A new cybercrime trend surges in Hyd

Hyderabad: In a troubling new trend, Hyderabad has seen a surge in cybercrimes known as 'digital arrests', where fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials to extort money from victims. By using fear tactics, scammers claim the victims' bank accounts are involved in illegal activities such as money laundering and threatening arrest if immediate payments are not made.Victims are often coerced through phone calls, video chats, and fake legal documents, which falsely accuse them of crimes such as money laundering. Under pressure, they are tricked into disclosing sensitive financial information or transferring large sums to the fraudsters.The cyber fraudsters typically target vulnerable individuals, including senior citizens, by pretending to be officials from agencies like the police or tax departments.

They may claim that a fraudulent bank account has been opened on the victim's name and demand cooperation to avoid legal consequences. Victims are sometimes held "digitally captive" for hours or days, forced to interact only with the scammers through online means.In a recent case reported in Hyderabad, an elderly couple was duped of Rs 10.6 crore. Fraudsters posing as Mumbai police

claimed that an account in the victim's name was involved in illegal transactions.They coerced the couple into transferring money into various bank accounts, citing the need to comply with an ongoing investigation. The scammers used fake official letters and threatened imprisonment.

Hyderabad police recently arrested 18 individuals from Rajasthan, uncovering a web of cybercrimes involving digital arrests. "These criminals, known to target software engineers, homemakers, and retirees, managed to extract amounts ranging from Rs 1.1 lakh to Rs 2.9 crore from victims across multiple cases," said a Cybercrime official.Hyderabad Cybercrime DCP D. Kavitha described the modus operandi of the fraudsters, emphasising how they focus on vulnerable individuals like senior citizens."The fraudsters exploit minimal personal details, such as an Aadhaar number or a phone number, to obtain sensitive information about the victim's financial accounts. Posing as high-ranking police officials, they manipulate and intimidate the victims into compliance, often threatening them with arrest," she said.

Police sources said it was found that scammers were using fake documents of the Enforcement Directorate and Income

Tax Department. These tactics are designed to deceive victims into believing they are under investigation for money laundering.Cybercrime officials urged citizens to be cautious in sharing personal or financial information online. "It is advised to verify the authenticity of anyone posing as a government official and avoid engaging in phone-based investigations. No legitimate police investigation will ever be

conducted entirely over the phone," said an official from Telangana Cyber Security Bureau (TGCSB).Individuals who are suspicious of calls from cybercriminals threatening them of wrongdoings and seeking bank and other details should immediately report the matter to the officials engaged in tackling cybercrime. They can report such incidents immediately through the TGCSB's helpline (1930) or the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal.

Activists, political leaders detained hours before VLF foundation ceremony

Mahipal, POW State Secretary Y Geeta, Damagundam Parirakshana JAC Chairman D Gudem Venkatanna and others have been taken into custody, according to reports.Former BRS MLA from Vikarabad Metuku Anand was also prevented from visiting a family, whose member had passed away. Videos of the former MLA

being stopped by the police and asking him not to go further have been shared on different social media platforms.In the videos, the former MLA is seen asking the police to board his vehicle so that they get clarity over the purpose of his visit. He even asked the police to take him to the family in their vehicle, in case of any doubts.

Vikarabad: Hours before the foundation ceremony for the Very Low Frequency (VLF) radar station at Damagundam, police took activists and political party leaders, opposing the project, into preventive custody.Union Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and others would be participating in the foundation ceremony here on Tuesday.

Cutting across political parties, leaders have been opposing the VLF station

project, citing many reasons, including adverse impact on the flora and fauna in the region. They are also worried about the project's impact on River Musi.Sensing trouble from activists and political leaders, heavy police force has been deployed in the district since Monday. However, the leaders are being taken into custody to avoid any untoward incident.

AIKMS Vikarabad unit president Y Mahender Reddy, CPM district unit R

Hyderabad Cybercrime police refund Rs 39 lakh to victim of fraud

Hyderabad: Hyderabad Cybercrime police have refunded an amount of Rs 39 lakh to a victim who was recently cheated by cyber fraudsters in a stock trading fraud in the city.The 34-year-old unemployed victim was made to transfer a total of Rs 78.70 lakh to different bank accounts provided by the scammers. Hoping to make easy money, the victim deposited money in installments, but soon realised he was cheated as he could not withdraw money after a point.Based on a complaint, the Cybercrime police booked a case and initiated an investigation. Notices were sent to the bank officials, followed up with them

to freeze the fraudulent amount. The complainant too was, guided to file a petition in court for the refund of the amount held in the fraudulent accounts.*Beware of fake investment social media groups promising high returns with little risk*Never believe the promises of huge returns and fake profit screenshots.*Use SEBI – approved apps for investment. Ask a SEBI registered financial advisor before investing.*Scammer will credit a small amount in the victim's account to gain the victim's confidence and allow withdrawal as well.*There is a possibility to get refund of at least part of the lost and Put on Hold amount, if it is reported immediately.

Milton was an unusual hurricane, but not unexpected. Here's why

Hurricane Milton, which made landfall near the city of Siesta Key in Florida on Wednesday night, triggered intense rainfall, flooding, tornadoes, storm surge, and strong winds in the area.The storm killed at least 12 people, most in the eastern part of Florida, destroyed homes, knocked out power to more than 3 million customers, flooded barrier islands, and tore the roof off a baseball stadium. It also dropped more than 45.72 cm of rain on St Petersburg (a city on Florida's Gulf coast, part of the Tampa Bay area), representing a more than a 1-in-1000 year rainfall event for the region.The hurricane has now weakened and moved off over to the North Atlantic Ocean, the National Hurricane Center, a US government agency, said on Thursday.Milton occurred during the peak of the Atlantic hurricane season (mid-August to mid-October). Yet, scientists have said the storm is unusual in many ways — from how quickly the storm intensified to the path it followed — although not surprising. As the world continues to become warmer, scientists have repeatedly warned about such storms.

