

Viral fever patients footfall surges in govt hospitals in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: With cloudy weather conditions and sporadic showers continuing to prevail in Hyderabad and neighboring districts, clinics, nursing homes, Basthi Dawakhana and outpatient wings of Gandhi Hospital, Osmania General Hospital and Fever Hospital, Nallakunta are witnessing a significant surge in patient footfall with viral and bacterial infections.

Immunologists and seasonal disease experts have advised people to focus on their immunity to fight upper respiratory tract infections. Senior doctors from the Directorate of Public Health (DPH), Telangana have urged people to take extra precautions and have released an advisory for typhoid, gastro, dengue and viral fevers. In addition to taking basic precautions, families can ensure that vulnerable individuals including senior citizens, children and pregnant women can get administered with flu shots, which have to be administered based on physicians prescription.

Doctors have advised the citizens to take certain precautions on their part this season. The precautions against jaundice/typhoid and gastro as listed out by the Director of Public Health include drinking and carrying filtered / boiled water from home, bottled water when outside, washing hands frequently, especially before and after meals and after visiting the washroom, car-



rying hand sanitizers and using them regularly. The advisory also suggest avoid

eating raw, pre-cut and uncovered food sold in open like chaat, salads, fruits and

juices while eating freshly made home cooked food and discarding leftovers.

Kawal Tiger Reserve's core likely to see tiger movement after 8 years



Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Will the core of Kawal Tiger Reserve be able to see movement of tigers after a long gap? According to official information, a tiger has entered the forests of Edulawada forest in

Asifabad mandal by crossing the National Highway 363 indicates a positive answer. Tigers from Maharashtra's Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve have often been migrating to the wild of Kaghaznagar for-

est division, a corridor of KTR, in search of prey and territory for quite a long time. They sometimes take shelter in the forests of Bellampalli and Chennur divisions. However, they are not entering the core of the reserve for reasons unknown.

This tiger named S-12 stayed in the forests of Kaghaznagar division till a few weeks back and managed to cross the busy national highway for the first time in recent times. It reached the Vattivagu irrigation project in Asifabad mandal. It killed a cow at Dongargaon village in this region. It was earlier sighted near the opencast mining projects of SCCL at Kairiguda village in Rebbena mandal on Tuesday. "The tiger drifted towards Tiryani mandal and killed another cow on Wednesday. Movement of the tiger is being monitored. Awareness is being created among locals over the presence of the tiger. Rural folks are requested not to harm the tiger and to avoid sudden confrontation with it," District Forest Officer Neeraj Kumar Tebriwal told 'Telangana

Today.'

Incidentally, Tiryani mandal is located close to the core of the KTR. "The tiger can easily move into the core of the reserve if it can cross hillocks and forests conducive to inhabitation of the tigers. However, direction of the movement of a tiger is unpredictable," an activist involved in tiger conservation said. In spite of a slew of measures including creating grass lands to ensure sufficient prey base for tigers, the KTR could not draw a tiger since 2016, worrying officials of the forest department. A tiger killed cattle in the forests of Kaddampeddur mandal but subsequently entered the forests of Kumram Bheem Asifabad district eight years back. The National Tiger Conservation Authority in the status of tigers in 2022 pointed out that no tigers were detected in the reserve except for a few individuals in Kaghaznagar. The 42 reserve of the country was created in 2012 with the cover encompassing 892 square kilometres in 2022.

Why France has made abortion a constitutional right

France, which signed the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, has not traditionally been at the forefront of securing the rights of women. They had to wait until 1944 to win the vote, 16 years after British women. France legalised abortion only in 1975. On March 4th, however, when the French parliament voted to make abortion a constitutional right, it became the first country to do so explicitly. "The place of women has changed because France has changed," declared Yaël Braun-Pivet, the first female head of the National Assembly, who presided over the vote. That evening the Eiffel Tower was lit up with the words "My body, my choice". Pro-abortion supporters hug each other after French lawmakers have approved a bill that will enshrine a woman's right to an abortion in the French Constitution, at Trocadero Plaza in Paris, Monday, March 4, 2024. The vote makes France the first country to have a constitutional right to abortion since the former Yugoslavia inscribed it in its 1974 constitution. (AP Photo/Oleg Cetinic) (AP) PREMIUM Pro-abortion supporters hug each other after French lawmakers have approved a bill that will enshrine a woman's right to an abortion in the French Constitution, at Trocadero Plaza in Paris, Monday, March 4, 2024. The vote makes France the first country to have a constitutional right to abortion since the former Yugoslavia inscribed it in its 1974 constitution. (AP Photo/Oleg Cetinic) (AP)

The overwhelming vote by French legislators, who backed the constitutional revision by 780 votes in favour to just 72 against, was a rare moment of cross-party unity. Pushed initially by the left-wing opposition, it last week secured unexpected backing in the Senate, which is controlled by the opposition on the right. The justice minister, Eric Dupond-Moretti, spent hours there trying to win over senators. Emmanuel Macron, the centrist French president, then seized the chance to send the revision days later to a joint sitting of the lower and upper houses in Versailles, where a three-fifths majority is needed to revise the constitution. That threshold was passed by a big margin. Some French legislators, including the head of the Senate, Gérard Larcher, had argued that it was unnecessary to enshrine the right to abortion in the constitution since it was already protected by law. The constitution, argued Mr Larcher, was not a "catalogue" of social rights. There was no imminent threat to those rights. Moreover, the French are among the strongest supporters of the legal right to abortion, with 82% in favour, far ahead of the 63% in Poland and 55% in America (see chart). But French lawmakers on the left in particular had worried about how to protect the right to abortion from any future attempt to roll it back, particularly after America's Supreme Court in 2022 overturned the longstanding ruling that barred the states from banning abortion there. Poland's nationalist government severely restricted abortion in 2020. In France campaigners look ahead with trepidation to the next presidential election, in 2027, and the possibility of a hard-right vic-



tory. Although Marine Le Pen, the nationalist leader, does not campaign against the right to abortion and backed the constitutional revision this week, 42 of her 87 fellow deputies voted against, abstained or did not take part. Unveiling the proposal last year, Mr Macron said that he wanted to make sure that the right was

