a hopeful picture for an estimated 7 million individuals from India suffering from Parkinson's disease.



# CM Mann exhorts people to transform plantation drive into mass movement

Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), August 6: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Tuesday gave clarion call to the people for transforming the plantation drive into a mass movement for checking the environmental pollution on one hand and enhancing the green cover of the state on other. Addressing the gathering during a state level function to mark Van Mahautsav Tuesday, the Chief Minister said that this is a unique initiative aimed at enhancing the green cover across the state. Quoting verse 'Pawan Guru, Paani Pitaah, Mata Dharat Mahat' from Gurbani, CM Mann said that the great Gurus have equated air (pawan) with teacher, water (paani) with father and land (dharat) with mother.

He said that during those times there were no industrial units who were polluting the environment but it was the farsightedness of Great Gurus aimed at checking the pollution. The Chief Minister said that now the time has come when we must imbibe the teachings of Gurbani in our lives to restore the pristine glory of the state by resolving to save the environment of the state. He said that the state government will leave no stone unturned for this noble cause adding that the people of state should support the state government by planting more and more trees. Bhagwant Mann said that it is the need of hour to transform the plantation drive into a mass movement to benefit the people.

The Chief Minister said that Punjab is the first state in the country to launch the carbon credit scheme to preserve the environment and check global warming. He said that this project has been launched in the state with the help of TERI and as pilot project 3686 farmers from across the state will be disbursed Rs 45 crore in four instalments. CM Mann also distributed cheques worth Rs 1.75 crore to 818 farmers of the Hoshiarpur district as first instalment of this ambitious scheme. The Chief Minister said these funds will be transferred to the farmers through the Direct Benefit Scheme besides playing an active role in checking environmental pollution. He envisioned that this scheme will act as a pivotal for reducing the effects of Greenhouse gases adding that this is based on the 'Polluter Pays Principle' where polluters compensate the organisations/ farmers working for reducing carbon emission. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the saplings planted by farmers play a pivotal role in reducing environmental pollution so they can be eligible beneficiaries of this scheme. The Chief Minister said that by the reckless cutting of trees human beings have created havoc with nature. He said that owing to this only we are witnessing a lot of natural fury across the country adding that the only solution for this is to plant more and more trees.

Bhagwant Singh Mann advised the farmers that every food grower who is getting free power must plant at least four trees in his farms adding that if needed this will be given a shape of law to save the coming generations. The Chief Minister said that at the time he assumed the charge of office only 21% canal water was being used. However, he said that it is a matter of

great pride and satisfaction that today 72% of the canal water is being used for irrigation purposes. CM Mann said that New Kandi Canal is being constructed which is likely to benefit 11,000 acres of land adding that 206-Megawatt Dam is being established at Dhar Kalan. The Chief Minister said that the state government has taken exemplary initiatives for the well-being of the state and its people. Mann said that for the first time in the post-independence era his government has started the work for construction of Malwa canal in the state adding that it is on record that none of the previous governments of the state had paid heed towards this necessity of the state. CM Mann further said that this around 150-kilometre-long new canal will usher a new era of unprecedented progress and prosperity in the state especially in Malwa region adding that the state government will spend around Rs 2300 crore on this prestigious project that will cater to irrigational needs of nearly two lakh acres of fertile land of the state. Training his guns against SAD leader Sukhbir Singh Badal, the Chief Minister said that the former Deputy Chief Minister is trying to mislead the people through his political gimmicks.

He quipped that the scion of Badal family is now seeking pardon for his actions but he should remember one thing that apology may be given for the misdeeds but sins are unpardonable. Mann said that the Badal family has committed heinous sins against the state and its people which can never be forgiven. The Chief Minister said that the state government is gathering evidence about the sacrilege incident adding that the real culprit of this crime will be behind the bars soon. Training his guns against the rebel Akali leadership, he said that these leaders are now shedding crocodile tears over the issue whereas they were part and parcel of the Badal family during these sins. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that these leaders cannot absolve them from



the sin merely by issuing statements now. The Chief Minister said that gone are the days when the government was run from the offices in Chandigarh adding that for saving time, money and energy of people, the sovereign masters of state, now the government is being run from the villages and towns. He said that the state gov-

ernment has already launched its flagship scheme of Sarkar Tuhaade Dwaar under which village level camps are being organised to offer citizen-centric services to people at their doorsteps. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that more such pro-people initiatives will be taken in the coming days for the welfare of people.

## 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. COPPA was passed in 1999 and came into effect in 2000.

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.



