

## Concerned citizens of twin cities condemn communal vandalism

Hyderabad: Concerned citizens of the twin cities condemn communal vandalism to instigate violence and demand strict action. A statement endorsed by several prominent citizens said, "even as we were thinking that Hyderabad has left communal violence behind with no riots since 2012, we find ourselves getting engulfed in intense communalisation. The past two months have seen four incidences in Rakshapuram, Nampally, Muthayalamma Temple, and Yakutpura". All these incidents that quickly become flash points, thanks to social media, seem to be deliberate instigations by individuals to vitiate the atmosphere in large parts of the city.

Condemning the deliberate acts of vandalism and hate mongering, the citizens in the statement demand the government to take strict and exemplary action against anyone indulging in vandalism or hate mongering to instigate communal

disturbances. It sought the government not allow mobs to take law into their own hands, establish Fast Track Courts to prosecute and punish the guilty in a time bound manner and police immediately apprehend and arrest the accused, showing no bias or favour, and arrange for immediate prosecution of all the guilty. The statement said all political parties must unequivocally condemn all such acts of communal hatred and violence members of the public, especially youth, should act in a responsible manner and should not blame or act against entire communities for the actions of one or few deranged individuals or groups driven by hate. Those who endorsed the statement included Prof. Shanta Sinha, Prof Rama Melkote, Prof. Padmaja Shaw, Dr. Mazher Hussain, COVA, Sandhya V. POW, Sajaya K, Prof. T. Vijay Kumar, Prof Ayesha Faruqui, M. A. Shakeel, Sarah Mathew, Prof. Jani Basha, Tashi Choedup, and others.



## Osmania University creates textile motifs using 'pollen morphology'

BORDER LAYOUT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Passiflora vialaca</i> (Passifloraceae)</li> <li>• Pollen Morphology: Oblate Spheroidal, Colporate, ornamentation- Reticulate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pollen form used in motif: Exine part of the pollen</li> </ul>	
Pollen	Motif	Open border

Hyderabad: The Osmania University on Wednesday announced the creation of a novel art form, 'Paragamanjari', which incorporates the intricate beauty of pollen morphology into textile design. The initiative combines science and art, using the microscopic yet highly ornate structures of pollen grains (ranging from 10-100 µm) to inspire textile motifs. The result is a new category of design, blending nature's intricate patterns with human creativity to produce a stunning range of fabrics.

The term 'Paragamanjari' derives from Sanskrit, with 'Paraga' meaning 'pollen' and 'manjari' signifying 'design'. Coined by Dr. Allam Vijaya Bhasker Reddy, Assistant Professor in the Department of Botany at OU, and Shivani Netha,

an MSc student, as part of her project work, the innovative design philosophy introduces a fresh artistic perspective akin to the famous Kalamkari, Pochampally, Dharmavaram, and Uppada traditions. The concept has been submitted for patent protection and, once approved, is expected to make an impact on both the textile and design industries, the OU said. What sets 'Paragamanjari' apart is its unique inspiration drawn from the ornamental patterns of pollen, marking the first time that such natural microscopic elements have been incorporated into textile design, it said. The project's success represents an important collaboration between botany and textile technology, elevating the study of palynology—the science of pollen—beyond its traditional academic boundaries. By integrat-

ing these scientific elements into textile design, 'Paragamanjari' also paves the way for its inclusion in future textile tech-

nology curricula, highlighting the synergy between natural science and creative industries, the university added.

## Hyderabad cybercrime police refund Rs 53 lakh to victim



Hyderabad: The Hyderabad Cybercrime police refunded Rs 53 lakh to an elderly person who was recently cheated by cyber fraudsters in the city. The 84-year-old victim was made to transfer a total of Rs 2.8 crore to different bank accounts provided by the scammers who posed as CBI officials. They threatened to book cases against him claiming the victim as involved in fraud cases. Under fear

of fake cases being foisted on him, the victim transferred the money and ended up being cheated. 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.

# Karnataka government plans to start 11 medical colleges under contentious PPP model

The Karnataka government is planning to establish 11 new medical colleges under a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model in 11 districts that do not have government medical colleges at present. As of now, the State has 22 government medical colleges in 22 districts while 11 others have no government medical colleges. To fill this gap, the government has now proposed to open medical colleges under the PPP mode in Tumakuru, Davangere, Chitradurga, Bagalkote, Kolar, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Bengaluru Rural, Vijayapura, Vijayanagara and Ramanagara districts.

Speaking to The Hindu, State Minister for Medical Education Sharan Prakash Patil said, "To improve medical infrastructure, health facilities for the rural people and to give increased opportunities in medical education to rural residents, poor and meritorious students, the State government is committed to starting a government medical college in every district. There are no government medical colleges in 11 districts of the state. But the Finance Department has not given us permission to start new medical colleges in these. So, we are planning to start medical colleges under the PPP model in these districts." Dr. Patil further said: "A private organisation has been tasked to study and report on starting medical colleges under the PPP model. A meeting has already taken place in this regard. An appropriate decision will be taken after receiving the complete report. However, 11 colleges cannot be started at once and our initiative will begin with two to three colleges per year." District hospitals to go to private establishments