"irreversible". Many French legislators this week made a further point: that the vote was a message of support to women elsewhere. It was a campaign "for those who resist Trump, Bolsonaro, Orban, Milei, Putin, Giorgia Meloni", declared Laurence Rossignol, a Socialist senator who had lobbied for the revision, to a cross-party stand-

ing ovation. For Mr Macron, who runs an unpopular minority government that has recently veered to the right on immigration, it is also a way to shore up support on the left—and, for once, win the momentary approval of the majority of the French. To stay on top of the biggest European stories, sign up to Café Europa, our weekly subscriber-only newsletter.

Do you often feel hungry even after a meal? Here's what to do

A good meal should not only make you feel good but also help you feel satiated. The feeling of fullness is what can keep cravings away. Sharing how that can be done, nutritionist Nidhi Sharma listed out the various reasons for not feeling satiated and shared easy ways to tweak your meals. Less protein in your meal – Ideally, 1/3 portion of your meal should be protein. Main sources can be legumes, Paneer, tofu, etc. Add these to every meal.

Distraction while eating – How many times it has happened to you that you are reading something but are unable to understand a single word because you were not focusing on it? "It's the same with digestion and the feeling of satiety. If you are not paying attention to what is going inside your mouth, how you are chewing etc, your mind will not get a satiating signal as it's primarily engaged somewhere else. This may lead to false hunger signs & eventually overeating," said Sharma.

Delay of gratification – The signal of satiety is usually delayed by 15-20 minutes. "So, if you had a balanced meal,

based on your requirements, give your gut some time to transmit the signal to your brain. So, if you are feeling hungry just after a meal, wait for 20 minutes, clean up the kitchen, and you will feel satiated soon," said Sharma. Craving for a sweet – Most Indian curries are garnished with a variety of spices. And there are chances that you might like to grab something sweet after a meal. "Including curd in your meal can help or have a date after the meal to help you," Sharma mentioned. Chia seed drink – If you are still feeling hungry after 30 minutes of your meal, take 2 tbsp chia seeds and add them to the water, keep them for 30 minutes, and sip them slowly. "Chia is rich in nutrients and protein, this will help subside your hunger. This can also be taken if you are working late at night and feeling hungry after an early dinner," said Sharma.

Are these measures effective?

Eating mindfully with a priority on plant protein helps one cut down cravings and refrain from eating junk food during snacking, said "High carb and sugary diet



triggers insulin release and makes one hungry soon. This makes people eat whatever junk food is available and binge on it leading to many metabolic disorders," said Dr Dilip Gude, senior consultant physician, Yashoda Hospitals, Hyderabad. According to Dr Gude, eating 20 to 30 grams of protein each meal and making sure 40 per cent of the total energy requirement in calories per day comes from protein (plant protein preferably) is the ideal way to eat. Hydrating well after the meal, slow mindful eating chewing adequately makes one satiate healthily and keeps hunger pangs away."

PhonePe launches pre-approved term life insurance

PhonePe, today announced the launch of a 'pre-approved term life insurance' feature on its platform. The feature aims to make insurance coverage more accessible and affordable for millions of Indians by waiving the requirement for proof of income at the time of policy purchase. With this launch, PhonePe ushers a new era of financial inclusion in India by making insurance products inclusive with the added advantage of quick and convenient access to life insurance coverage, without requiring extensive income verification. The company has partnered with leading insurers to enable this feature on its platform. This partnership also supports insurance providers to now serve more users, specifically over 30 million individuals, who previously could not avail term insurance due to the lack of income proof. Millions of PhonePe users including merchants, self-employed individuals, gig workers and many more user groups who don't have a formal proof of salary or income, can now avail term insurance products seamlessly on the PhonePe platform. Infact, the company is focused on scaling up this offer tremendously and expanding its reach to make it accessible for up to 50 million users by later this year.

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Commenting on the launch, Vishal Gupta, CEO at PhonePe Insurance Broking Services, said, "We are excited to announce the launch of the 'pre-approved sum assured (PASA)' feature on our platform. This launch is aimed at bringing the previously under-served customers into the term life insurance net by making the products more accessible and affordable to Indians across various socio-economic strata. By partnering with industry leaders and collaborating with them deeply we are able to simplify user experience and deliver tailor-made offerings that are industry leading and solving for specific cohorts in an inclusive manner. Our mission is to drive insurance adoption in the country by making the insurance buying process simple, easy and affordable for all."

PhonePe, based on the underwriting principles of its insurance partners, identifies a user base for whom the pre-approved term insurance process can be enabled. The company has worked on these indicators collaboratively with the insurance providers to empower users while complying with underwriting principles set by the



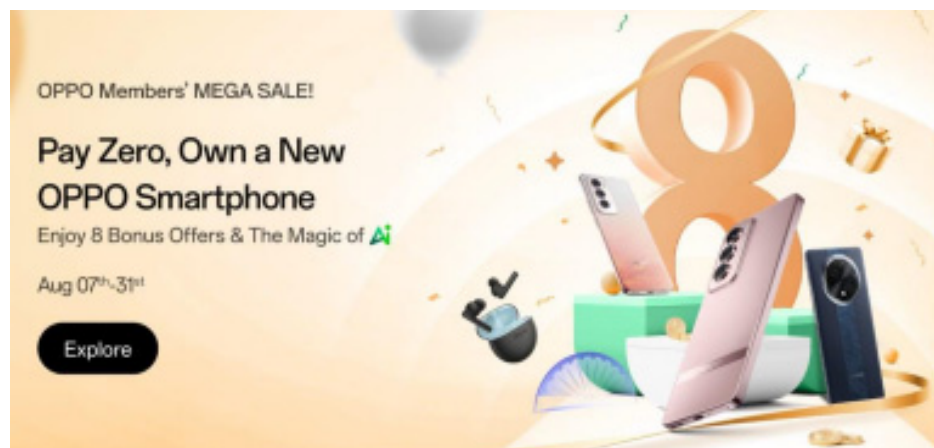
regulators. About PhonePe Group:

PhonePe Group is India's leading fintech company. Its flagship product, the PhonePe digital payments app, was launched in Aug 2016. In just 7 years, the company has scaled rapidly to become India's leading consumer payments app with 550+ million registered users and a digital payments acceptance network of 40+ million merchants. PhonePe also processes over 270 million daily transactions with an annualized Total Payment Value (TPV) of USD 1.6+ Trillion. On the back of

its leadership in digital payments, PhonePe Group has expanded into financial services (Insurance, Lending, Wealth) as well as new consumer tech businesses (Pincode - hyperlocal e-commerce and Indus App Store - India's first localized App Store). PhonePe Group is an India headquartered technology company with a portfolio of businesses aligned with the company's vision to offer every Indian an equal opportunity to accelerate their progress by unlocking the flow of money and access to services.

OPPO India Adds Livephoto Feature to "Your Everyday AI Companion", the Reno12 Series

Announces a range of exclusive offers on the latest products to celebrate OPPO Members' Mega Sale Day, available at OPPO e-Store and offline retail stores



OPPO India has introduced a new Livephoto feature in "Your Everyday AI Companion" the Reno12 series that allows users to capture short-moving pictures with its wide-angle, main camera, or telephoto lens. Users can then select different keyframes, apply creative effects, edit their photos, and share them with family and friends. The Livephoto feature integrates AI Touch-ups' advanced algorithms to automatically optimise lighting, colours, and other elements for clarity to make your everyday moments memorable. To celebrate the second anniversary of OPPO Members' Mega Sale Day, OPPO India also offers exclusive deals on its e-store and at retail stores until August 31st. Starting today, OPPO members—both new and existing—

can expect incredible deals on the Reno12 Pro, Reno12, F27 Pro+, IOT products, accessories, and other smartphones. Offline customers can avail the following offers:

Up to 10% cashback and no-cost EMI for up to 6 months from leading banks such as SBI Cards, HDFC Bank, One Card, Kotak Bank, Bank of Baroda, DBS and Federal Bank. Benefits worth ₹2250 from Reliance Jio, available to new postpaid customers on plans of ₹649 and above*. The benefit of Zero Down Payment schemes from leading financiers on purchasing the latest OPPO products* T&C apply. OPPO E-Store customers can avail the following offers: Win assured prizes in the OPPO Exclusive Raffle, including OPPO Reno12, F27 Pro, F25 Pro+ & Exclusive coupons, and Re-

ward Points.

Up to 68% discount by buying latest OPPO smartphones bundled with Enco Buds 2. My OPPO Program offers for OPPO Users: Customers may sign in to their pre-installed My OPPO app to activate their membership and enjoy assured rewards on buying any OPPO Smartphone along with 8.8X reward points. Exclusive Additional Member's Discount on accessories from the Online OPPO Store; prices starting at ₹88. Limited OPPO Store coupons: A

₹88 OFF coupon on a minimum purchase of ₹899 (A38 not included), ₹888 OFF Coupon (min purchase ₹12,888) Points redemption up to 8.8% for selected products. Extra Exchange Bonus up to ₹4888 and an additional ₹888 coupon for old users who have purchased Reno8/8T, A18/A38/A78 on OPPO store. Users who have purchased the F/Reno/Find series in the store can receive a ₹88 discount coupon on purchase ₹899 (A38 not included) and 888 points.

Investments to increase power demand in Greater Hyderabad, says Bhatti

Hyderabad: Stating that huge investments in Greater Hyderabad region would increase power demand, Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka asked power officials to take steps to meet the power demand for upcoming projects and investments in the Greater Hyderabad region.

The Energy Minister, who held a review meeting with Energy Department officials on the power situation on Thursday, said several multinational companies were showing interest in investing in

Hyderabad, especially in pharma, biotech and service sectors. The Greater Hyderabad region was likely to witness a substantial increase in power demand in the coming days. On the collapse of the retaining wall at the under construction Sunkishala pump house of the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam, the Deputy Chief Minister said the project work was started in 2021 by the previous BRS government and the tunnel side wall was completed in July 2023, hence the present government had no role in the collapse of the retaining wall.

Airtel Payments Bank Crosses 600 crore of Quarterly Revenue for the First Time

Airtel Payments Bank, India's leading digital bank, today announced its consolidated results for the first quarter ended on 30 June 2024. In a significant milestone, for the first time, the Bank's quarterly revenue grew to ₹610 crore, up by 52% YoY. The Bank's net profits stood at ₹7.2 crore, up by 41% YoY. During the quarter, the Bank's Monthly Transacting Users (MTU) exceeded 88 million giving a boost to customer deposits, which grew by 53% YoY to ₹2,943 crore. The Bank's annualised gross merchandise value (GMV) stands at over ₹3,400 bn.

The growth in revenue and MTUs has been driven primarily by an uptake in the Bank's digital savings bank account along with other digital offerings. The Bank's eco-friendly NCMC enabled cards are witnessing a strong demand and usage. Anubrata Biswas, MD and CEO of Airtel Payments Bank, said, "We are pleased to report a significant milestone this quarter, with our revenues surpassing ₹600 crore for the first time. This industry-leading growth has

been driven by strong uptake of our flagship safe daily transaction account for India, and a surge in digital payments across all our businesses. The Bank, today, is well-positioned as first-in-class to take margin-enhancing advantage of India's large unfolding digital opportunities."