# Merutsav 2024 - A Celebration of Athletic Excellence and School Spirit

Meru International School hosted the much-anticipated Merutsav 2024, a week-long sportsmanship, skill, and camaraderie celebration. With participation from 40+ schools and over 2500+ students, the event featured exciting competitions in chess, badminton, table tennis, basketball, yoga, and taekwondo. The level of enthusiasm and talent displayed was commendable, making Merutsav 2024 a grand success.

## Basketball Highlights:

In the basketball segment, over 300 students from 28 schools competed across four segments (5&6 Boys & Girls, 7&8 Boys & Girls). Eight referees from the Basketball Federation of India officiated the matches, ensuring a high standard of play.

## Badminton Doubles Highlights:

The badminton doubles segment saw participation from over 40 students representing 16 schools. The matches were keenly contested in two segments (5&6 Boys & Girls).

**Table Tennis Highlights:** Table tennis competitions attracted 107 participants from 21 schools, competing across six segments (5&6 Boys & Girls, 7&8 Boys & Girls, 9-12 Boys & Girls). The matches were judged by four officials from the Table Tennis Federation of India.

**Taekwondo Highlights:** The Taekwondo events showcased exceptional talent and determination among young athletes, with winners and runners-up across various age groups.

## Mystic Yogis (Yoga) Highlights:

The yoga competitions, known as "Mystic Yogis," displayed grace, flexibility, and mental focus, with winners and runners-up in the 5&6, 7&8, and 9-12 segments. Merutsav 2024 was a testament to the vibrant sports culture at Meru International School and the dedication of all participating schools. The event not only highlighted the athletic prowess of the students but also fostered a spirit of healthy competition and mutual respect. As we celebrate the successes of Meru International



School and all other participating institutions, we look forward to continuing this tradition of excellence in sports and beyond.

## Tyaani by Karan Johar Unveils Exclusive Curated Collection for Varalaxmi Occasion at Hyderabad Store



Tyaani by Karan Johar is thrilled to announce the launch of an exclusive, limited-time collection curated especially for the Varalaxmi occasion. This exquisite collection is available only at our Hyderabad store in Jubilee Hills and features a stunning array of jewellery styles designed to cater to diverse tastes and preferences, ensuring every individual finds their perfect piece.

The collection includes Mango Malas, where traditional elegance meets modern sophistication. Each piece is meticulously crafted to symbolize prosperity and beauty, making them perfect for the auspicious Varalaxmi occasion. Tyaani's dedication to preserving and celebrating cultural heritage shines through in these designs. In addition to Mango Malas, the collection showcases the rich heritage of the Tyaani

art form. These pieces highlight intricate craftsmanship and timeless designs that resonate with cultural significance, reflecting Tyaani's commitment to blending tradition with contemporary artistry. For those who appreciate vintage charm, the collection also features Victorian-inspired pieces. These jewellery items combine vintage allure with contemporary flair, creating a statement of grace and grandeur. The Victorian styles are designed to capture the essence of elegance and sophistication, making them a perfect addition to any festive wardrobe. Furthermore, the collection includes exclusive diamond designs that exude luxury and brilliance. These pieces are crafted with unparalleled attention to detail, ensuring that each design offers a unique and unforgettable sparkle. The diamond designs are perfect for those looking

to add a touch of opulence to their celebrations. Mr Rishab from Tyaani said, "We are excited to present this exclusive collection for the Varalaxmi occasion. Each piece in this collection has been thoughtfully designed to blend traditional elements with modern aesthetics, providing our customers with jewellery that is both timeless and contemporary. We believe this collec-

tion will add a special touch of elegance and splendour to their celebrations." With the festive and bridal season approaching, this exclusive collection is available for a limited time only. Tyaani by Karan Johar invites jewellery enthusiasts to visit the Hyderabad store in Jubilee Hills and explore the exquisite pieces that have been specially curated for the Varalaxmi occasion.