What was unusual about Milton?

Milton exploded from a Category 1 storm (they bring winds of 119 to 153 kmph) to a fierce Category 5 storm (they have winds of 252 kmph or higher) over the course of 12 hours between October 6 and October 7 morning. By afternoon, it had sustained winds of a whopping 285 kmph, becoming one of the strongest hurricanes ever recorded in the Atlantic.A storm is said to undergo rapid intensification if its maximum sustained winds spike by around 56 kmph, according to a report by The New Yorker. Extreme rapid intensification takes place when wind speeds increase by 93 kmph. Milton's maximum sustained winds spiked by more than 145 kmph in a day, the report said.It was also rare that Milton formed in the Gulf of Mexico, which is connected to the Atlantic Ocean by the Straits of Florida, then began to move eastward, and made landfall on the Western coast of Florida. Jonathan Lin, an atmospheric scientist at Cornell University, told Vox, "There are not really any hurricanes on record that have done this and made landfall at a Category 3+ status."Hurricane Milton Guests at the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World brave wind and rain as bands of weather from Hurricane Debby pass through Central Florida. (AP)

Why was Milton an unusual storm?

The most crucial factor behind Milton's intensification were the remarkably high sea-surface temperatures in the western Gulf of Mexico. The day Milton became a Category 5 storm, sea-surface temperatures reached nearly 31 degree Celsius, well above the 26 degree Celsius needed for hurricanes to develop.Heat stored in oceans is a key ingredient in the rapid or extreme rapid intensification of hurricanes. "Put simply, hotter water evaporates more readily, and rising columns of warm, moist air from that evaporation fuel rapid intensification," according to a Vox report.Scientists say that the Gulf of Mexico's unprecedented temperatures are primarily due to climate change. As the

world continues to emit greenhouse gases, more heat is getting trapped in the atmosphere, a significant amount of which is absorbed by oceans. Global mean sea surface temperature has gone up by close to 0.9 degree Celsius since 1850, and around 0.6 degree Celsius over the last four decades.Another reason for Milton's severe intensity was the high humidity of the atmosphere. The atmosphere can hold 7% more moisture for every degree-Celsius increase in temperature. The increased moisture levels make storms more dangerous, leading to higher precipitation intensity, duration and/or frequency.Lack of wind shear was also a factor. Wind shear is a change in wind speed and direction, and if it is strong enough, it can disrupt

hurricanes. In Milton's case, this did not happen. Kim Wood, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Arizona, told The Atlantic, "All of that combined is making the storm more efficient at using the energy available."

Why are scientists not surprised?

In recent years, rapid intensification of storms has become more common. For instance, Hurricane Otis, which hit Mexico last year, became a Category 5 storm from a Category 1 storm within a day. Hurricane Idalia (2023) and Hurricane Ian (2022) are some of the other examples of rapid intensification.Although more research is required to establish the impact of climate change on hurricanes, scientists believe

that the spike in rapid intensification is a consequence of rising global temperatures.A 2017 study, 'Will Global Warming Make Hurricane Forecasting More Difficult?', published in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society (BAMS), predicted that as the planet gets warmer hurricanes' rapid intensification just before landfall was likely to become "increasingly frequent and severe".The situation is expected to only get worse. An assessment by several of the world's leading climate scientists in the journal BioScience, published on Tuesday, said, "We are stepping into a critical and unpredictable new phase of the climate crisis… We will see much more extreme weather in the coming years."

Ratan Tata's lasting imprint on India's business landscape, global ambitions

Handed over the ropes of the Tata Group in 1991, Ratan Tata had just embraced the mantle of leadership when the diversified group's growth story had some parallels with India's economic growth story as well. As India took its leap towards liberalisation in 1991, Tata also worked towards revamping the Group, taking business decisions during his tenure that looked like failure to his critics, but helped turn around the fortunes of many group companies — both in domestic operations and the group's global footprint. From Tata Tea's acquisition of Tetley in the year 2000 to acquiring the UK-based Corus Group in 2007 and reviving the once-struggling British luxury car manufacturer, Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) post acquisition in 2008, Tata set the ball rolling on the Group's presence overseas, charting out a path for other companies to follow.The $12 billion acquisition of Corus at a time when it was four times the size of Tata Steel marked a big milestone in Indian industry's forays abroad. Close on the heels of the acquisition of Corus in 2007, Hindalco Industries, a subsidiary of the Aditya Birla Group, ac-

quired American aluminium manufacturing company Novelis Inc. for $6 billion.The decade from Tetley's takeover to the time Ratan Tata left the Group in 2012 also marked the most remarkable phase for outbound investments from India. Between 2001-2012, there were around 1,135 overseas acquisitions by Indian companies with the majority share of software and business services.Global expansion, modernising the GroupRatan Tata focused on modernising the group's operations, fostering innovation, and expanding globally. The goal of internationalising the operations of the diversified business was stated by him in 2004 when he expressed optimism about making it a global group that is "at home in the world." "I hope that a hundred years from now we will spread our wings far beyond India, that we become a global group, operating in many countries, an Indian business conglomerate that is at home in the world, carrying the same sense of trust that we do today," he had said.What had once looked like risky investment decisions to his critics

have turned into success stories as was seen in the case of JLR that achieved its highest-ever full-year revenue of $38 billion last financial year, following a remarkable turnaround after Tata Motors, led by Ratan Tata, acquired the brand in 2008 from its American owners, Ford Motor Company, for $2.3 billion. This acquisition marked a reversal of fortunes from 1999, when Ratan Tata had approached Ford to sell his struggling car business and the deal fell through after the Tatas felt put down by Ford executives, who implied they were doing Tata a favour by buying the Indian carmaker.His acutely unique business choices were not just limited to overseas but also domestic shores. After taking charge at the company's automotive arm TELCO (rebranded subsequently to Tata Motors), he introduced two car models — Tata Sierra and Tata Estate. Even though he faced internal opposition, Tata laid out his plans to make India's first fully indigenous car. In 1998, under his leadership, Tata Motors launched the first passenger hatchback, Tata Indica.