Airtel Payments Bank caters to three distinct segments - Urban Digital, Underbanked, and Industries & Institutions - offering comprehensive end-to-end digital banking solutions alongside a bouquet of digital financial services including insurance, lending, and investment solutions. Processing over 8 billion transactions annually across its platforms, Airtel Payments Bank stands as the sixth largest player amongst mobile banking users. The Bank addresses the challenge of accessibility by extending banking services to the deepest rural pockets with its largest banking network comprising over 500,000 neighbourhood-banking points. Airtel Payments Bank is the largest micro-cash player in India, currently digitizing around ₹8,000



crore of cash monthly with over 4,000 corporate partners. About Airtel Payments Bank: Airtel Payments Bank offers a diverse range of safe, simple, and rewarding banking solutions through a network of over 5 lakh banking points spread across the country and its digital platforms. The Bank has

also built a robust digital payments ecosystem across the country.

Airtel Payments Bank is focused on contributing to the Government's vision of Digital India and Financial Inclusion by taking digital banking services to the doorstep of every Indian.

Yellampalli water levels dip; pumping might be stopped soon



Hyderabad: Pumping operations from Sripadada Yellampalli reservoir taken up 10 days ago to support the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme (KLIS) ayacut, are likely to be hit any time on account of the declining inflows. It is going to be a frustrating experience for farmers as they needed irrigation support the most at this crucial hour to go for paddy transplantation.

The Yellampalli project plays a crucial role in supplying drinking water to Hyderabad. The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) draws water from the Yellampalli reservoir to meet the city's needs. It is mandatory to maintain at least 14 tmc of water as part of the storage at

Yellampalli for its needs under any circumstances. The present storage in the project, as on Thursday, dipped to 13.35 TMC. It has a gross storage capacity 20 TMC, but did not receive adequate inflows after the onset of monsoons.

The inflows, which were in the order of some 17000 cusecs when the pumping operations were resumed from the Nandi Medaram pump house, had also come down to 7477 cusecs. The net realisation at Mid Manair Reservoir is little over 7000 cusecs. Multiple reservoirs that have been integrated with the KLIS distribution network are waiting for water releases from Mid Manair to support the Kharif operations. It had received hardly five TMCs of water from Yellampalli in the last 10 days and it

would be hard on its party to feed the multiple reservoirs waiting for water release. In case of a further drop in the inflows into Yellampalli, the pumping operations are likely to be suspended. Though the KLIS scheme is design to lift two TMCs a day, the present operations were yielding only one fourth of it. The only option left for the irrigation officials to support the KLIS ayacut is to wait for adequate inflows from upper reaches of Godavari river. The scope for pumping water from Medigadda barrage

was ruled out by the government. "We are hopeful that Godavari catchment in Maharashtra would receive good rainfall in the next two weeks. It would help bring good inflows into all the Godavari basin projects," said a senior Irrigation official, adding that otherwise, they would have to knock the doors of the NDSA once again asking it for a way out. "If we have to choose between irrigation and drinking water to be supported, the latter needs to be given precedence," he said.

Tension prevails in Sangareddy as farmers obstruct RRR survey

Sangareddy: Tension prevailed at Girmapur in Sadasivapet as a large number of farmers came out to protest against the survey of lands for the proposed Regional Ring Road (RRR) when officials reached there to demarcate land on Thursday.

Since an interchange was proposed at Girmapur on NH-65, farmers from Girmapur and Peddapur were set to lose nearly 200 acres of land. The interchange will connect the northern and southern parts of the RRR here. Expecting the protest, officials had deployed large numbers of police personnel to ensure that the survey was carried out peacefully. However, the farmers stopped the survey for over two hours, demanding that the survey be carried out only after announcing the compen-

sation package for them.

When the officials tried to convince them, they demanded a statement from the RDO or Collector. Since the RDO and Collector were busy with Health Minister Damodara Rajanarasimha's programme in Sangareddy, the talks with the other officials failed. The officials again tried to carry out the survey but faced strong opposition from the farmers, following which the police took the farmers forcibly into custody and shifted them to different police stations while they were raising slogans against the government.

Speaking to Telangana Today, a farmer Ramesh from Girmapur said they were demanding the government only to come up with a statement on the compensation package.

An epitome of probity in public Life

The passing away of Buddhadeb Bhattacharya shall be deeply mourned by the people of West Bengal, cutting across the political divide. As the Chief Minister of West Bengal for over a decade, and previously a Cabinet Minister in four of the five Left Front governments led by Jyoti Basu, Buddhadeb Bhattacharya displayed character traits, which have become increasingly rare within those who govern. He epitomised probity in public life. The modest two room apartment, in which he continued to live with his family through his ministerial tenure till the very end of his life, stands as testimony. In this October 2002 picture, West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee is seen with cricketer Sourav Ganguly at the inauguration of a State Government housing complex named after Saurav, in Kolkata. The then Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina with Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee after paying floral tributes to former West Bengal Chief Minister and Communist veteran leader Jyoti Basu, at the State Assembly, in Kolkata on January 19, 2010.

Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee with M. Karunanidhi at the latter's residence in Chennai on August 13, 2006. Both of them were Chief Ministers then. West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee felicitates legendary singer and Padma Bhushan awardee Manna Dey at an event organised in Kolkata on January 21, 2008 by the Association of Professional Performing Singers, West Bengal, supported by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and Bengal Shelter. Lord Swaraj Paul Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee at Writers' Buildings in Kolkata on April 8, 2008. The then West Bengal Governor Gopal Krishna Gandhi flanked by Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee (right), and Mamata Bannerjee at a press conference at Raj Bhavan in Kolkata on September 7, 2008. The State Government and Trinamool Congress came to a consensus on the controversial farmland acquisition issue for the Tata Motors car project at Singur. The issue was one of the reasons behind Left Front's loss in West Bengal. The then Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar and Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee at Jyoti Basu's funeral in Kolkata on January 19, 2010. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee addresses a massive rally in Kolkata on February 13, 2011 at the launch of the Left Front campaign for the upcoming elections to the State Assembly. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee paying tributes to Gabriel Garcia Marquez, one of the greatest authors in Kolkata, on May 14, 2014. Lal Salam: Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee offering his last respects to CPI(M) leader Benoy Konar at State's Party headquarters in Kolkata on September 15, 2014. The then Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi and Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee during a campaign rally for Congress-Left candidate Deepa Dasmunshi in Kolkata for the 2016 West Bengal Assembly elections. In this July 2023 picture, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee being discharged from a city hospital after undergoing treatment for 11 days. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee during a CPI(M)'s State committee meeting in Kolkata. He was the last of the great Communist leaders from West Bengal, a quintessential Bhadrakalok, who loved to read poetry, Kafka and Marquez. Like many of



his generation, Buddha da, as he was fondly called, was attracted to communist politics through his participation in West Bengal's student-youth movement of the 1960 and 1970s. As a leader of the youth front of the CPI(M) and a protege of communist veteran Pramode Dasgupta, Buddhada had joined the very first Left Front government in 1977 as the Minister of Information and Public Relations at the young age of thirty three. He figures among a very small set of leaders who served in the Left Front Cabinet from its inception till its eventful end in 2011 (except for the second Left Front government because of his narrow loss in the 1982 Assembly election). During this long ministerial career, Buddhada had always stood out for his honesty and decency. He had even resigned from the Left Front ministry in 1993, protesting against perceived wrongdoings, and had to be persuaded to rejoin the cabinet a few months later by Jyoti Basu himself. Buddhada had authored a Bengali play during that period of introspection, which reflected on the decadence of the values that were inculcated by the Left movement of yesteryears. Among all the communist leaders of his generation in West Bengal, Buddhada was the most engaged with the spheres of literature, arts and culture. It was his engagement with dissident literature coupled with the lived experience of the collapse of the USSR in the late 1980s, that led him to question several Marxist-Leninist orthodoxies.

Combined with his uprightness, it was Buddhada's unorthodox approach towards governance and policy-making as West Bengal's Chief Minister since 2000, which had made him popular among the people, especially the younger generation in Bengal, who were born or brought up under

Left Front rule. His single minded efforts to address the unemployment problem in West Bengal, which led to massive out-migration of the youth from the State, also received public support and led to a memorable election victory in 2006. History since then took a different turn. His industrialisation strategy and land acquisition for industry initiatives, inspired by the Chinese model, generated much controversy and together with pent up discontent on other aspects of the thirty four year long regime, brought an end to the Left Front rule in 2011. It was his decency that led him to gracefully accept the electoral defeat and gradually retire from public life. While opinions remain sharply divided till date over the rights and wrongs under the last Left Front government, Buddhada's unfulfilled dream of modernising West Bengal's economy and providing decent job opportunities to the youth within the State shall remain acutely relevant. The initiative of his government to enhance OBC reservation quota in West Bengal and in-

clude significant sections of the minority Muslim community within its ambit, following the Sachar committee findings and Ranganath Mishra commission, was an important step to address the socio-economic backwardness of the deprived sections. This progressive policy, which was enacted into a law by the subsequent Trinamool Congress regime, has recently been reversed by a High Court verdict. Buddhada was deeply committed to safeguarding India's secular, democratic constitutional order. Even during a period of serious illness on the eve of the 2019 Lok Sabha election, he appealed to the people of West Bengal not to jump from the frying pan of Trinamool Congress misrule to the communal fire being lit by the BJP. The people of West Bengal did not take that plunge neither in 2019 nor in 2021 and 2024; although the revival of the party, that Buddhada led from the front for over a decade till 2011, is still awaited. It is that revival that would have made him most happy.

Infant dies in road accident at Masab Tank

Hyderabad: A three-month-old infant girl died after the auto rickshaw she was travelling in overturned after hitting a road divider at Masab Tank on Thursday morning.

According to the police, Santoshi, mother of the infant and Laxmi, her grandmother were going along with the toddler Anvika in an auto to go MGBS from Katedan in an auto rickshaw to go to their native place Nanded. When the auto rick-

shaw reached Mahaveer Hospital stretch, the driver J Anil, rammed the vehicle into the road divider and the vehicle overturned.

"All the people who were in the auto fell on the road and the infant became motionless. The family rushed her to a nearby hospital where doctors pronounced her dead," said an official of Masab Tank police station. A case is registered against the auto driver for rash and negligent driving.

A man received 217 COVID shots — what does his body teach us?

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a roller-coaster for vaccinology — from a rare show of truly global collaboration between governments, multilateral agencies, the scientific community, and industry to huge public demand for rapid vaccine development against the new virus that had brought the world to its knees to sudden concerns of “too rapid” development when many vaccines could be developed in record time. Some wanted “booster doses”, and others worried about “too many doses”.

So when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced in September 2021 that the third doses of the Pfizer and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccines would soon be available to Americans who were first in line to receive their initial two-shot vaccines, some experts questioned the need for it for most people — except the elderly or immunocompromised — and called it “over-vaccination” owing to a lack of data. Later, the third dose became the norm worldwide, although India still called it a “precaution dose” and continues to do so, while many Western countries recommend repeated boosters, some with updated vaccines against the current Omicron variant. The debate over the best vaccination strategy continues. The man who received 217 shots

In January 2022, an octogenarian from Madhepura district in Bihar claimed to have received more than 11 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine because it helped him with joint and back pain that had eluded other forms of treatment. At the time, some scientists worried about “over-vaccination”. Since the subsequent doses beyond the first two may not have been reported, it faded from the headlines. But on March 4, a study published in *The Lancet* reported a shocking case of “over-vaccination” by a 62-year-old German man who received over 217 COVID-19 shots over 29 months for “private reasons”.