## ADIF challenges Google's dominance with CCI complaint

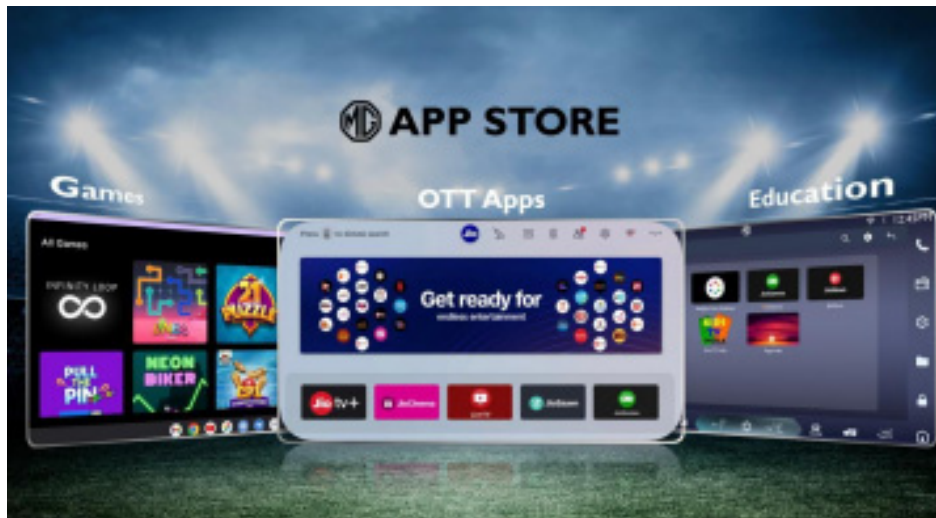
New Delhi: The Alliance of Digital India Foundation (ADIF) on Monday said it has filed a comprehensive complaint with the Competition Commission of India (CCI), bringing to light Google's alleged anti-competitive practices in the online advertising sphere. In the complaint, the ADIF outlined Google's dominant position and "purportedly abusive behaviour" in both the online search advertising and online display advertising markets. The apex body representing homegrown startups alleged that Google's control over major online platforms, coupled with the fact that it derives 97 per cent of its revenue from advertising, "has led to practices that stifle competition and adversely affect Indian businesses." Prateek Jain, Associate Director-Startup and Alliances, Alliance of Digital India Foundation (ADIF), said the digital advertising landscape is critical for the growth and sustainability of India's startup ecosystem. "Our complaint to the Competition Commission of India is a crucial step towards ensuring that this vital market operates on principles of fairness,

transparency, and equitable competition. We believe that addressing these issues will not only benefit advertisers and publishers but will also foster innovation and create a more vibrant digital economy in India," Jain added.

The complaint highlighted how Google imposes unfair conditions on advertisers in the realm of online search advertising, through its Ad Policies. According to the ADIF, these included restrictions on call assets and prohibitions on third-party technical support. The foundation also raised concerns about the opacity of Google's ad ranking system, describing it as a "black-box approach" that leaves advertisers in the dark about the services they are paying for. Furthermore, ADIF argued that Google's practices regarding trademark usage in keyword bidding create an artificial inflation of advertisement prices. Google allows competitors to bid on trademarked keywords, leading to a bidding war that ultimately benefits Google at the expense of advertisers and trademark owners.



# JSW MG Motor India Launches Multiple Industry-First EV Ecosystem Initiatives at DriEV.Bharat



JSW MG Motor India launched a series of pioneering electric vehicle (EV) innovations at DriEV.Bharat. This event was organized by the company at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, in partnership with leading industry players from diverse automotive and EV ecosystem domains. This first-of-its-kind event reflects the unwavering commitment of the manufacturer to advancing EV technology and the faster adop-

tion of electric vehicles along with building a robust EV infrastructure for a hassle-free ownership experience. The event featured the launch of eHUB by MG, the Industry's first and largest charging platform by an OEM; of Project REVIVE, focused on repurposing EV batteries beyond cars; of EVPEDIA, India's first dedicated educational and knowledge platform for electric car users; the MG-Jio Innovative Connec-

tivity Platform (MG-Jio ICP), which will be standard in all upcoming MG vehicles.

Underscoring the company's commitment to innovation and sustainability, the industry's first charging platform, eHUB by MG was introduced at the event. This is intended to simplify the EV charging experience for customers nationwide by providing them with a single platform. The company also introduced Project REVIVE, an initiative in partnership with TERI, Lohum and BatX, aimed at repurposing EV batteries beyond cars to provide a second life as renewable energy storage systems for sustainable community applications. This initiative promotes a circular economy, a system aimed at eliminating waste and the continual use of resources through principles of reuse, repair, and recycling, and supports India's clean energy goals. Reinforcing its commitment to enhancing consumer awareness and addressing their queries, JSW MG Motor India launched EVPEDIA—an industry-first dedicated EV education platform. This initiative provides reliable, accurate, and engaging information on EV technology, benefits, costs, and maintenance. By debunking myths and fostering informed decisions, EVPEDIA builds

EV advocacy and promotes broader EV adoption.