Pockets of Middle Class Being Looted to Fund AAP's Political Ambitions, Alleges PPCC Chief

Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), Oct 15: Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee (PPCC) has alleged that AAP is looting the pockets of the middle class to fund its political ambitions.In a critique of the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab, Warring, PPCC chief and Member of Parliament from Ludhiana, has accused the Bhagwant Mann-led administration of betraying the people of Punjab and enforcing "GST-terrorism" to fill their political coffers. Warring lambasted the AAP for looting the state's middle class and small business owners to finance their lavish election campaigns and fund extravagant advertisement budgets, branding it as a total sell-out of the state's hard-earned resources.

"Aam Aadmi Party claims to stand for the common man, but they are the biggest enemy of the very people they pledged to protect. They are emptying the pockets of middle-class families, misusing public funds to fuel their political ambitions and self-glorification," Warring remarked."This party has crossed all limits of excess, hiring a private jet to fly Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to a rally, while the state's helicopter followed empty, just for security reasons. It's an outright mockery of the taxpayer's money, a shameful waste of public resources, all while Punjab's people struggle under the burden of rising prices and economic hardships."

The PPCC Chief pointed out that the misuse of Punjab's resources doesn't stop with CM Bhagwant Mann. "Not only does Bhagwant Mann waste Punjab's helicopter, but it has also been used to ferry Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on multiple occasions. Why are Punjab's assets being used? This is the clearest evidence that the AAP government is not for Punjabis, but for their party bosses."Warring further highlighted the terror being unleashed on small business owners under what he termed as "GST-Terrorism." He pointed out that messages are being circulated across districts instructing government officials to conduct arbitrary raids on salons, beauty parlours, and cosmetic shops during the festive season, targeting them with undue pressure to check B2C invoicing.

"On the eve of Karva Chauth, when families are preparing to celebrate, AAP is sending terror squads to harass small businesses under the pretext of GST enforcement. These shops, many of which are struggling to survive, are being targeted as part of AAP's revenue collection drive to fund their political adventures. This isn't governance—this is daylight robbery!"The PPCC Chief expressed deep concern over the psychological and financial strain AAP's policies are imposing on Punjab's middle class and business community. "Entrepreneurs in Punjab are living in fear, not just of criminals, but of their own government. The law-and-order situation is collapsing, corruption is rampant, and now honest business owners are being terrorized by the AAP government's GST squads. How can anyone thrive in such an environment?"

Warring also slammed AAP for their failure to tackle issues like illegal sand mining and corruption, issues they had once vowed to eradicate. "Instead of addressing illegal activities or the rampant corruption within their own ranks, AAP is squeezing Punjabis dry to fund their next big election or build grand advertisements across the country. When will they stop extorting the people of Punjab for their personal gain?" he questioned.The PPCC Chief warned that this GST-enforcement drive, coupled with AAP's rampant spending, would only worsen the already fragile state economy. "They have chosen the festive season to execute these raids. At a time when Punjabis should be celebrating, they are being terrorized by this GST racket. AAP is ruining Punjab's festivals while they roll in luxury."Raja Warring made it clear that the Congress party would not stand by and allow AAP's exploitation of the people to continue. "We will raise our voices and mobilize the public against this GST-terrorism! The Congress party will lead the charge in exposing the AAP government's blatant misuse of public money, and we will not let them get away with looting from the hardworking citizens of Punjab."He

concluded by calling on the public to hold the AAP government accountable for its actions. "This is not the governance Punjabis were promised. Bhagwant Mann and the Aam Aadmi Party have deceived the people of Punjab, and it is time for Punjabis to rise and demand justice. The robbery of Punjab's resources will not go unnoticed, and the AAP government will be held responsible for every single rupee they have siphoned from the state."

Musk reacts to Ambani lobbying, calls any India move to auction satellite spectrum 'unprecedented'

Starlink boss Elon Musk said a move by India to auction satellite broadband spectrum, and not allocate it, would be "unprecedented", reacting to a Reuters story that rival billionaire Mukesh Ambani was lobbying for the auction route.In what is seen as a battle between the two billionaires, Starlink argues administrative allotment of licences is in line with a global trend, while Ambani's Reliance says an auction is needed for a level playing field as foreign players could offer voice and data services and compete with traditional telecom players.On Sunday, Reuters reported Ambani's Reliance has argued India's telecom regulator has incorrectly concluded that home satellite broadband spectrum should be allocated and not auctioned, without seeking industry feedback, and the consultation process must start afresh.

Reacting to the news, Musk wrote on X that any such decision to auction as Reliance is lobbying for "would be unprecedented.""This spectrum was long designated by the ITU as shared spectrum for satellites," he wrote late on Monday on X, referring to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a specialized UN agency for digital technology.

India is a member of the ITU and signatory to its treaty that regulates satellite spectrum and advocates that allocation must be done "rationally, efficiently and economically" as it's a "limited natural resource."Reliance did not respond to a request for comment on Tuesday. It has previously told Reuters it is "imperative" upon the Indian regulator to consult on the methodology of spectrum assignment.

Starlink boss Elon Musk in reponse to news that rival Ambani is lobbying for the auction route instead of allocation for satellite broadband spectrum in India would be "unprecedented".

The methodology of giving out spectrum for satellite services in India - a market set to grow 36% a year to reach $1.9 billion by 2030 - has been a contentious issue since last year.Musk's Starlink and global peers like Amazon's Project Kuiper back an administrative allocation, saying it is a natural resource that should be shared by companies. Ambani, Asia's wealthiest man, is arguing for an auction process.Reliance's latest lobbying move in India has intensified a face-off with Musk who wants to launch Starlink services in India but has voted for the spectrum allocation route, in which the government simply assigns spectrum to the companies.An Indian government source told Reuters on Sunday the regulator was following due process of consultation.