Researchers found out about his case from media reports and conducted a detailed study to investigate the immunological and other effects of over-vaccination on his body. Their investigation revealed much about immune function and the effects of over-vaccination. They compared their findings to a reference cohort of 29 healthy persons who received ‘only’ three COVID-19 vaccine doses. Between November 2019 and October 2023, the man underwent routine examinations for various reasons, which indicated no vaccination-related anomalies on 62 parameters. No vaccine dose caused issues for the German individual. He never got a minor SARS-CoV2 infection either, according to rapid antigen/RT-PCR and nucleocapsid serology assays. The antibody titres were much greater than the control group vaccinees, with serum neutralisation capability 5.4-fold and 11.5-fold higher for wild-type and Omicron B.1.1.529 spike proteins, respectively. They also reported that he exhibited antibodies that were not found in the control group and that some antibodies were also detected in his saliva. Advanced “quality” tests of antibodies showed no significant difference from the control group. Strong “over-vaccination” did

not increase or impair antibody quality either. Finally, the researchers evaluated individual immune cells to discern the “exhaustion” of immune cells from repeated vaccination — and found none. Throughout the study, more antibody titres showed the individual’s immune system’s ability to respond to the antigen despite hyperstimulation. In sum, even after over-vaccination, the COVID-19 vaccinations were well-tolerated and effective.

Are too many vaccine doses bad for you?

The investigations did not harm the person, and raised many questions: Are too many random vaccine doses at random intervals safe for anyone? Can a single case study generalise safety? Do two to three years suffice to assess vaccine safety? How might such high vaccine doses affect an individual’s immune system? Many experts have discussed ‘immune tolerance’ and ‘immune exhaustion’ — especially of the T cells. Long COVID pathogenesis, when the SARS-CoV-2 virus persists in the body for a long time, has been carefully investigated in relation to this issue. Scientists have found no evidence that COVID-19 vaccinations do this. The vaccines merely briefly expose the immune system to antigens. Each shot injects a small quantity of antigen, triggering a momentary immunological response. However, naturally sick people produce viruses and antibodies throughout the body for days or weeks. The human common-cold coronavirus and rhinoviruses infect people multiple times every year, often at short intervals, without harming their immune systems. Our immune system responds to environmental exposure on an hourly basis without getting tired. The recent vaccines are more sophisticated. They use only a portion of an organism or a few antigens, unlike smallpox and whole-cell pertussis vaccines, which include thousands. In the new study, immunological profiling indicated repeated vaccinations or infections stimulated the immune system, making it more responsive. Interestingly, the immune system also developed faster, stronger, and broader, protecting against more new variants. A probable downside: Cancer and HIV can cause immune-fatigue due to chronic foreign-object exposure. So the immune system might become ‘exhausted’ and stop responding after repeated encounters. Thankfully, COVID-19 has not shown this yet. Recent research has revealed that repeated vaccines and spontaneous infections in fact boost COVID-19 immunity. Despite these promising results, over-vaccination should be avoided. The COVID-19 vaccines have been associated with autoimmune diseases like immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia, autoimmune liver disorders, Guillain-Barré syndrome, IgA nephropathy, rheumatoid arthritis, and systemic lupus erythematosus. Molecular mimicry, autoantibody synthesis, and vaccine adjuvants appear to contribute significantly to these disorders. The relationship between a COVID-19 shot and these conditions’ symptoms is unclear. This said, overloading the immune system rarely causes



harm. Hypervaccination may rarely cause an ‘Arthus reaction’, a condition characterised by localised acute small-vessel inflammation and possibly entire limb edema. Repeated tetanus and diphtheria vaccination injections have been shown to have this reaction. As we know, there are two broad types of immunity: innate and adaptive. When innate immunity is permanently stimulated, and the intensity of the reactions is stronger, these mechanisms may be directed against the host and subsequently stimulate acquired immunity. The cytokines, oxidative stress, and high nitric oxide production accompany this manifestation. Other issues pertain to the principles of immunisation. In this instance, an interval between doses ranged from two days to two months. Most vaccines, including the mRNA vaccines, work best when there is a defined minimum interval between the two doses

against one particular disease. A shorter interval usually elicits a suboptimal immune response than adequately spaced doses. One must stick to the laws of science and, in this case, the principles of vaccination. We must endorse the caution the authors advised to avoid attempting such over-vaccination without evidence on a sufficient number of subjects. In addition, the study is a good illustration of how we can seize on the opportunities to advance science for the benefit of all. Conversely, the results will also reassure the vaccine-hesitant community about the safety of vaccines. Dr. Puneet Kumar is a clinician, Kumar Child Clinic, New Delhi, with a special interest in infectious diseases and vaccination. Dr. Vipin M. Vashishtha, is past convener, IAP Committee on Immunisation, and director and pediatrician, Mangla Hospital and Research Center, Bijnor.

Breastfeeding may lower postpartum depression risk, experts say

New Delhi: Breastfeeding can potentially reduce the risk of postpartum depression, said experts on Wednesday.

World Breastfeeding Week is held in the first week of August every year, supported by World Health Organization, and United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The theme for 2024 is Closing the Gap: Breastfeeding Support for All.