The carmaker also announced that all upcoming MG cars will feature the MG-Jio Innovative Connectivity Platform (MG-Jio ICP) as a standard inclusion. This is a technology stack which introduces several firsts, including the MG App Store for in-car gaming, entertainment, and learning, superior voice capability in six Indian languages, and a groundbreaking Home-to-Car functionality.

At the event, a panel discussion amongst industry experts, such as EY and IIT was held about the long-term benefits of EVs.

Gaurav Gupta, Chief Growth Officer at JSW MG Motor India, highlighted the company's vision to redefine the future of electric mobility in India, stating, "DriEV.Bharat reflects our unwavering commitment to advancing EV technology and enhancing the user experience to accelerate EV adoption. With initiatives such as our unified charging platform, battery second-life project, EV education, and the MG-Jio ICP, we are empowering the industry as well as our customers with smarter, more sustainable choices."

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Wes Ball breathes new life into the global epic franchise of Planet of the Apes with Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes, set several generations after Caesar's reign. In this era, apes are the dominant species living harmoniously, while humans have been reduced to living in the shadows. As a new tyrannical ape leader builds his empire, one young ape embarks on a harrowing journey, questioning all he has known about the past and making choices that will define the future for both apes and humans alike. Now streaming on Disney+ Hotstar in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu, this latest instalment in the magnificent franchise continues the epic saga, inspiring and enthralling viewers.

Kevin Durand talks about his first reaction to seeing himself on screen, as Proximus Caesar, “It was wonderful. Weta

Digital did such an incredible job. You know, Proximus is the most articulate ape we’ve seen in this series, so I was lucky to have a little bit of license to be able to add more expression, and it’s so cool to see it come through.”

He further talks about his experience using performance capture to become the character, “It was super fun. I think it was the most fun I’ve ever had! So immersive and completely functioning off imagination and make-believe. It was amazing to completely just go under. We studied the anatomic differences between a bonobo and me, and it was just so incredibly informative. I just had this license to become this other creature. Wes [Ball] challenged me to push the anatomical differences. He was really fantastic to work with.”





# What is the new Alzheimer's blood test?

The story so far: Researchers have developed a new blood test to detect Alzheimer's disease that helps diagnose the disease even at the early stage of mild cognitive impairment. Scientists at Lund University in Sweden have shown that PrecivityAD2, a new blood test, is about 90% accurate in identifying AD in people experiencing cognitive symptoms. The paper 'Blood Biomarkers to Detect Alzheimer Disease in Primary Care and Secondary Care' by Sebastian Palmqvist et al was published in the July 28 edition of peer-reviewed journal JAMA.

Why are practitioners excited about the test?

According to statistics, one in five women and one in 10 men develop dementia due to AD (Alzheimer's disease). Individuals with cognitive symptoms are first seen in primary care, with a minority being referred to secondary care, authors of the article pointed out. Further they added that symptomatic AD is misdiagnosed in 25% to 35% of patients treated at even specialised clinics and likely even more patients treated in primary care. For long, a blood test has been the Holy Grail for diagnosis of AD, since even current, modern methods of diagnosis involve very expensive and complex amyloid or Tau Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scans. The other alternative is to draw cerebrospinal fluid via a painful procedure, lumbar puncture. "The big goal is a serum study," explains neuropsychiatrist E.S. Krishnamoorthy of Buddha Clinic who has a special interest in dementia, whose most prevalent type is Alzheimer's disease. This blood test comes as close to the target as possible, and in that sense will make the diagnosis of AD very simple. Blood tests will not only reduce the costs of diagnosis, but also simplify the diagnostic procedure — involving as it does, just drawing of blood. There have been a few commercial attempts that went live before this test, but the current study has provided some definitive results. In a statement to Medscape Medical News, Howard Fillit, co-founder and chief science officer of the Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation, says: "Blood tests are revolutionising Alzheimer's detection, diagnosis and ultimately treatment." He believes that these tests will "soon replace more invasive and costly PET scans as the standard of care and serve as the first line of defence in diagnosing the disease." Dr. Fillit adds: "After many years of research, the field is in a place where we have novel biomarkers and diagnostics to support a diagnosis, the way cholesterol is used to help detect heart disease."

What does the test do?