According to the plans underway, as suggested by NITI Aayog, the State gov-

ernment will hand over district hospitals in these districts to private establishments for clinical practice, while they in turn invest in new medical colleges, under the PPP model, sources said. However, the district hospitals will continue to function under the Department of Health and Family Welfare as earlier. The State government will allot land for the private colleges. NITI Aayog had suggested that it was impossible for either the State or Union governments to bridge the gap in health and medical education infrastructure, and proposed that the State government give up district hospitals with over 750 beds to private establishments for clinical practice, even as they build medical colleges around these hospitals. However, some States and experts have criticised this proposal, calling it the "selling" of public healthcare to private players and pointing out that if the government eventually withdraw from the running of the hospitals, the poor would lose access to care. Financial constraints hit some medical college plans

As of now, Karnataka has a total of 73 medical colleges, including 22 run by the government and a total of 12,095 seats are available. In 2014-15, the State government announced the setting up of medical colleges in several districts. However, construction of the medical colleges in some districts did not take off owing to financial constraints. Setting up and running a medical college is a huge expense that can go up to ₹600 crore, sources in the government said. The government has now taken steps to move the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS) campus to Ramanagara and has decided to build a medical college on the university campus. The government has also already sanctioned a new government medical college



to Kanakapura. Both these colleges of the same district are expected to start from the next academic year. It is still not clear

whether these colleges will be started under the PPP model or the government will build and run them itself.

# WHO to evacuate 1,000 Gazan women, children for urgent medical care

Israel, which is besieging the war-devastated Palestinian territory, "is committed to 1,000 more medical evacuations within the next months to the European Union," Hans Kluge said in an interview with AFP. He said the evacuations would be facilitated by the WHO -- the United Nations' health agency -- and the European countries involved. On Thursday, October 17, UN investigators said Israel was deliberately targeting health facilities in Gaza, and killing and torturing medical personnel there, accusing the country of "crimes against humanity". Rik Peepkorn, WHO representative in the occupied Palestinian territories, said in May that around 10,000 people needed evacuating from Gaza for urgent medical care. The WHO Europe has already facilitated 600 medical evacuations from Gaza to seven European countries since the latest war began there in October 2023. "This would never have happened if we did not keep the dialogue (open)," Kluge said. "The same (is true) for

Ukraine," he added. "I keep the dialogue (open) with all partners." Now, 15,000 HIV-AIDS patients in Donbas, the occupied territories (of Ukraine), are getting HIV-AIDS medications," the 55-year-old Belgian said in English, stressing the importance of "not politicising health". "The most important medicine is peace," he said, noting that healthcare workers had to be allowed to do their jobs in conflict zones. "Outrage every time! Around 2,000 attacks have been registered on health centres in Ukraine since Russia's invasion in February 2022, according to the WHO. "There may be a kind of acceptance almost but this should cause outrage every single time," he said. "We will always continue to condemn this in the strongest possible terms." Kluge expressed concern ahead of Ukraine's third winter of war. "Eighty percent of the civilian energy grid is damaged or destroyed. We saw it in the hospitals, surgeons operating with a lamp on their heads," he said. "It will be a very, very tough" winter. Despite strains

on Europe's healthcare systems, he said the 53 countries that make up the WHO European region -- which includes central Asian countries -- were able to come together to prepare for future pandemics. "In Europe, we did our homework," he said. "Global pandemic treaty? What we need is a pandemic treaty globally, because even if we do our share, we're never going to stop bugs entering our continent." A European strategy for pandemics is due to be presented on October 31. At the same time, the WHO is urging its members to "manage and prepare for the next crisis, while ensuring continuation of essential basic health services" in order to avoid another "rupture" like that which occurred during the Covid pandemic. Ensuring the security of national healthcare systems is crucial and should be a priority, he said. "A minimum of 25 out of 53 countries during the past five years had at least one big health emergency event big enough to test

the country's security," he said. The pandemic has left its mark on Europeans, which Kluge hopes to erase during his next mandate. "The Covid-19 pandemic set us back two years on non-communicable diseases," he said, requiring countries to double down on diagnosing and treating multidrug resistant tuberculosis, testing for uterus and cervical cancer, and vaccinations. In addition, Kluge said he also wanted to address worrying trends, such as the health of young people and growing inequalities between men and women. "It's very clear. We see that the lockdowns during Covid-19 led to a 25 percent increase in anxiety and depression orders," he lamented. "Twenty-six percent of the women between 15 and 49 years in my region report, at least one time in their lifetime experienced intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence," he said. Kluge has headed the WHO Europe since February 2020 and is expected to be re-elected at the end of October.

# Stonecraft Group Partners with AIVOT Golf & Sports Management and the PGA of America announces first of its-kind PGA-Standard "Stonecraft Golf City" in South India - in Hyd

Stonecraft Group, a leading integrated biophilic real estate developer, announces the launch of a PGA-standard America-branded golf facility in collaboration with AIVOT Golf & Sports Management Pvt Ltd, the exclusive golf facility and development partner of the PGA of America in India. Located in Hyderabad, this debut PGA-branded course in South India will feature an 18-hole championship course spread across 200+ acres. This world-class course is set to redefine golfing standards in India, creating premier destinations for golf enthusiasts across the globe. In addition to the golf course, the development will include top-tier amenities that cater to the growing demand for integrated luxury living and sports, attracting both local and international attention.

Featuring a PGA of America-branded course that embodies world-class standards and state-of-the-art facilities, this premier golf course in Hyderabad is designed to provide an unparalleled experience for both professional and amateur golfers. The course includes a state-of-the-art clubhouse with luxurious amenities, dining options, and a pro shop, ensuring a premium experience for all visitors. A dedicated golf academy offers PGA of America player development programs led by PGA professionals. Furthermore, the course's eco-friendly design incorporates sustainable practices, preserving the natural landscape while elevating India's golfing scene to new heights. The initiative emphasizes sustainability through green building practices and the Miyawaki Technique, contributing to the region's environmental goals.