While the numerous benefits of breastfeeding for infants are widely acknowledged, there’s a less discussed but crucial connection: its impact on maternal mental health, specifically postpartum depression. Postpartum depression (PPD) is a medical condition that many women experience within the first 2 to 3 days after delivery and may last for up to two weeks. It’s typically characterised by strong feelings of sadness, anxiety (worry), and tiredness that last for a long time after giving birth. It also includes mood swings, crying spells, anxiety, and difficulty sleeping

Research shows about one in seven

women can have postpartum depression. PPD and anxiety are often overlooked challenges that many new mothers face. “Depression and anxiety disorders represent the most common obstetric complications during pregnancy and the first year postpartum, reducing the mother’s ability to effectively perceive, decipher, and respond to their infant’s needs,” Manisha Khalane, Lactation Consultant, Surya Mother and Child Super Speciality Hospital, Pune, told IANS. A recent study published in *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* showed that women who breastfeed their babies were found to have a lower risk of developing PPD. The effects were maintained in those women over the first four months after child delivery. “While breastfeeding alone may not prevent postpartum depression, it can play a significant role in reducing the risk by promoting hormonal balance, physical recovery, emotional bonding, and a sense of purpose and support,” Ruth Patterson, Chief Lactation Consultant at Cloudnine Group of Hospitals, Bengaluru, told

Sino-Russian challenge: Symbolic, strategic and synchronized



The great shift in international politics where Russia and China challenge traditional western dominance received a formal stamp from President Xi Jinping and President Putin during the former's recent visit to Moscow. Xi's concluding comment that 'right now there are changes not seen for a hundred years' and that 'we are driving these changes' sums up the directions of Sino-Russian partnership. The symbolism of this meeting is a combined power projection.

The contexts of this Sino-Russian meeting are (i) the proxy war in Ukraine, where Russia has made significant gains over the Russian speaking areas of the Donbas region but remains bogged down; North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is providing massive arms, monetary, intelligence assistance, so there is no end in sight to this war of attrition. (ii) United States (US) national security strategy marks China as the long-term dangerous threat and is arming Taiwan, encouraging its independence; isolating China economically by putting export controls that curb and target Chinese technologies, industries and manufacturing. (iii) The US has twinned the Sino-Russian threats. NATO strategy is to decimate and weaken Russia irreversibly and simultaneously isolate and contain China. The US is supporting major militarisation of the Indo Pacific in Japan,

South Korea and the Philippines and extending military bases in many islands; the Australia, United Kingdom, US (Aukus) Agreement will bring nuclear submarines to isolate China. It is no wonder that China and Russia believe they need security and strategic coordination.

China published a 12 point very general peace plan for Russia-Ukraine that proposes that peace is possible if the 'legitimate security concerns of all' are respected; they have commonalities in framing this war, oppose unilateral sanctions, and reject the 'Cold War mindset'. This plan is rejected by the US that does not want to cede ground to the Russians till Ukraine is victorious on the battlefield. This appears an unlikely scenario. Xi's trip to Moscow that comes straight after his election as president for an unprecedented third term, has been more than symbolic. A major thrust of the holistic partnership is their commitment to 'coordination -no matter whatever the changing events'. So, whether it was China's mediation between the Saudis and Iran, Chinese foray into the international politics of West Asia, it is clear that Russia provides unsung background support. The earlier "no limits" partnership, called 'rock solid' is now multidimensional with a material basis. Russia as China's top gas and petroleum supplier will step this up, as it changes the direction of pipelines from

Europe to China, with a second 'Power of Siberia' Pipeline constructed by Gazprom and Chinese State CNPC. Cooperation and trade from agriculture exports to machinery and manufacturing are to expand to reach a goal of \$ 200 billion of annual trade with Agreements on 80 bilateral projects signed. Further Russia will build civil nuclear power facilities in China. They will cooperate in the construction of civil aircraft, ship building, auto manufacturing. Russia like the Central Asian Republics is part of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. The Sino-Russian partnership has taken the early steps to challenge the US Dollar, which is the root of American hegemony. The West pushed Russia out of the dollar zone with sanctions, but Russia, China and many countries- including India, are encouraging trade in national currencies and currency swap arrangements. Putin endorsed the use of the Chinese yuan in settlements between Russia and other countries. Already, two thirds of trade between Russia and China - worth about \$ 150 billion is in local currency. So, steps towards the internationalisation of renminbi will be furthered, enhancing US threat perceptions. The China-Russia security and economic cooperation is not a security or military alliance like NATO. However, they do send signals of a close relationship that seeks to push the US out of the Eurasian land mass. They collec-

tively root for a multipolar world and oppose any axis of great powers. As NATO escalates its militarism in the Indo-Pacific, the depth of Russia- Sino relationship can begin to acquire a military and security dimension. Especially since their joint statement says that this 'friendship that will not tolerate coercion from any third party.' It is clear that the Chinese are not supplying weapons as the Russians do not need these and, in any case, China does not want to be sanctioned. Further the argument being made that Russia has ceded its sovereignty and become a client state of China is untrue. Russia has demonstrated its capacity and agency in equal terms. This partnership does not pose a military threat to the region and they underline this with their collective support to groupings like the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organizations. The narrative of multipolarity, regionalism, inclusive security from Russia and China finds resonance from many countries in the Global South. All these countries want peace, economic development for their people but would also like to leverage their relations with both the West and with China and Russia for development projects and have strategic choices. Of course, several countries have their own contentious issues with China- whether it is India, Vietnam and several in South East Asia.

Move over, red carpet. Indian cinema is back at Cannes, says Anupama Chopra

For far too many years, our headlines have been about stars on red carpets — in 2018, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan's purple lipstick was big news; in 2023, influencers hijacked the spotlight (a few were trolled for making the prestigious film festival a backdrop for Reels); in 2022, the focus was on Deepika Padukone, who was part of the main competition jury. Her many looks sent the internet into a tizzy. Through these years, Indian cinema was largely relegated to supporting-artist status. Last year, the biggest noise was created by Anurag Kashyap's *Kennedy*, a noir thriller that was selected for a midnight screening. The film has yet to be released in India.