According to Medical News Today, the test works by measuring a combination of two ratios within a blood sample: plasma phosphorylated-tau217 (also called p-tau217) to not-phosphorylated-tau21 and two types of amyloid-beta: AB42 and AB40. Let it suffice for us to understand that both tau and amyloid-beta proteins are currently considered pathological hallmarks of AD. A total of 1,213 patients were already under evaluation for cogni-

tive decline in primary or secondary care centres between February 2020 and January 2024 in Sweden. Of the participants, 23% had subjective cognitive decline, 33% had dementia, and 44% had mild cognitive impairment. About 50% of participants showed Alzheimer disease pathology through primary and secondary care testing. In comparison to the blood test that had an accuracy of 91%, dementia specialists identified clinical Alzheimer disease with a diagnostic accuracy of 73%, the researchers say in their paper. In primary care, physicians had a diagnostic accuracy of 61%, they add. They argue that this would be an accurate blood test for AD and that it could streamline the diagnostic workup and treatment of AD. The significance is that there are several drugs that work in the early stages of the disease, and an early, cost-effective, simple diagnosis will go a long way for patients, experts say.

How does this impact the future?

Future studies should evaluate how the use of blood tests for these biomarkers



influences clinical care, researchers have said in their paper. No doubt the costs will come down, naturally impacting positively on affordability.

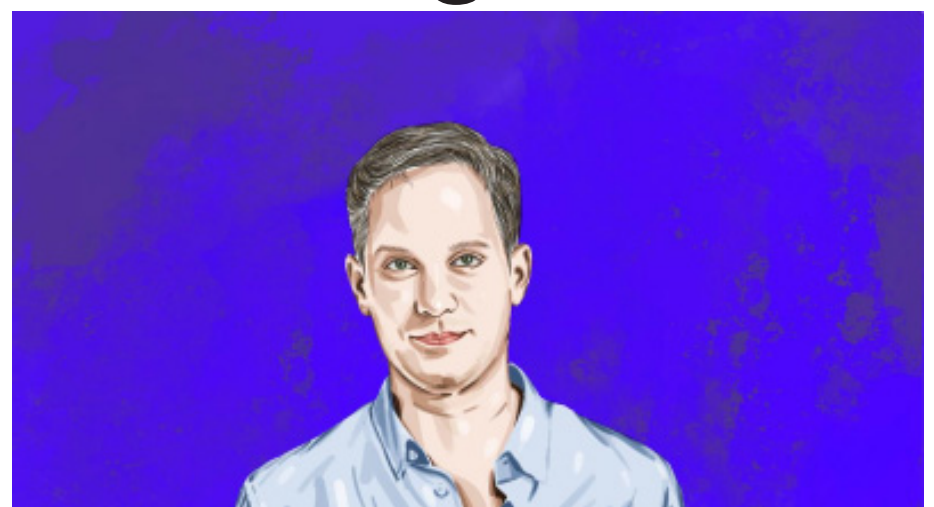
Availability is the other issue. Dr. Krishnamoorthy says that in India, the diagnostic tools still remain an MRI and a

regular PET scan. Amyloid or Tau PET scans are not commercially available yet. He adds that availability of the blood test will happen, but one needs to wait and watch if the test will be accessible to all or if only a few will be able to afford the test, even at reduced rates.

## Evan Gershkovich | Pawn in the game

Evan Gershkovich was on a reporting assignment in Yekaterinburg, some 1,400 km off Moscow, when Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) picked him up from a local bistro on March 29, 2023. The press accreditation by the Russian Foreign Ministry notwithstanding, the FSB slapped espionage charges against the 32-year-old Wall Street Journal reporter and detained him at the notorious Lefortovo prison, where political prisoners of the Soviet era were once held.

Mr. Gershkovich was handed out a 16-year sentence in July 2024, to be served at a penal colony. Much like the dawn that reveals itself after the darkest hour, the journalist's prospects brightened as he, along with 15 others, was released by Russia on Thursday in exchange for eight prisoners sourced from five countries. While Mr. Gershkovich's 491 days spent behind bars in Russia are marred by monotony, for the nation outside his prison premises, it was a period marked by massive churning. Prominent opposition leader Alexei Navalny died in an Arctic prison; Vladimir Putin won an unprecedented fifth term as President; Russian forces began to make battlefield gains in Ukraine; and the administration clamped down on any form of dissent against the regime, and Yevgeny Prigozhin, a former Putin ally who led a rebellion against the Kremlin, was killed in a plane crash. Some say the prisoner swap, perceived as a diplomatic triumph for the Biden administration ahead of the coming polls, also serves to legitimise Putin's actions — of detaining foreigners and using



them as diplomatic leverage. A WSJ report states that the seeds of the idea were originally sown by the U.S., whose forces in 2008 and 2010 arrested Russian nationals from Thailand and Liberia, to snuff out transnational threats after the September 11 attacks. Russia's call for their release went unheeded during both Barack Obama and Donald Trump's tenures.