Stonecraft Group will incorporate sustainable practices throughout the project, ensuring a minimal environmental footprint. This project will not only enhance Hyderabad's sporting credentials but also bolster its reputation as a city committed to sustainable, forward-thinking development.

Commenting on this, Kirthi Chilukuri,

CEO & Managing Director of Stonecraft Group, said: "We are proud to bring this landmark PGA-branded golf facility to Hyderabad. This project reflects our vision of integrating world-class infrastructure with sustainable development, setting new benchmarks in luxury and recreation. The facility will also be the only golf facility in the world featuring a biophilic design with

a Miyawaki forest, which enhances the natural splendour of Hyderabad's iconic boulders and water bodies. This facility will elevate Hyderabad as a premier destination for sports, tourism, and investment, driving significant economic growth. We aspire to make this course a premier global destination for golfers, welcoming enthusiasts from around the world to experience all it has to offer."

## 5 New Cars That Made Waves in 2024

In 2024, several new cars made headlines in India, captivating the market with their innovative features and designs: The 2024 Maruti Swift makes a bold entry with a refreshed design featuring a sportier front grille, sleek headlights, and a redesigned bumper. Inside, the cabin is upgraded with a larger infotainment system, supporting Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, along with premium materials for added comfort. Safety and technology are elevated with features like a 360-degree camera, cruise control, and six airbags standard across all variants, ensuring maximum protection. Powered by the all-new 1.2L Z-Series engine, the Swift delivers a fun, zippy driving experience with ample torque for effortless city commuting. Starting at ₹6.49 lakh (ex-showroom), the 2024 Maruti Swift blends style, performance, and safety in a future-ready package.

MG Windsor, India's first intelligent CUV, blends the comfort of a sedan with the spaciousness of an SUV, offering a perfect blend of innovation, style, and comfort. Its futuristic AeroGlide design transcends traditional segmentation, while the luxurious interior features Aero Lounge seats that recline to 135°, 15.6-inch Grandview Touch Display and an expan-

sive Infinity View Glass Roof, adding a business-class experience. Powered by a robust PMS Motor with IP67 certification, the Windsor delivers 100 kW (136 PS) and 200 Nm of torque via a 38 kWh Li-ion battery, offering a range of 332 km\* ARAI certified packs 4 driving modes and a quick charge time of just 40 minutes at any DC fast charger. With a class-leading 2,700 mm wheelbase and 604 litres of boot space, it ensures maximum comfort and practicality. Connectivity is enhanced by the MG-Jio Innovative Connectivity Platform (ICP) with Home-to-car functionality and i-SMART technology with 80+ connected features. Built on a 'Pure EV Platform,' the MG Windsor starts at INR 13,49,800 (Ex-Showroom), and its innovative Battery-as-a-Service (BaaS) program allows for flexible ownership with a pay-per-kilometre model starting at INR 9.99 Lakhs + 3.5 Rs./km for battery. Additional benefits include a lifetime battery warranty, one year of free public charging via the eHUB by MG app, and a 60% buyback assurance after three years, positioning the Windsor as a standout choice in India's electric vehicle market.

Thar Roxx, new Mahindra SUV is a blend of ruggedness and refinement, fea-



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turing an iconic silhouette with a powerful long hood, short overhangs, and strong road presence. Engineered with the all-new M\_GLYDE platform for a smooth, dynamic ride, it offers superior control with WATT's Link suspension and first-in-segment Hydraulic Rebound Stopper.

Power options include G20 TGDI mStallion and D22 mHawk engines, deliv-

ering up to 380 Nm of torque. It boasts advanced safety with 35+ features, Level 2 ADAS, and ESP, while off-road performance is enhanced by India's first Crawl Smart Assist and IntelliTurn. Luxurious interiors include a panoramic skyroof, Harman Kardon sound system, twin HD screens, and more, all starting at ₹12.99 Lakh.

# PhonePe announces exciting cashback offers on 24K Digital Gold

PhonePe announces exciting cashback offers on 24k Digital Gold this Dhanteras and Diwali. Users can avail up to INR 2000 guaranteed\* cashback on purchasing a minimum of INR 1500 worth of digital gold from PhonePe. The offer is applicable from 29th October to 1st November 2024 for one-time transactions (valid once per user). PhonePe offers its users the convenience of buying 24K Digital Gold from the comfort of their home 24\*7. Apart from one time purchase, PhonePe also empowers every Indian to invest in Gold digitally via SIP and helps customers invest long term systematically. Customers also have the flexibility to invest in Digital Gold with any amount of their choice. The accumulated gold is stored digitally in the user's account, backed by physical gold stored in secure vaults. On selling

the stored Gold anytime, users can get their money credited to their bank accounts within 48 hours. Users can purchase 99.99% purity-certified 24K Digital Gold on the PhonePe platform, from leading and trusted players in the digital gold space like MMTC-PAMP, SafeGold and Caratlane. Over 1.2 Crore customers from 19,000+ postal codes in India have bought high purity 24K gold on the PhonePe platform at transparent prices with zero making charges. Here is a step-by-step guide to avail this special cashback offer while buying Gold on PhonePe: Click on 'Gold' under the Purchases section on the Home page. Click on 'Buy One time'