K.K Pictures Unit Meets Union Minister Kishan Reddy

K.K Pictures is excited to announce the upcoming release of its highly anticipated Pan India film, Production No. 1, directed by M.V. Satish Kumar. This important cinematic project seeks to shine a light on the serious issues affecting women within Hindu society, particularly in a context marked by rising violence and coercive conversion.India, revered as a spiritual leader in the world, faces a troubling

reality as the core values of Hindu Sanatana Dharma come under threat in a country rich with Mahatmas, philosophers, and the profound teachings of Vedic knowledge."Are Hindus in our society becoming complacent? Is anyone genuinely aware of the growing atrocities faced by Hindus today?" queries Producer Dr. Kashetty Kumar, underscoring the urgency

of these pressing issues. Production No. 1 is designed to inform, provoke thought, and inspire action within the community.The film will be made available in multiple languages including Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada ensuring it reaches diverse audiences across the nation.On a honorable note the film unit met with Union Coal Mines Minister G. Kishan Reddy at Dilkusha guest house in

Rajbhavan Road, Somajiguda, Hyderabad. During this meeting, M.V. Satish Kumar provided an insightful overview of the film's themes, earning the Minister's commendation for the team's dedication to highlighting crucial societal issues. Notable figures in attendance included Meesala Chandraiah, Dugyala Pradeep Kumar, Prasad Patel, actor Antanagari Rajendra, Shikha Vijay, and others.

NYT sends AI startup Perplexity 'cease and desist' notice over content use: Report

The New York Times has sent generative AI startup Perplexity a "cease and desist" notice demanding the company stop using its content, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.The letter from the news publisher said the way Perplexity was using its content, including to create summaries and other types of output, violates its rights under copyright law, the report said.Since the introduction of ChatGPT, publishers have been raising the alarm on chatbots which can comb the internet to find information and creating paragraph summaries for the user.Perplexity and the New York Times did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment.NYT is also tussling with OpenAI, which it had sued late last year, accusing the firm of using millions of its newspaper articles without permission

to train its AI chatbot.Other media firms such as The Atlantic and Vox Media have signed content licensing deals with OpenAI which give the ChatGPT-maker access to their content.In the letter to Perplexity, NYT asked the company to provide information on how it is accessing the publisher's website despite its prevention efforts, according to the WSJ report.

Perplexity had previously assured the publisher it would stop using "crawling" technology, the report said citing the letter.Earlier this year, Reuters reported multiple AI companies were bypassing a web standard used by publishers to block the scraping of their data used in generative AI systems.Perplexity faced accusations from media organizations such as Forbes and Wired for plagiarizing their content.

A study on side-effects of Covaxin and three lessons in public trust and research

A research paper on the side effects of a Covid vaccine has snowballed into a huge controversy; it has attracted international attention. Authored by the faculty and students of the Banaras Hindu University and titled 'Long-term safety analysis of the BBV152 coronavirus vaccine in adolescents and adults: Findings from a 1-year prospective study in North India,' the study was published in May 2024 in a peer-reviewed international journal, Drug Safety.The paper analyses telephonic responses from 635 adolescents and 291 adults, who had registered in BHU's hospital in Varanasi and had received Covaxin jabs. Covaxin and Covishield were the two vaccines approved by the Union Health Ministry to prevent Covid-19 hospitalisation and deaths. The enquiries were made a year after the jabs were given.

The controversy started after the journal's editor and authors were upbraided by the head of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for "implicitly (making) conclusions about vaccine safety, unsupported by evidence." Besides its flawed methodology, the apex research institution found the use of the term AESIs or "adverse events of special interest" to be inconsistent with its globally accepted definition. This is important because hinging on this is the question of how data on medical events is collated and interpreted. ICMR demanded the retraction of the paper. Then Covaxin's manufacturer, Bharat Biotech, filed a suit against the journal's editors and authors for causing "shock, alarm, and hesitancy about the safety and efficacy of Covaxin."

A shot in the arm came in the form of an open letter issued by 600 academics and members of civil society, decrying the suit and strongly backing the need to promote independent research. The signatories quoted the Supreme Court's direction to collect and share information on adverse events (related to Covid,) "even if they are not already known to be caused by vaccine…"This reinforcement of academic freedom was short-lived because last month, the journal removed the disputed paper. This is disquieting. Bharat Biotech has, meanwhile, withdrawn the suit against the editors, which leaves the authors to fend for themselves.What had the researchers done to invite such wrath? They used telephonic conversations to collect data on respondents' health-related experiences post-vaccination. These were collated, analysed statistically and discussed disease by disease, condition by condition, in the now discredited paper. Several previous papers by this group of researchers also related to post-vaccine events had apparently created no controversy. Perhaps it was the grandiose title of the paper and its conclusion that "nearly one-third (33 per cent) of the study's participants developed AESIs" that triggered alarmist reportage. The highly localised sample of less than 1,000 people, was hardly significant statistically, given that millions had been vaccinated across the country's hugely dissimilar populations.

The episode raises important questions, which go beyond the paper.The first is about editorial accountability. Did the journal not have a responsibility to defend its editorial decision? The researchers had followed a protocol approved by the BHU's ethics committee and had acted on the advice of the journal's peer reviewers. The paper was published within four months of submission, signifying extraordinary editorial receptivity. The journal's u-turn needs an answer — not by criticising the paper (which should have been done before publication) but by explaining why obvious shortcomings went unnoticed.