With Joe Biden's ascent to the office, the administration began to adopt a softer approach to 'hostage diplomacy'. His government oversaw the swap of woman basketball player Brittney Griner, held in Russia on drug charges, for Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout. So did they release assets worth billions of dollars belonging to the sanctions-hit Iran in exchange for Americans. Venezuela, too, benefited from

a similar deal, but not without stoking fears that it would incentivise hostage-taking by authoritarian leaders. For Mr. Putin, Thursday's arrangement was the fruition of his years-long effort to retrieve Vadim Krasikov, who was imprisoned in Germany after gunning down a Chechen rebel at a Berlin park in broad daylight in 2019. The U.S. saw it as an opportunity to bring back Paul Wheelan, a former Marine imprisoned in Russia since 2018 and for whose return clamour was growing at home. Along with Mr. Wheelan and Mr. Gershkovich, those freed included Alsu Kurmasheva, the editor of Radio Free Europe, and Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Vladimir Kara-Murza, convicted for criticising Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Navalny's name was also pushed by the West, especially Germany.



# The joint ISRO-NASA mission to fly two Gaganyatris to the ISS | Explained

The story so far: On August 2, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced that two of the astronauts selected for its maiden human spaceflight mission, 'Gaganyaan', will travel to the U.S. in the first week of August to train there for a mission to the International Space Station. In particular, Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla has been assigned to fly to the ISS while Group Captain Prashanth Nair will be his back-up.

What is this new mission?

On June 22, 2023, the U.S. and India issued a joint statement after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Joe Biden. Among other things, the statement mentioned "a joint effort to the International Space Station in 2024". The two astronauts — or "Gaganyatris", as ISRO is calling them — are the Indian participants for this mission. ISRO published a statement on August 2 in which it said: "During the mission, the Gaganyatri will undertake selected scientific research and technology demonstration experiments on board the ISS as well as engage in space outreach activities. The experiences gained during this mission will be beneficial for [Gaganyaan] and it will also strengthen human space flight cooperation between ISRO and NASA."

Who is part of India's crew?

On February 27, during a visit to the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre in Thiruvananthapuram, Prime Minister Modi announced the names of the four astronaut-candidates for Gaganyaan mission — the ambitious ISRO mission to fly Indian astronauts to space onboard an Indian launch vehicle. The other two, apart from Mr. Shukla and Mr. Nair, were Group Captains Ajit Krishnan and Angad Pratap. All four are test pilots with the Indian Air Force. They have undergone training in India and Russia; according to the India-U.S. joint statement, NASA will provide Mr. Shukla and Mr. Nair "advanced training ... at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas".

According to ISRO, a "National Mission Assignment Board" selected Mr. Shukla and Mr. Nair for the joint mission. All astronauts going to the ISS need to be approved by the Multilateral Crew Operations Panel, which did so. This panel has representatives from the ISS's five international partners: NASA, Russia's Roscosmos, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, the European Space Agency, and the Canadian Space Agency.

What are the mission parameters?

Per ISRO's statement, its Human Spaceflight Centre has signed an agreement with Axiom Space, Inc. "for its upcoming Axiom-4 mission to the ISS". The mission, colloquially called Ax-4, is the fourth crewed mission to the ISS organised by Axiom Space, a private company based in Houston. Axiom plans to operate the world's first commercial space station. Its current offerings include human spaceflight services, as part of which it selects and trains astronaut-candidates, charters launch vehicles, and plans and manages space missions. As participants of the Ax-4 mis-



sion, Mr. Shukla or Mr. Nair will fly to the ISS along with two other astronauts. SpaceX will provide the launch vehicle for the mission and its Crew Dragon capsule will house the crew. NASA has said the mission will last 14 days. According to the ISS's programme manager, Ax-4 will fly no sooner than November 2024. At a conference in Las Vegas in late July/early August July 30 to August 1, representatives of Boryung, a South Korean pharmaceutical company that has invested in Axiom Space, said the mission could be postponed to early 2025, Space News reported. This information remains unconfirmed, however.

What is the schedule onboard the ISS?