Proceed by selecting "Buy in Rupees" and adding minimum INR 1500 worth of 24K GoldCheck the final details of your Gold purchase and click on 'Proceed to



Pay', and it's done.\*Offer is valid from 29th October 2024, 00:00 AM to 1st November, 2024, 11:59 PM only on one-time transac-

tions. Not valid on SIP transactions. Minimum order value is Rs.1500. Valid once per user

## Industrial & Logistics Sector Records 53.5% YoY Demand Growth in Q3 2024: Savills India



The industrial and logistics sector demonstrated remarkable resilience in Q3 2024, achieving an impressive absorption of 17.5 million square feet—up from 11.4 million square feet in Q3 2023, according to the latest report by Savills India, a global real estate advisory firm. This represents a substantial Y-o-Y increase of 53.5%, solidifying India's status as a burgeoning hub for industrial and logistics operations. Tier I cities led the charge in absorption, accounting for 14.0 million square feet (80%) of the total, while Tier II and III cities contributed 3.5 million square feet (20%). This growth was driven primarily by sustained demand from the third-party logistics (3PL) sector, which comprised 38% of total absorption, alongside manufacturing at 16%. Notably, there was a sharp rise in demand from the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and fast-moving consumer durables (FMCD) sectors, contributing 17%. In addition to strong absorption rates, the sector witnessed a fresh supply of 19.3 million square feet in Q3 2024, reflecting a 9% year-on-year growth compared to Q3 2023. Tier I cities accounted for the majority of this supply, with 16.4 million square feet (85%), while Tier II and III cities contributed 2.9 million square feet (15%). "Demand continues to chase high-quality supply for both factory buildings in manufac-

turing and distribution facilities in warehousing. This asset class is outpacing others, growing at a CAGR of approximately 17% over a three-year span. Businesses are redefining their strategies towards value creation and growth, particularly in sectors like FMCG, FMCD, EV & auto, electronics, defense, and apparel, which are experiencing increased demand. The logistics services sector, supported by 3PL companies, is fulfilling the majority of sectoral requirements in addition to their

planned consolidation and business needs. Urban logistics, specifically quick commerce, is emerging as the "new kid on the block," with many e-commerce companies piloting models to gain market share by implementing the "just-in-time" approach similar to contract manufacturers. In summary, India continues to shine, backed by the government's PLI scheme, infrastructure developments, and various policies that support the manufacturing and logistics sectors," explained Srinivas N.,

Managing Director of Industrial and Logistics, Savills India. Delhi-NCR emerged as the top performer, contributing 22% of the total supply and 17% of the absorption, followed by Bangalore with 18% of the supply and Kolkata and Chennai are each at 12%. The 3PL, FMCG/FMCD, and manufacturing sectors collectively drove 71% of the total demand, underscoring the strength of these industries in the market. The e-commerce sector contributed 8% to the overall demand.

## CAR Kia Unveils the Carnival Limousine

CAR Kia celebrated the official launch of its latest flagship vehicle, the Carnival Limousine, at the CAR Kia Jubilee Hills showroom. The event was graced by esteemed orthopedic surgeon Dr. Neelam Ramana Reddy from Star Hospital, whose commitment to excellence made him an ideal choice to inaugurate this luxurious vehicle. The Carnival Limousine signifies a major milestone for CAR Kia, aiming to set a new benchmark in the luxury MPV (Multi Purpose Vehicle) segment. With its combination of premium features, exceptional comfort, and cutting-edge technology, the Carnival Limousine is more than just a car; it's an unparalleled travel experience designed for discerning consumers.

Dr. Ramana Reddy highlighted the importance of innovation and quality in today's automotive market, echoing CAR Kia's mission to provide superior products tailored to the needs of Indian customers. He praised the Carnival Limousine as a testament to the brand's dedication to



excellence. Mr. Santosh Chand, General Manager of CAR Kia, emphasized the significance of this launch by stating, "The Carnival Limousine represents our dedication to exceeding customer expecta-

tions. We are committed to bringing innovative and luxurious mobility solutions that resonate with the evolving demands of our customers. With this launch, we aim not just to redefine comfort, but to create memorable experiences on the road.

# Telangana Shooters Excel at the XV South Zone Shooting Championship 2024

Hyderabad: The XV South Zone Shooting Championship 2024, which took place from October 13th to 20th at the Saragarhi Shooting Academy in Velachery, Tamilnadu, concluded on a high note, showcasing the remarkable talent of athletes from various southern states. This year's championship attracted over 250 competitors, with Telangana shooters particularly standing out with an impressive medal tally. Telangana athletes secured a total of 8 medals including 3 Gold, 3 Silver and 2 Bronze, demonstrating their superior skills in rifle and pistol disciplines. Medal Winners from Telangana:

1. Raiyan Faisal Yousufuddin - Gold in the 50M Small Bore Free Rifle Prone (NR) Junior Men (578/600)
2. Amaan Ali Khan - Gold in the 25M Standard Pistol (NR) Junior Men (276/300)
3. Amaan Ali Khan - Gold in the 25M Standard Pistol (NR) Men (276/300)
4. Dhavalika Devi Nyamurs - Silver in

the 50M Small Bore Sport Rifle Prone (NR) Women (584/600)

5. Dhavalika Devi Nyamurs - Silver in the 50M Small Bore Sport Rifle Prone (NR) Junior Women (584/600)

6. Mahender Pal - Silver in the Standard Pistol (NR) Championship 25M Men (265/300)

7. Nagendrudu Vanamala Pedda - Bronze in the 25M Centre Fire Pistol (NR) Master Men (249/300)

8. Gaurav Sharma - Bronze in the 25M Standard Pistol (NR) Master Men (228/300)

Mr. Amit Sanghi, President of Telangana Rifle Association, congratulated all finalists and prize winners, particularly commending the Telangana shooters for their exceptional performances. He praised their hard work and dedication, recognizing their achievements in qualifying for the Nationals and expressed hopes for their continued success in future competitions.