This year is already a game-changer. After three decades, an Indian film has been selected in the main competition section. Payal Kapadia's debut feature, *All We Imagine as Light*, is a contender for the festival's most coveted award, the *Palme d'Or*. Her film, about a nurse who receives an unexpected gift from a husband she hasn't spoken to in years, will be competing against cinema legends, including Francis Ford Coppola's sci-fi drama *Megopolis*; David Cronenberg's *The Shrouds*, a horror film about one man's mission to connect with the dead; and Paul Schrader's *Oh, Canada*, in which a famed, terminally ill documentary filmmaker gives one last interview to a former student.

Payal's selection feels personal, because I first went to the festival in 1999 and have been waiting to cheer for India in the main competition ever since. The festival's second-most-prestigious section, *Un Certain Regard*, also features Indian talent. British-Indian writer-director Sandhya Suri's feature debut *Santosh* has made the cut. The film stars Shahana Goswami as a newly widowed woman who inherits her husband's job as a police constable in rural India. Sandhya's competition includes Bulgarian-American director Konstantin Bojanov's *The Shameless*, featuring Mita Vashisht and Tanmay Dhanania, in a story about a violent world of killing and sex work, in which two women unexpectedly fall in love.

This year, there were 2,263 submissions to *La Cinef*, the section for film-school projects. Only 18 were selected, including Film and Television Institute of India graduate Chidananda S Naik's *Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know*. Based on folklore, the 16-minute short film is about what happens to a village when the sun refuses to rise one day. In the *ACID* sidebar (named for the Association for the Diffusion of Independent Cinema), we have *In Retreat* by Ladakhi filmmaker Maisam Ali. This is the first Indian film to be programmed at *ACID* since the sidebar was launched in 1992. The other sidebar, *Directors' Fortnight*, includes *Sister Midnight* by the Indian filmmaker Karan Kandhari. The poster, which shows Radhika Apte with a large bandage across her nose, is startling enough to make me get in line. (The film is about a newlywed woman, trapped in a violent life in a Mumbai slum, who devel-



ops a thirst for vengeance.) The cherry on the cake is legendary director-cinematographer Santosh Sivan receiving the *Pierre Angénioux Tribute*. Each year, in honour

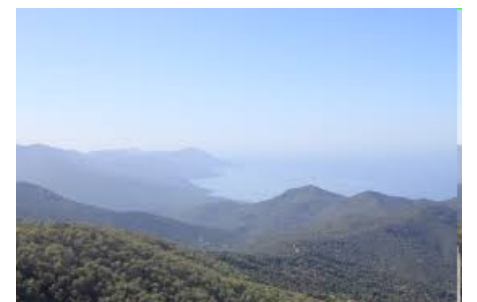
of the late inventor, engineer and optical manufacturer, a great director of photography is awarded. Santosh is the first Indian to receive the tribute. He is in good com-

pany — earlier recipients include Roger Deakins and Christopher Doyle. I'm excited for India. For a ground report, tune in to my next column, on June 2.

Discover Algeria's hidden treasures: New visa initiative paves way for adventurous travellers in Sahara

One of the Arab world's last holdouts to global vacationers is slowly opening up, as a new Algerian visa program gives more outsiders the chance to take in the lunar landscapes and prehistoric art of its vast Sahara desert. Unlike Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, Africa's largest country hasn't prioritised tourism despite its proximity to Europe. It may sport majestic Roman ruins, picturesque Mediterranean cities and soaring Atlas mountains, but this fiercely independent energy exporter has mostly kept its treasures to itself. That won't change overnight — Algeria is still a challenging place for most foreigners to bag a visa. But an initiative rolled out in January 2023 has eased the process for adventurous travellers who don't need maximum comforts to tour the stark southern deserts that make up 80% of the country, and it's starting to gain traction. "It's for people who want to discover the grandeur of nature," Tourism Minister Mokhtar Didouche said in an interview in the capital, Algiers. "To tourists looking for a five-star hotel, I say in the Sahara you have a million stars!" For sure, it remains a minority pursuit — Didouche says 10,000 visas have been issued to visit the Sahara in the year to February 2024. Still, overall Algeria tourist arrivals hit 3.3 million over those 12 months, fueled largely by people visiting friends and fam-

ily in the country; it's a level Didouche said was previously "quite unthinkable." There's a target of 10 million by 2030. "At the most, you have a week to 10 days to process your visa," Didouche said of the latest initiative, significantly shorter than previously when permission was granted via consulates. Trips have to be booked through approved travel agencies in Algeria and visitors typically have security escorts. In addition to exploring the desert, some tour operators report they are able to take their groups to sites in the north too, although it's not clear how widespread the practice is. An average week-long trip organized by local operators involving offroad vehicles and no-frills camping typically costs up to •800 (\$863) euros per person, not including international and domestic flights, according to Algerian travel agents. *Terres d'Aventure*, a French agency that works with Algerian counterparts, lists tours that start from nine days for •1,850, including flights. The slow-motion change comes after Saudi Arabia took the historic step of welcoming tourists in 2019, leaving the North African nation as one of the broader region's last frontiers for adventure travel. Foreign dollars may also help Algeria's plans to diversify an economy that's long practiced protectionist policies and is still hugely reliant on the



oil and gas reserves it began tapping in the 1950s. Arrivals didn't exceed 2.7 million per year over the past decade and the industry contributes just 2% to the country's gross domestic product, according to Didouche. The majority of recorded visitors are from the diaspora with family links to Algeria, as these visitors are allowed easier entry. There are plans to extend the speedier visa-for-the-Sahara policy to the whole country "soon," the minister said, without providing additional details. In Algeria's north, where the vast majority of its 47 million people live, attractions include a 1,200-kilometer (746-mile) coastline and Unesco world heritage sites such as the Roman ruins of Tipasa, Timgad and Djémila as well as the sprawling hillside alleys of the Kasbah in the heart of Algiers. In February.