The second question relates to ICMR, India's highest body responsible for the formulation, coordination and promotion of biomedical research. Because ICMR has a role as the co-owner of the Covaxin patent for Covid-19, along with Bharat Biotech, it needs to remind the public about that role. It was ICMR's National Institute of Virology that had provided the virus strains to Bharat Biotech. Conflict of interest questions were raised in 2021 but died down once Covaxin began to be used and was acknowledged as a great achievement of Indian science. But now, questions are being raised again in the wake of the BHU paper's controversy. A recap would help.

The third question is for the researchers. Advising caution and monitoring is easy. The difficult part is to answer how and who should be cautioned, and who should supervise the exercise. Covaxin, or any other Covid vaccine, will only be used again if there is a serious outbreak of Covid-19 or its variants. Were that to happen, vaccination could be re-introduced to cover vulnerable groups. However, the administration of vaccines would still be managed by each state's district health machinery. Among the slew of cautionary recommendations in the BHU, a large number pertain to upper respiratory infections (URIs), the bulk of the adverse events of special interest. Who are these recommendations addressed to? Who can exercise caution against coughs, colds, sinuses and sore throats which largely constitute URIs? Even more absurd are the cases of acne, myopia, hair loss and skin problems which have been placed under the rubric of safety monitoring. How can any policy confront these conditions? To be fair, the paper has not drawn any causal link with the vaccine but for the average reader such links were implied.The BHU story has nevertheless flagged three larger concerns. First, if defamation cases against academics become a trend, as is happening in other countries, it will hurt independent research, especially on drugs and vaccines. The biggest losers would be consumers and that's a huge concern. Second, ICMR and universities must see that medical research proposals are screened institutionally to avoid causing public mistrust or impacting the delivery of essential public health services, including vaccination. Third, medical research methodology must expect research to be mindful of drawing unworkable conclusions. Pursuing medical research is critical, but so also is staying down-to-earth.

Ola Electric shares fall nearly 3pc for third consecutive session

New Delhi: Ola Electric shares closed nearly 3 per cent down on Monday – a fall for the third consecutive session – as the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) asked the EV firm to clarify its pricing practices.The automotive testing agency, operating under the Ministry of Heavy Industries, has asked the EV company to provide clarification about a price reduction for its S1 X 2 kWh electric two-wheeler in its recently announced sale.Ola Electric's share closed at Rs 87.44 apiece. The stock has lost its sheen from its all-time high of Rs 157.40.If fails to provide a satisfying answer, Ola Electric may face legal action and potentially lose the subsidies its electric vehicles are eligible for under the PM Electric DRIVE Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) scheme.According to reports, if any violations are found, action is likely to be taken in accordance with the law and the E-DRIVE scheme guidelines.Bhavish Aggarwal-run Ola Electric has also been slapped with a notice from the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), after the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) received over 10,000 complaints in the last one year regarding its poor after-sales service.Ola Electric needs to reply to the CCPA's show-cause notice within 15 days.Meanwhile, the Centre on Sunday directed Ola to implement a mechanism allowing consumers to choose their preferred method of refund, and to provide consumers with a bill or receipt or invoice for all auto rides booked through its platform. As per information on NCH, 2,061 complaints have been registered against Ola from January 1, 2024, till October 9.The top complaints included higher fares charged from consumers than what was shown at the time of booking the ride; non-refund of the amount to the consumer; driver asking for extra cash and driver not reaching the correct location or dropping at an incorrect location.

In Jammu and Kashmir, it was a vote for strengthening the democratic process

The Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) survey shows the complex co-existence of the Jammu region and the Kashmir Valley. While Statehood seems to be the main ground of convergence between the two regions, party choices sharply bring to the fore the divergences. The survey provides important insights to the mood, aspirations, and political attitudes of the people of J&K.While the reasonably high voter turnout was by itself an important achievement and a triumph of democracy, the expression of voters' choices was an even more significant triumph. The people of J&K were electing a Legislative Assembly after 10 years. While the National Conference (NC)-Congress alliance secured a majority of seats, there was a clear divide in the voting pattern between the Jammu region and the Kashmir Valley. After the results were declared, NC leader Omar Abdullah said that J&K must be governed such that both the Kashmir Valley and Jammu feel adequately represented.

Statehood in demandSix important factors largely shaped voter choices in J&K. First, there was a strong sentiment across J&K for the restoration of Statehood. More than six of every 10 respondents strongly endorsed the view that granting Statehood is a way forward to solve the Kashmir issue. In the Kashmir Valley, the support for Statehood was much higher as compared to Jammu. When asked whether Union Territory status or Statehood was better for the future of the people, more than eight of every 10 (81%) favoured Statehood.On the question of the restoration of Article 370, a little less than two-thirds (64%) supported restoration. Within the Kashmir Valley, where it was a major issue, as many as eight of every 10 (83%) favoured restoration of Article 370. But it may be misleading to believe that this is merely a 'Valley issue' because in the Jammu region too, four of every 10 (42%) respondents supported the restoration of Article 370.These two issues — Statehood and autonomy — will remain key to J&K's's relation with the Union government and will also shape the relation between the two regions.