## Media Delegation from Jammu And Kashmir visit NSTI, Vidyanagar



24th October, 2024, A group of 14 media professionals from Jammu & Kashmir, led by Tariq Rather, Deputy Director of PIB Srinagar visited NSTI, Vidyanagar today as a part of their 5-day media tour in Telangana. Smt. Priyanka Srinivasan, Deputy Director NSTI (W) along with the students welcomed the J&K Media delegates. Smt. Priyanka briefed the journalists about the various activities carried by NSTI. Addressing the gathering, she said National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) is one of the premier institutes run by the Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Govt. of India. She gave a detail presentation about the various courses offered by the institute, imparting vocational training to students as required by the local industry and also providing need-based training to become self-entrepreneurs.

Briefing about the training courses offered by NSTI, she said that all these courses cater to the needs of different sectors of the economy & labour market. NSTI is also offering the following new age courses like A remotely piloted aircraft drone pilot, drone technician etc as per the specific needs of Industry, she added. As a part of this press tour J&K journalists visited the training labs of Fashion Design and Technology, Cosmetology, Architectural Draughtsman, Information Technology etc. They also experienced and observed the modern training facilities. Earlier, the journalists interacted with the faculty members and students of various courses and enquired about the facilities provided by the institute. Varganti Gayathri, Media communication officer from PIB Hyderabad accompanied the Jammu & Kashmir media team.



# The case for a nature restoration law in India

The degradation of natural ecosystems is an urgent global issue, and India, with its vast geographical and ecological diversity, is no exception. With almost 30% of its total geographical area having land degradation, the need for India to adopt a comprehensive nature restoration law is more acute. The Nature Restoration Law (NRL), which was enacted by the European Union (EU), is an inspiring model from which India can draw points to tackle its growing environmental crises. The NRL, adopted by the EU's Environmental Council on June 17, 2024, is a groundbreaking piece of legislation that aims to restore the health of Europe's ecosystems. The regulation was endorsed by a majority of EU member-states, representing 66.07% of the EU population, marking a milestone in global environmental governance. The law mandates that at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas must be restored by 2030, with the goal of having all ecosystems in need of restoration fully restored by 2050.

The NRL is part of the EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the European Green Deal, and it seeks to reverse the alarming trend of biodiversity loss as over 80% of Europe's habitats are in poor condition. It focuses on a broad range of ecosystems, from forests and agricultural lands to rivers and urban spaces, implementing specific measures such as the restoration of 25,000 kilometres of rivers into free-flowing rivers and the planting of three billion additional trees by 2030. The environmental, economic case for India

India is grappling with similar, if not more severe, environmental challenges. According to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas, nearly 97.85 million hectares (29.7%) of India's total geographical area underwent land degradation in 2018-19, a sharp increase from 94.53 million hectares in 2003-05. Desertification, in particular, is a growing concern, with 83.69 million hectares affected in 2018-19. The report highlights that land degradation is prevalent in key States such as Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, which together form 23.79% of India's desertified land area. India has already made considerable strides in addressing these issues through the successful implementation of the Green India Mission, the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (which is the second-largest watershed programme in the world) and the National Afforestation Programme. However, the scale of the problem demands a more comprehensive approach. Just as the EU's NRL sets legally binding targets for ecosystem restoration, India needs such a nature restoration law that mandates the restoration of its degraded landscapes, ensuring the long-term sustainability of its ecosystems.

A Nature Restoration Law in India, inspired by the EU's model, could include the following. First in the list is restoration targets. India should aim to restore 20% of its degraded land by 2030, with a goal of restoring all ecosystems by 2050. This in-

cludes forests, wetlands, rivers, agricultural lands, and urban green spaces. Second is wetland restoration. While peatlands are less common in India, critical wetlands such as the Sundarbans and Chilika Lake support biodiversity and carbon sequestration. A law could target restoring 30% of degraded wetlands by 2030. Third is biodiversity in agriculture. Agriculture dominates India's landscape. Promoting agroforestry and sustainable practices could restore farmlands. Indicators such as the butterfly or bird index used in the EU, could track progress. Fourth is river restoration. India could focus on restoring free-flowing rivers, beginning with major rivers such as the Ganga and Yamuna, addressing pollution and obstructions. Fifth is urban green spaces. To combat urban degradation, India should ensure no net loss of green spaces, promoting urban forests in cities such as Bengaluru and Delhi, which face heat islands and declining air quality.