ISRO chairman S. Somanath said in a recent online interaction that the main purpose of the India-U.S. joint mission to the ISS is to expose the two 'Gaganyatris' to the way a spaceflight mission is organised and conducted and to give them flight experience, including working with the crew already onboard the ISS. In the event that he flies to the ISS, Mr. Shukla has also been designated the prime mission pilot — a responsibility that Mr. Somanath said will put him through the paces of conducting a mission. The two 'Gaganyatris' will also be conducting "five different experiments" onboard the ISS, according to Mr. Somanath, who added that "some of them ... originated in India" while "some are international experiments" in which India will be "joint partners". He declined to share specific details.

What is Gaganyaan's status?

ISRO has thus far completed the pad abort and the high-altitude abort tests, and has tested the crew escape system, among others. In October 2023, Mr. Somanath told The Hindu the LVM-3 launch vehicle for the mission has virtually completed the pro-

cess of being rated to carry humans. He added the crew module was still being developed and that it would have to be manufactured abroad. He also said engineers were working on the capsule's Environmental Control and Life Support System and the overall Integrated Vehicle

Health Management System: "Every day, there is some test happening." The next major Gaganyaan milestones are a series of uncrewed suborbital and orbital test flights. The last of these is currently expected to happen in mid-2025, although the date could slip further.

## 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. COPPA was passed in 1999 and came into effect in 2000.

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.



# Students' deaths at Delhi UPSC coaching centre : Why everyone loves a basement

On a muggy July day, in a swanky lawyer's chamber, the senior summons his junior with great urgency. "Quick! Hurry, I should get an OTP," he says, handing over his phone. The junior exits the hall, steps outside the basement of the newly built building in posh Jangpura Extension to catch the cellular network signal. As soon as he hears the familiar sound of the notification, he rushes back to his senior. Delhi's ubiquitous basement offices — often in upscale residential neighbourhoods — are some of the most sought-after real estate spaces for 'professionals'. From a young advocate just setting up her practice to silk-stocking senior advocates, from doctors to chartered accountants, the basement office is a preferred choice, even when they barely let in any sunshine or cell phone network. Then there is another subterranean world — of gymnasiums, cloud kitchens, bars and libraries, many of which are in violation of norms set by civic bodies.

A combination of factors — from how land-use regulations are framed to skyrocketing costs for a piece of the city's land — have allowed for a booming basement economy to take shape in the national capital. These basement spaces have come under scrutiny given the torrential rains this season and the incident in Rajinder Nagar, where three students of a coaching centre lost their lives when they were trapped in the flooded basement library of the building. What the rules say The Unified Building Bye-Laws, 1983, and the Master Plan Delhi, govern the regulatory landscape for basements. These bye-laws prescribe what activities are allowed in Delhi's colonies (which are categorised into eight zones based on circle area rate) and whether they are designated for residential, commercial or mixed use. In category A and B colonies, only 'professional activities' are allowed in residences. The Master Plan defines these activities as those involving services based on professional skills such as doctors, lawyers, architects, chartered accountants, company secretaries, cost and works accountants, engineers, town planners, media professionals and documentary film makers, and management professionals. In 2016, dietician/nutritionists were added to this list.

In 2008, an amendment was made to the Master Plan to specifically allow 'professional activity' in basements. "Professional activity in basements is permissible in plotted development, subject to relevant provisions of Building Bye-Laws, structural safety norms and fire safety clearance. In case the use of basement for professional activity leads to exceeding the permissible FAR (Floor Area Ratio) on the plot, such FAR in excess shall be used subject to payment of appropriate charges prescribed with approval of Government," the provision reads. Additionally, a 2011 order by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) opened up more of these underground workspaces for them. The MCD order mandated the inclusion of a dedicated floor for parking in all proposals for the redevelopment of individual residential plots. While this was intended to solve the problem of people parking on roads, these floors instead began to be used for reasons other

than parking. "Even if residents have to park on the streets, these spaces are used as servant quarters or rented out as office space. The rent typically covers the building's maintenance costs and pays for the security guard and other staff," says Shreya Jain, a flat-owner in one of the 'builder floor' units in South Delhi.