Second, there was a visible trust deficit in both regions towards the political process. This deficit was especially evident when it came to issues about the Kashmir Valley in the Jammu region and vice versa. Other than Mr. Abdullah, no local leader was really a preferred chief ministerial candidate. Moreover, leaders from Jammu evoked very little trust in the Kashmir Valley and those from the Kashmir Valley found little trust among the people of Jammu.Close to half the respondents (48%) expressed a lot of trust in the Election Commission of India (ECI). When this was disaggregated region-wise, the expression of a 'lot of trust in the ECI' fell to four of every 10 in the Kahmir Valley and rose to six of every 10 in the Jammu region. While a majority of the respondents said that the elections were held in a free and fair manner with no rigging, the positive response was much more intense in the Jammu region as compared to the Kashmir Valley. This was also reflected in

voter turnouts.PolarisationThird, the two regions were polarised over the question of endorsement of the performance of the Central government. This endorsement was much more evident in the Jammu region as compared to the Kashmir Valley. In Jammu, four of every 10 respondents said that the Central government was more successful than its predecessors in resolving the Kashmir issue. In the Kashmir Valley, less than one in every 10 (6%) took a similar stand. More than half the respondents were fully or somewhat satisfied with the work done by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre. This reflected in voter choices as well. Two-thirds of those who were fully satisfied with the Modi-led Central government voted for the BJP. Half of those who were somewhat or fully dissatisfied with the work of the Central government voted for the NC-Congress alliance. The support for the work of the Central government was clearly along party lines.Fourth, despite a disruption in the routine electoral process barring the Lok Sabha election, voter identification with parties was fairly significant. Across J&K, about half the respondents (49%) mentioned party as the key deciding factor. Four of every 10 mentioned the local candidate as the decisive factor in determining who to vote for. Among those who voted for the two national parties and the traditional State-based parties (the NC and the People's Democratic Party), the party was clearly the focus of attention. In the case of BJP supporters, it was as high as seven (70%) of every 10 voters. Those who voted for new parties made their decision based on the local candidates. Thus, the party mattered for the supporters of established parties, while candidates mattered for the newer parties.Fifth, there were clear demographic differences in the voting patterns. In Kashmir, the NC-Congress alliance had marginally higher support among

men as compared to women. In Jammu, the BJP had greater support among men as compared to women. The NC-Congress alliance drew equal support among the youth in both the Kashmir and Jammu region (four of every 10 youth). The remaining youth voted for the PDP and the newer parties in the Kashmir Valley, while four of every 10 youth in Jammu voted for the BJP.Finally, the voters across J&K listed the same set of priorities. Unemployment was seen as the most critical problem, followed by inflation and poverty. In the Kashmir Valley, poverty was mentioned more frequently than inflation, while in Jammu, the reverse was true. Only two of the centrally sponsored schemes saw a large number of beneficiaries. Six of every 10 had benefited from the Ayushman Bharat scheme and the numbers were much

higher in Jammu (seven of every 10) as compared to Kashmir (five of every 10). The Ujjwala scheme evoked a similar response in both regions with more than half the respondents saying they had benefited from it.The voters in J&K saw an opportunity to choose a representative who they believe can handle local problems and articulate regional aspirations. This will be a challenging task for all the elected MLAs, as there are clear differences between the regions on a range of issues. The new government will need to reduce the trust deficit.Sandeep Shastri is Director-Academics, NITTE Education Trust, and the National Coordinator of the Lokniti Network; Suhas Palshikar taught political science and is chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics; and Sanjay Kumar is Professor and Co-director Lokniti-CSDS

Timely intervention of Hyderabad police and bank officials prevent two cyber frauds

Hyderabad: Timely intervention of Hyderabad police and bank officials has prevented two cyber frauds and saved a total of Rs 20.5 lakh from being transferred into the bank accounts of fraudsters.Head Constable Feroz of Cyber Crime Unit, Hyderabad, with the assistance of Deputy Manager Saleha Begum of ICICI Bank, Nallakunta played a crucial role in preventing fraudulent transactions.

In the first instance, a resident of Warasiguda went to the bank to transfer Rs 9 lakh to a suspicious account for payment in a stock trading fraud. Saleha Begum, alerted Feroz, who then counseled

the customer and stopped him from making the payment to the scammer's account. The victim had already paid Rs 3 lakh to the fraudsters.In another instance, a resident of Adikmet went to the bank to transfer Rs 11.5 lakh into a fraudster's account as part of a digital arrest fraud. The bank and police officials counseled the customer and alerted the cybercrime police, thereby preventing money loss.Hyderabad Police Commissioner CV Anand appreciated the efforts and proactive response of the bank officials and cybercrime staff in preventing the fraud and saving the victims and felicitated them.

The U.K. and 'leaving lessons' from the Indian Ocean

The Chagos islands in the Indian Ocean comprise seven atolls, with the northernmost atoll called Peros Banhos. Maldivians know the Chagos islands as Foalhavahi which are just 300 miles from Addu Atoll, the southern tip of the Maldives and where the United Kingdom had a Royal Air Force base on Gan Island (Maldives) until 1976. North of Peros Banhos, there are two reefs and a sandbank; another sandbank lies further north. These reefs and sandbanks are again closer to the Maldives. It is not just about proximity. Historically, these islands and shallows were a part of the Maldives.A letter from a Maldives Sultan, written in 1560 survives in a Portuguese archive in Lisbon. Here, the King of Maldives clearly refers to the Peros Banhos Atoll as belonging to the Sultan.

The Atoll of FoaMulak is next to the Addu Atoll. It is not by accident that Maldivians call Peros Banhos as 'FoaLhavahi'. These two atolls have much in common, and not just in their names. British Victorian historians Albert Gray and H.C.P. Bell, in 19th century work that deconstructed island names, suggested that the first part of the word of the island of Fólávaki is perhaps, the Malay 'pulo', which is island.The winds and navigation are what connect these two atolls to the Malay Peninsula, now a part of Malaysia. The Arab navigator Ahmad Ibn Majid would detail how after going around the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa), when travelling to the east, navigators would take the route that went from FoaLhavahi to FoaMulak, and then straight to the Malay Peninsula. Many people from the Maldives Atoll of FoaMulak have Malay features and Malay heritage.French traveller Vincent le Blanc, while in Pegu in 1640, picked up an amazing story. According to him, there was an island called Polouois towards the south of the Maldives, which can only be what the Maldivians call the island of FoaLhavahi in the Chagos islands.