Economic and social benefits of restoration The benefits of such a law would extend beyond environmental restoration. According to the World Economic Forum, nature restoration could globally generate economic returns of up to \$10 trillion annually by 2030. In India, restoring degraded lands would enhance agricultural productivity, improve water security, and



create millions of jobs, particularly in rural areas. The law could also help India meet its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 15, which calls for the sustainable management of forests and combating desertification. Restoring ecosystems can also mitigate the effects of climate change, which exacerbates land degradation. Degraded land loses its capacity to absorb carbon dioxide, further contributing to global warming. By restoring its ecosystems, India can enhance its carbon sinks and meet its commitments under the

Paris Agreement. The EU's Nature Restoration Law sets an important precedent for countries worldwide. Given the alarming levels of land degradation and biodiversity loss in India, such a law in India would not only help India restore its degraded ecosystems but also contribute to its socio-economic development and climate resilience. The clock is ticking, and the time to act is now. Tuhin A. Sinha is National Spokesperson, Bharatiya Janata Party. Kaviraj Singh is Founder and Managing Director, Earthood

## Facebook owner Meta restarts facial recognition tech in 'celeb-bait' crackdown

Three years after Meta shut down facial recognition software on Facebook amid a groundswell of privacy and regulator pushback, the social media giant said on Tuesday it is testing the service again as part of a crackdown on "celeb bait" scams. Meta said it will enroll about 50,000 public figures in a trial which involves automatically comparing their Facebook profile photos with images used in suspected scam advertisements. If the images match and Meta believes the ads are scams, it will block them.

The celebrities will be notified of their enrollment and can opt out if they do not want to participate, the company said. The company plans to roll out the trial globally from December, excluding some large jurisdictions where it does not have regulatory clearance such as Britain, the European Union, South Korea and the U.S. states of Texas and Illinois, it added. Monika Bickert, Meta's vice president of content policy, said in a briefing with journalists that the company was targeting public figures whose likenesses it had identified as having been used in scam ads. "The idea here is: roll out as much protection as we can for them. They can opt out of it if they want to, but we want to be able to make this protection available to them and easy for them," Bickert said.

The test shows a company trying to



thread the needle of using potentially invasive technology to address regulator concerns about rising numbers of scams while minimising complaints about its handling of user data, which have followed social media companies for years. When Meta shuttered its facial recognition system in 2021, deleting the face scan data of one billion users, it cited "growing societal concerns". In August this year, the company was ordered to pay Texas \$1.4 billion to settle a state lawsuit accusing it of collecting biometric data illegally. At the same time, Meta faces lawsuits accusing it

of failing to do enough to stop celeb bait scams, which use images of famous people, often generated by artificial intelligence, to trick users into giving money to non-existent investment schemes. Under the new trial, the company said it will immediately delete any face data generated by comparisons with suspected advertisements regardless of whether it detected a scam. The tool being tested was put through Meta's "robust privacy and risk review process" internally, as well as discussed with regulators,

# An approaching milestone in constitutional governance

November 26 this year will mark the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of India. It is a milestone that needs to be celebrated by every stakeholder of Indian democracy. Constitutional governance in India is not merely a facet of the laws, rules and regulations that govern the establishment and the evolution of democratic institutions. It is also about permeating a deep sense of constitutional culture that has captured the collective consciousness of Indians across different cultures, faiths and beliefs. As we move towards celebrating this Constitution Day, it is an opportune time to identify the core constitutional values that have shaped the constitutional culture of India. These five values have also withstood the test of time.

First, people's respect for democratic institutions. The Constitution of India was adopted on November 26, 1949, a time when life expectancy in India was around 32 years. Today, it has progressed to around 70 years. This extraordinary improvement in the standards of living and the quality of life has contributed in a significant manner for the ordinary Indian to respect the role and the contribution of democratic institutions. The social and economic development of India is an example of the progressive implementation of public policy over the last several decades. There is a need for a nuanced understanding on why Indians continue to participate in such large and significant numbers in every election — local, State or national — notwithstanding the fact that they expect a better performance from their representatives. Since the first elections in 1951-52, we have consistently witnessed nearly 60% of Indians participating in elections including in the 2024 general election where there was a 65.79% voter turnout. The respect for democracy and faith in democratic institutions in India is a core constitutional value that has withstood the test of time. Second, the smooth transition of elected governments. The seven decades have seen numerous elections across States and at the national level. India has seen elected representatives representing different political parties, with varying degrees of strength and presence, within a State and/or at a pan-India level. We have also seen political leaders of different ideological persuasions winning elections and holding positions of power and responsibility in the States and at the Centre. But if there is one thing that is unique and distinctive about India's democratic traditions, it is the deep commitment every political party attaches to the idea of smooth transitions of power at the end of elections. While elections are fought with high-voltage campaigns and at times, even divisive narratives, the electoral results are almost always a humbling experience — it is the people of India who win each election without any exception. The Indian electorate has, time and again, demonstrated to the world that its understanding of problems and challenges will shape our decisions relating to elections. The people of India have imbibed this core constitutional value

of participating in elections and enabling the smooth transition of power from one government to the other. Third, protection of rights and freedoms through courts. The Constitution is very forthright in recognising the highest degree of importance being attached to the fundamental rights and the courts, which are institutions created under the Constitution to protect the rights of people. It is even more remarkable that the framers of the Constitution were people associated with the freedom movement and responsible for building the foundations of the Indian Republic. They struggled to fight against colonialism to help achieve India's freedom. While drafting the provisions relating to fundamental rights, the members of the Constituent Assembly were mindful of the power of the mighty state and its instrumentalities. They could have tilted towards the idea of a benevolent state, especially when almost the entire first Cabinet had people who were part of the freedom movement. However, their deep scepticism of the state apparatus and the fervent commitment towards protecting individual rights and freedoms reflected a far-sighted vision on their part. This vision of recognising the role of the state, while being conscious of the fact that rights and freedoms are paramount, is a core constitutional value that has only been strengthened over the years.