Another reason why basements and barsaatis (single room sets on rooftops, often constructed without permits) are popular concepts in Delhi is because of the vertical limit for construction. Until December 2022, the Master Plan only allowed buildings to be 15 metres high. After the Supreme Court intervention, this was raised by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to 17.5 metres with stilts. However, as per DDA rules, the basement is not to be counted in FAR in residential units if used for parking, household storage and services or 'professional activity'. Additionally, on the number of basements a building can have, the Master Plan states "no limit, subject to adequate safety measures". Apart from professional activities, there cannot be any other use of basements. The 'other activities' — gyms, diagnostic centres, gaming zones or even coaching centres — cannot run in basements, but only on other floors. Going underground In a small, dimly lit basement in Kalkaji, several pool tables of varying sizes stand scattered across the room. In the background, a Salman Khan movie plays on the projector. The pool hall is empty except for a lone caretaker wiping down the tables, readying them for the after-office crowd that will come in the evening. "I paid around Rs 1-1.5 crore two years ago for this place," says the owner of the snooker house. "We generally get more customers on the weekend, who stay for longer hours," says the caretaker.

From the outside, not many would suspect a pool cafe behind the entry door. The only thing that gives it away is an LED board with a running scroll reading 'Billiards, Snooker, Pool'. It is one of many basement businesses that flourish in Delhi. Basements are useful for residents in more ways than one, with cost an overriding factor. Shamsher Singh, an advocate who works out of a basement office in East Nizamuddin, says, "If I want an office that's close to the courts and accessible to my clients, and something that's within a budget, a basement in a residential unit is my only choice. Central Delhi is one of the most expensive real estate markets so what do you do?" According to a property dealer, the rental rates for a basement measuring around 900 square yards in a newly constructed building in Defence Colony is Rs 2.5 lakh, with the price going up to Rs 3.5 lakh for the ground and first floors, Rs 3 lakh for the second floor and between Rs 4 and 4.5 lakh for fourth floor and above. The buying rate for a basement space in the same area is around Rs 16 crore, while a first-floor space would cost around Rs 13 crore. upsc aspirants deaths A snooker house running from a basement in Kalkaji

Ten years ago, when Pritam Pal and his brother Gautam decided to start a jewellery business on the Kalkaji main road, a basement space was an obvious



choice. For one, the price was considerably cheaper than above-ground real estate. "The Airtel shop one floor above ours pays a rent of around Rs 60,000 a month and it's not even that big," explains Pritam Pal. "We bought this shop for around Rs 1 crore. I think market rates for a basement like this has gone up to Rs 3-4 crore now." But basement workspaces come with their own set of problems. "We can't lay a single brick here without the MCD or police showing up at our doorstep. Yet, when we raise complaints about waterlogging or lack of parking for our customers, they are nowhere to be seen. We paid Rs 36,000 for a parking space, but our customers still don't have any place to park when they come to our shop," says Gautam Pal.

Despite paying around Rs 55,000 a month as rent, legal practitioner Pawas Kulshrestha was aghast when his swanky Defence Colony basement office was flooded during heavy rain on July 28. "I think almost all the lawyer chambers on this stretch were completely flooded. In some chambers, you couldn't even see beyond the first step (of the staircase)," he says. Kulshrestha's office bears signs of

the deluge. The white walls are now damp and bear seepage stains. "Until recently, all our paperwork was laid out near the reception to dry," he adds. According to a shop owner in Greater Kailash-I, who requested not to be named, the area's 'basement culture' changed after the MCD sealed 77 basement shops in 2006. "M Block market was well-known for its apparel shops that attracted a huge number of customers. The MCD's monitoring committee at that time sealed most basement shops here citing one reason or another and it was only after a High Court order in February 2009 that shops were unsealed," he says. However, by then, customers moved on to other shopping hubs. Misha Chandra, a young lawyer who works with a senior advocate in a well-decorated basement office in Vasant Kunj, can't wait to work in a 'real office'. "I know everyone has a basement, but when I have to work from the office the whole day, it is really disorienting. It's sunny when I step in and very dark when I step out but I have no sense of how the day is changing from inside. There's no window or absolutely any sunlight," she said.

## BRS leader Rakesh Reddy demands GO 46 cancellation

Hyderabad: BRS leader A Rakesh Reddy demanded the Congress government to fulfill its electoral promise to cancel GO 46. Speaking at Telangana Bhavan on Sunday, Rakesh Reddy explained the plight of GO 46 victims, who were allegedly beaten by the police when they went to Praja Bhavan to voice their grievances.

He noted that even when the victims started a hunger strike, the Congress ministers and MLAs remained silent, while mentioning that BRS working president KT Rama Rao extended the party's support for the GO 46 victims.

He also accused the Congress government of filing cases against unemployed youth and criticised the job calendar presented in the Assembly, criticising it as "jobless calendar." He suggested that the Congress government should learn from its ally, the DMK, on how to effectively manage a job calendar.