This island was ruled by the King of Achen in Sumatra. The King, who had many descendants from several wives, had given the island to one of his children, by name Argiac. Another island went to his eldest son Abdanic. This island can only be the Maldives Atoll of FoaMulak. When the king died, the two sons fought with each other; the elder boy sought the assistance of the King of Bengal, and defeated Argiac. FoaLhavahi came back to FoaMulak. Since then, FoaLhavahi remained uninhabited until slaves who were brought from Zanzibar, populated the Chagos in the late 1700s.

The Africa connectionDuring the same period, Maldives sultans brought slaves from Africa, and by the mid-1800s, the population in Male, the Maldives capital, had a sizable African population. It was the same slave traders who brought slaves to the Maldives and Chagos. It is very likely that slaves in the Maldives and Chagos were from the same African clans.The sovereignty of the Chagos islands depended on which side emerged victorious in the many British-French wars. By 1965, the Chagos islands remained under United Kingdom sovereignty. When Great Britain began to decolonise its Indian Ocean territories, there was no logic or reason why the islands should be handed to Mauritius. In the late 1930s, the Sultan of the Maldives sent expeditions to the Atoll to count and mark with his seal the coconut palms on the Chagos islands. The last expedition was led by the father of the former Foreign Minister of the Maldives, Ahmed Naseem, who is of African descent. For centuries, the Maldives have used the islands of Peros Banhos Atoll as a base for fishing expeditions. People would camp on the islands, catch fish, and cook, smoke and dry them before bringing them home.The importance of marine conservationIt is of huge concern that fish stocks in the Indian Ocean are depleting at a fast rate because countries are handing over fishing rights to greedy factory trawlers and purse seiners that operate from countries outside the Indian Ocean. The only zones in the Indian Ocean that are fully protected from industrial fishing are those of the Maldives and the Chagos territory. In the case of the Maldives, fishermen use pole and line, one by one — fishing techniques that have no bycatch (other fish or other marine species caught unintentionally) and are maintained at a sustainable level.Great Britain must be congratulated for bringing the whole of Chagos under protected status. For Great Britain, the best and most respectable way to leave the Indian Ocean would be to discuss with the Maldives how this protected status can be maintained indefinitely. Britain must learn its 'leaving lessons'. Leaving India in 1947 was good, but the human cost from Partition was horrific. It is vital that as the process of decolonising proceeds, all island countries of the Indian Ocean, including the Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles and Sri Lanka, jointly agree to maintain the Chagos archipelago's fully protected status, in the interests of marine conservation.Mohamed Nasheed is the Secretary General of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), and a former President of the Republic of Maldives

The way to solve the 'Kashmir problem'

The enthusiastic electoral participation of the people of J&K has proved that they envisage democracy as the ultimate mode of getting involved in the political processes. This explicit endorsement of democratic politics is not merely about electing a new Assembly; instead, democratic federalism is seen as a politically viable approach to resolve what is popularly known as the 'Kashmir problem'. The Lokniti-CSDS survey underlines four empirical manifestations of this popular view.Statehood and autonomy

First, there is a strong claim that J&K must be conferred statehood. This is not an entirely new contention. In fact, political parties, including the ruling BJP, have been sympathetic to this call. The demand for statehood, however, is also seen as a long-term way of solving the question (Table 1). An overwhelming majority (73%) of the respondents argued that restoration of statehood might open new possibilities for dialogue and deliberation.

A sizeable share of respondents (59%) claimed that granting greater autonomy to J&K will contribute significantly in restoring confidence among the people. It is difficult to ascertain the meaning of the term 'greater autonomy' based only on the survey data. Nevertheless, it is clear that the majority of respondents recognise statehood in the established framework of constitutional federalism, which ensures division of powers between the States and the Centre. That might be the reason why only one of every 10 respondents fully agreed with the statement that giving more power to the Lieutenant Governor will help in resolving the political problems of the region.Second, the people strongly confirmed the official position that Kashmir is an integral part of India's political landscape. The demands for statehood and greater autonomy are made in relation to the legally permissible framework offered by the Constitution. That is why improving relations with Pakistan is not seen as a crucial precondition to solve the political stalemate in Kashmir. Around one-fifths of the respondents claimed that improved bilateral relations with Pakistan could create a conducive environment.

Third, there is a clear condemnation of all forms of separatism. Only 11% of the voters agreed fully that there was a need to build better relations with the separatists; 23% fully disagreed. This rejection of separatist politics is understandable: the common people do not want to be politically alienated. In fact, only 16% of the respondents fully agreed with the view that the Army must be directed to adopt an even tougher stand.Finally, the respondents were divided on the success of the Modi government in solving the Kashmir issue (Table 2). Around two of every 10 (22%) respondents said that the Modi government has been more proactive and successful in a comparative frame.

The gruelling course of litigation in India

Last month, the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, highlighted the issue of court delays. In her speech at the National Conference of the District Judiciary, she noted that these delays are what are making people hesitate approaching courts, as they fear that the pursuit of justice will complicate their lives further. She referred to this as the 'black coat syndrome', likening it to white coat hypertension — a condition where patients exhibit elevated blood pressure in clinical settings. While the term is symbolic, it underscores a real issue — that many people are reluctant to engage in litigation due to the gruelling process, which includes endless adjournments, numerous appeals, and escalating legal costs. A significant factor contributing to these delays is the Indian judiciary's scheduling and case management practices. Effective case management, involving clear timelines for filing documents, conducting witness examinations, scheduling hearings, and limiting adjournments, are crucial. Without these, the court system struggles to move cases forward efficiently, exacerbating delays and frustrations faced by litigants.