Fourth, federalism as a facet of constitutional governance. The framers of the Constitution were mindful of the extraordinary diversity of the country, including its linguistic diversity and other forms of pluralism deeply embedded in our civic and political culture. The history and the tradition of every State of India also meant that they were conscious of protecting the unique identity, tradition and culture of the States and the people while forging a collective national identity. They created different forms of autonomy and special privileges for different States keeping in mind their unique histories and cultures. To efficaciously ameliorate the disparities that are prevalent among the people in certain regions of the nation, the Indian Constitution delineates a paradigm of special dispensations, furthering the agenda of equity and inclusivity. Over the last seven decades, the idea of federalism has further deepened at least at two levels: first, the rise of State-level political parties across India and their own contribution to the development of national political consciousness. This has, on several occasions, led to strong State parties contributing to the development of coalition governments in the States and at the Centre. Second, the idea of federalism has also led to the passing of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which led to the establishment of panchayati raj institutions and nagarpalikas.

Fifth, the role of the media and civil society in instilling faith in democracy. Much has been said and written about the Indian media. The Indian media is a diverse and heterogeneous institution with views and perspectives that are generated across India in different languages. Further, the transition of print media to broadcast and fur-



ther innovations in media and technology have democratised access to information and indeed the role of media. While there are fundamental challenges relating to the economic model of governance of media institutions, it is fair to say that media and civil society have contributed to the instilling of faith in Indian democracy. While we need to be critical of the challenges of the autonomy and the independence of media, it is equally important to recognise the values of transparency that have been part of the media culture. In the cacophony of an information explosion through various forms of media and the medium of communication, the Indian electorate has been enlightened to develop an informed degree of understanding of the role of the media and civil society. We have every reason to celebrate 75 years of constitutional

governance. After Independence, the last British commander in chief of the Indian Army, General Claude Auchinleck had observed, "The Sikhs may try to set up a separate regime. I think they probably will and that will be only a start of a general decentralization and break-up of the idea that India is a country, whereas it is a sub-continent as varied as Europe. The Punjabi is as different from a Madrassi as a Scot is from an Italian. The British tried to consolidate it but achieved nothing permanent. No one can make a nation out of a continent of many nations." We proved many people wrong in not only forging a national identity of a nation that is built on constitutional ideals but we have also made the Constitution an instrument of galvanising social conscience and political consciousness.

## RRR affected farmers stage protest at Minister's residence in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: Intensifying their protests against the forcible acquisition of their land for the regional ring road (RRR), farmers from Rayagiri mandal of Yadadri Bhongir district staged a demonstration at the residence of Minister for Road and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy in Hyderabad on Tuesday morning. The farmers gathered in large numbers outside the minister's gate right from 4 am, raised slogans expressing their discontent, as he did not respond to them immediately.

As soon as the minister stepped outside his residence after 8 30 am, the farmers confronted him, preventing him from leaving the place. The police attempted to intervene and stop the farmers, but the protesters were determined to make their voices heard. They handed over a memorandum to the minister, demanding the implementation of the promise made earlier to change the alignment of the regional

ring road project.

The farmers expressed their frustration, stating that the minister deflected their concerns by saying that the matter was in the hands of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. They accused revenue officials of forcibly taking their lands and urged the minister to help them. The farmers alleged that revenue officials were misleading them by claiming that others had already submitted their passbooks, Aadhaar cards, and bank account details, and that they would not receive compensation if they did not comply.

The farmers' demanded among other things realignment of the RRR 40 kilometers away from its current location, allotment of land in exchange for their land, or compensating them according to the open market value along with employment opportunities.

# Black holes in Webb data allay threat to cosmology's standard model

Since NASA launched the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) almost three years ago, astronomers have been actively searching for clues about how galaxies grew in the early universe. This universe was a dark place: there is no light from this period to tell us how the first stars and galaxies formed, yet uncovering these processes could help answer key questions like the role of dark matter in the early universe. So when astronomers recently pored through JWST, they were surprised to find monstrous structures when the universe was only a few hundred million years old, instead of infant galaxies. The universe began with a Big Bang about 13.8 billion years ago as a hot, dense mixture of gases and subatomic particles. Over time, the universe expanded and cooled, allowing the particles to separate from the mixture and become independent clumps of matter. The gradual and continuous cooling of the universe eventually created larger structures such as stars, galaxies, and galaxy clusters.

According to the standard model of cosmology, which attempts to explain the universe's origins and evolution, the first stars formed around 100-200 million years after the Big Bang and the first galaxies within the first billion years. But JWST was revealing massive, fully-developed galaxies, that too in greater numbers than expected, only around 400-650 million years after the Big Bang. This mismatch became a source of intrigue among researchers, who had to figure out what was wrong with their standard model. Now, a study published on August 26 in the *Astrophysical Journal* by an international team, led by Katherine Chworowsky and Steven Finkelstein at the University of Texas at Austin, offers a promising explanation. Deep into the universe Distant galaxies are faint and detecting them requires advanced telescopes, Prerana Biswas, a postdoctoral researcher at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru, explained. (She wasn't involved in the new study.)