Court scheduling and case management have long been challenges within the Indian judiciary, significantly contributing to delays. Mechanisms such as Case Flow Management Rules were introduced for district and High Courts to streamline processes, set timelines, and create more predictable court schedules. However, despite their introduction in the late 2000s, these rules and other initiatives, that were aimed at improving scheduling and timely case disposal, have been inconsistently implemented, and with limited impact. At the level of the district judiciary

While stricter rules and rigid timelines are often suggested as solutions, the reality is more complex. It is crucial to recognise that all participants in the judicial system — judges, lawyers, litigants and witnesses — act with rationality and good intentions, though their actions are often influenced by various constraints and incentives. Court scheduling issues are deeply rooted in the complex interplay of these motivations. A holistic approach that considers the psychological and behavioural aspects of all stakeholders is essential for meaningful progress. Let us look at the challenges in the district judiciary. Judges have a crucial role in enforcing case management timelines. But systemic pressures often compromise their ability to do so. Judges in the district judiciary have to prioritise cases, with directions from higher courts to dispose of these cases within a specific time or where target disposal numbers have been provided for case types. While such oversight aims to ensure timely justice, higher courts often impose deadlines without fully considering their impact on the overall scheduling in district courts. This forces district courts to allocate disproportionate resources to expedite certain cases, disrupting scheduling and creating delays. The Supreme Court of India and various High Courts have criticised this trend, noting that such directives often disrupt case management in district courts. A more balanced approach is needed, wherein higher courts' deadlines align with district court operational realities to avoid exacerbating delays. Various statutes and rules impose timelines for the disposing of cases or filing documents, but judges are often not incentivised to adhere to these deadlines. When extensions are permissible, judges frequently grant them beyond statutory deadlines, knowing that higher courts are likely to condone such delays if appealed. Judges who enforce these deadlines may face pressure from the bar, potentially affecting their career progression as they risk being labelled 'difficult' and subjected to constant complaints.

The performance evaluation system for judges of the district judiciary, known as the units system, exacerbates these challenges. Judges are awarded "units" or points based on the type and number of cases they dispose of, with different weights assigned to different case types. To maximise their units, judges might prioritise and dispose of the simpler cases quickly, allowing them to accumulate points more quickly. This can lead to a situation where judges focus on less complex cases to boost their unit count, potentially neglecting the more challenging cases that require substantial judicial intervention. By favouring cases that are easier to resolve and quicker to process, judges may inadvertently contribute to delays in more complex cases, which are sidelined or postponed. The impact down the lineLawyers significantly impact court scheduling and case management. Often handling multiple cases scheduled across different courts on the same day, they strategically decide about which cases to attend to based on factors such as the likelihood of adjournment, the importance of the case, or the perceived mood and predispositions of a particular judge. This often leads to adjournments in some matters. The lack of predictability in case hearings exacerbates this issue. Lawyers often do not have a clear understanding of when a particular case will be heard or the likelihood of adjournment, making it difficult to plan their schedules. Moreover, lawyers may request adjournments or deliberately delay proceedings if they perceive that the judge is likely to grant an adjournment, especially if their client has expressly asked for it. This lack of predictability and the strategic behaviour it encourages only adds to the congestion in court schedules.

The tendency to extend stays and interim orders further diminishes the interest of lawyers in actively pursuing a case. For litigants, obtaining a stay on a case can often be seen as a victory, especially in civil matters where a stay order may prevent any immediate adverse action. Consequently, once a stay is obtained, there may be little incentive in pushing for a speedy resolution, contributing to the backlog of cases. Before a trial begins, the judge sets a schedule with specific dates for each witness's testimony, and, accordingly, summons are issued. However, the timing of testimonies often becomes unpredictable due to changes in the court schedule, adjournments, and procedural delays. This disrupts daily life for witnesses, forcing them to leave their jobs, make travel arrangements and put personal responsibilities on hold, often without knowing when they would have to testify. The lack of a predictable schedule frustrates witnesses, is a financial strain, discourages their court appearances and contributes to trial delays. Need for holistic reformTo address court scheduling issues, a holistic approach is needed that goes beyond rules and timelines, and which focuses on incentivising all actors. Judges should be evaluated not just by the number of cases they dispose of but also by their ability to manage and resolve more complex cases within the prescribed timelines. The unit system needs reform so as to prioritise complex cases that require substantial judicial intervention, encouraging a broader range of case management. Lawyers need better scheduling information to reduce uncertainty and avoid unnecessary adjournments. Courts should implement predictable scheduling systems, introduce penalties for delays, and reward lawyers who adhere to schedules. Litigants should be discouraged from using stay orders and interim reliefs as delay tactics by making such orders temporary and subject to regular review. Witnesses require more predictability in court appearances, with advance notice and sufficient compensation beyond travel expenses to encourage their participation. Technological solutions could enhance case management, providing real-time updates and the monitoring of timelines. Courts can adopt a data-driven approach to identify and address scheduling bottlenecks, improving overall judicial efficiency. Without reform that accounts for the human side of the system, any procedural changes will remain just that — paper reforms.

Excessive screen time, trauma linked to behavioral issues in kids: Experts

New Delhi: Excessive screen time, trauma and violence can cause behavioural issues in children, said experts on Thursday, on World Mental Health day. World Mental Health day is observed every year on October 10, to raise awareness and fight against stigmaBehavioural problems like aggressiveness, anger, coupled with depression and anxiety disorders have been significantly rising in the recent past. "Excessive screen time, trauma and violence can induce behavioural changes in kids. They will throw tantrums, become aggressive, anxious, will be unable to sleep and will get depressed," Dr Shorouq Motwani, Psychiatrist, Lilavati Hospital Mumbai, told IANS. "In recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in behavioural issues among children, often linked to factors such as stress, excessive screen time, and changes in routine," added Dr. Sameera S Rao, Consultant – Paediatrician and Neonatologist. Common behavioral issues include sudden mood swings, where children may exhibit extreme changes in emotions. Increased aggression can manifest as unexplained irritability or anger. Such children are also likely to experience mood swings, headaches or body aches, self-harm, impulsivity, hyperactivity, and inattention, and poor academic performance are some of the symptoms to watch out for in children. Tindicative of anxiety or OCD,