This means, first, a telescope with a large primary mirror. The Hubble Space Telescope has a 2.4-m-wide primary mirror while JWST's mirror is 6.5 m wide. Second, the telescope will have to be very sensitive, which relates to its ability to record data at different wavelengths. The Hubble operates in the optical, ultraviolet, and some infrared wavelengths, while JWST is specifically designed for infrared observations with a focus on studying the early universe. This is because visible and ultraviolet light from distant galaxies shift to the infrared wavelengths as the universe expands. In the new study, researchers analysed data from the JWST's Cosmic Evolution Early Release Science (CEERS) Survey, which Finkelstein leads. They focused on galaxies that existed when the universe was 650-1,500 million years old. According to the team, one possible explanation for a larger number of massive galaxies in the early universe is that these galaxies manufactured stars more efficiently than the galaxies of today. Biman Nath, a professor of astronomy and astrophysics at the Raman Research Institute, Bengaluru, said the

higher efficiency of star formation "wouldn't affect the large-scale structure" of the universe "because the bulk of these large-scale structures is produced by dark matter, so what happens to a tiny fraction of normal matter (whether or not they produce stars at a faster rate) wouldn't affect it." He added that the specifics of whether the modified efficiency contradicts the current understanding of galaxy formation needs to be worked out. Biswas agreed, saying that if this value is found to have been higher in the early universe, existing models of galaxy growth and evolution may need to be reworked. A secret ingredient The researchers also examined the black holes at the centres of these ancient galaxies. These objects are also called "little red dots" because of what the light from their direction looks like. These black holes rapidly consume the galaxies' gas, causing the latter to emit heat and light.

"The fact that massive black holes contribute to the total light emitted by their host galaxies has been known for some time, and there has been research and work done to disentangle light coming from black holes from the light coming from stars to accurately measure" the masses of stars in galaxies, Chworowsky said. "However, before JWST, we had not seen galaxies that looked specifically like little red dots, therefore it was not known that they often hosted black holes until they had been independently studied," she added. In other words, the star mass of galaxies may have been overstated in previous studies thanks to the additional light emitted by their black holes. When the researchers in the new study removed these little red dots from their data for analysis, they found that the galaxies weren't as massive as previously estimated, thus sparing the standard model of cosmology from revision. The researchers wrote in their paper that the standard model could explain more efficient star formation in the early universe in the form of the extreme physical conditions and abundant gas. Catastrophic events like supernovae and stellar winds were also less effective then at disrupting star formation. "The standard model of cosmology remains the most successful framework for describing our universe," Biswas said. "There are only a handful of studies that contradict this model. It is not surprising that JWST observations align with its predictions. It would be far more surprising if these observations challenged this model." Previous JWST observations of massive, well-developed galaxies in the early universe had questioned the standard model, including the universe's age, the timeline for the formation of the first galaxies, and galaxy formation theories. For example, a recent study used JWST data to say spiral galaxies could have emerged in the universe within 1.5 billion years, much earlier than previously expected. As evidence the researchers pointed to an exceptional star formation rate and larger galaxy sizes — but these conclusions could be overturned now. The authors of this study declined to comment. Nath, who wasn't involved with the new study, added that the problem of observations not matching the standard



model's predictions "become acute when the JWST observations of even earlier galaxies are considered, going back to when the universe was around 400 million years old." Chworowsky said the team is working on including more data from JWST in addition to CEERS. "This will give us the ability both to push this analysis to higher redshifts and higher masses, as those galaxies are rarer and we're more likely to be able to find them in larger sets of data." Expanding the data set will help re-

searchers get a better sense of the current results and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the formation of massive galaxies in the early universe. "I am happy to see that astronomers are working towards these problems," Nath said. "Maybe it is possible, after all, to find some explanation within the current models." Shreejaya Karantha is a freelance science writer and a content writer and research specialist at The Secrets of The Universe.

## Telangana women highly anaemic

Hyderabad: Telangana State continues to grapple with a high prevalence of anaemia among women of all ages, including pregnant women, adolescent girls, and women between 15 and 49 years. This is a significant health challenge, particularly given the state's ranking as the South Indian state with the highest percentage of anaemic women.

Iron-Deficiency anaemia (IDA) is a primary contributor to poor pregnancy outcomes in government hospitals. At present, however, there is limited access to additional nutrition for pregnant women through National Health Mission (NHM) initiative of the Union Health Ministry, New Delhi. The initiative of providing supplementary food has to be extended by the present Telangana State government to all pregnant women and adolescent girls between 15 years and 19 girls, an age group in which a staggering 59.1 percent of girls are anemic in Telangana.

It's not just adolescent girls, IDA has also remained a major public health issue impacting majority of women, as its among 15 years to 49 years of women is 57.6 percent in Telangana State.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines anaemia as reduction in haemoglobin concentration, red-cell count,



or packed-cell volume below established cut-off levels. According to WHO, anaemia among women is defined as a haemoglobin concentration of less than 120 grams per litre of blood for adolescent girls of less than 15 years and haemoglobin content of less than 110 grams per litre of blood among pregnant women. Senior health officials have said that IDA is problem among women primarily due to their recurrent menstrual loss. Demand for iron is higher among pregnant women, and women who have anaemia in combination with early onset of child bearing, a high number of births, short intervals between birth and poor access to antenatal care. A WHO study on Indian women said that daily consumption of iron among Indian women is alarmingly and unacceptably low. The average requirement of iron per day for a person is nearly 13 milligrams (mg) per day and anywhere between 15 mg and 18 mg per day among pregnant women.