

Farmers face challenges with no Kisan Sarkar in Telangana

Hyderabad: The once-robust support system for farmers in Telangana, right from sowing operations to harvest and procurement, is apparently missing under the current Congress regime. The State support that encompassed crop investment assistance, timely irrigation, uninterrupted power and assured purchase of produce till the last grain, appears to have faded. The administration has failed not just on Rythu Bandhu/Bharosa, loan waiver or incentive bonus, but even in providing farmers with the minimum support price. Nizamabad and Nalgonda, major paddy-producing districts, usually see farmers hitting the markets early with their Kharif produce. However, this year, they face a grim reality with not many takers for their produce.

Unseasonal rains have further dashed the hopes of Kharif farmers. Many, moving their produce to the yards from harvest points, have suffered extensive damage due to rains. Paddy stocks were exposed to rain water as farmers struggled to cover them with tarpaulins in the yards. Despite this, officials have reiterated that they will accept only paddy with up to 17 percent moisture, whereas many farm-

ers are arriving with stocks containing over 30 percent moisture. The situation has been particularly dire in Siddipet and parts of erstwhile Nizamabad, which received heavy rain on Sunday and Monday. Rajanna Sircilla, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Nizamabad, Nirmal, Khammam and Mulugu experienced similar issues with moderate to heavy rains on Tuesday.

"Farmers need to wait and dry up their paddy in the yards on their own. We cannot be considerate in this aspect. Last year, the State helped by procuring rain-exposed paddy and sending it directly to parboiled mills, but such assistance seems unlikely this time. The paddy growers are continuing to face these challenges, with the absence of farmer-friendly approaches becoming increasingly apparent," officials said.

The paddy purchase centres, which were opened formally in some of the places in Nalgonda district were yet to operate in a full-fledged manner. Inadequacies with weighing facilities and transportation issues are yet to be addressed. The officials tasked with the procurement operations are of the view that the paddy arrivals will pick



up only in the first week of November, especially after Diwali festival. In the meantime, private traders are cashing in on the helpless situation of farmers. They were offered Rs 1800 to Rs 1900 per ton to coarse varieties and Rs 2100 to Rs 2300 to A grade varieties. In the absence of the ag-

gressive minimum support price operations by the government agencies, the farmers are finding themselves at the receiving end. By disposing paddy stocks to private traders they are even losing on the incentive bonus of Rs 500 per quintal assured by the government.

Is Hyderabad's real estate bubble about to pop? developers, buyers hold their breath



Hyderabad: Having shone brightly for almost a decade, is Hyderabad's residential real estate, a prime driver for property market, losing its gleam? Amid concerns from various quarters, from developers and builders to consumers, over the recent drift of the city real estate, speculations are raised over the sales of available stock and new project launches adding to the inventory.

According to the latest assessment

released by Knight Frank Research on Thursday, Hyderabad though registered a 34 per cent year-on-year increase during January-September, the same for the month of September dropped by 22 per cent. The registrations data presented by Knight Frank shows as against 6,304 units in September 2023, this year September had only 4,903 home sales registered, a clear and sharp drop of 22 per cent. In terms of registration value too, compared

Rs.3,459 crore of last September, 2024 September could only score Rs.2,820 crore. However as far as January-September 2024 data is concerned, the Knight Frank assessment says, Hyderabad registered home sales worth Rs. 36,461 crore recording a 34 per cent year-on-year (YoY) increase, whilst number of registrations stood at 59,386 up by 13 per cent YoY. On September 2024, the report attributes the decline in registrations in Hyderabad 'to the observance of the Shradh/Pitra Paksha period, a time considered inauspicious for buying or registering homes according to the Hindu calendar'. The Knight Frank report ob-

served a significant growth in premiumisation trend over last the months with sales of homes priced at Rs.1 crore and above increasing from 9 per cent to 14 per cent during the first nine months of 2024. In September 2024, majority of the registered properties in Hyderabad were concentrated in the range of 1,000 to 2,000 sq ft) comprising of 68 per cent of all registrations. At a district-level, Medchal-Malkajiri led property registrations with 42 per cent of the market, up from 45 per cent in September 2023. Rangareddy and Hyderabad district accounted for 39 per cent and 19 per cent of the total registrations respectively.

Fifteen bonded labourers from Odisha freed from brick kiln in Peddapalli

Peddapalli: 15 bonded labourers including two children, who were exploited at a brick kiln in Raghavpur village of Peddapalli mandal, were freed on Friday. Based on a complaint lodged by their family members in Odisha, district officials inspected VSR Bricks Construction

in Raghavpur on Thursday and freed the labourers, who were later produced before the Revenue Divisional Office for inquiry where they displayed visible injuries and recounted their ordeal, describing how they were forced to work long hours without pay under constant threats.

India-China agreement is welcome — but we don't know enough

Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri announced on October 21 that India and China had reached “an agreement... on patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control... leading to disengagement and a resolution of the issues that had arisen” following Chinese transgressions “in these areas in 2020”. The question that remains to be clarified is whether “disengagement” will cover all extant areas of dispute where patrolling has been blocked on both sides, including the so-called “legacy disputes” in eastern Ladakh at Demchok and Depsang or only those areas that came into contention in 2020. Both Misri and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who spoke at another event a few hours later, were reluctant to answer direct questions on these two areas, repeatedly referring to 2020 as the year of consequence. This reluctance might have several reasons.

One easy explanation is that they were deferring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who might make the more substantive statement following an expected meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit at Kazan in Russia. But if that were so, why could the Ministry of External Affairs not have waited a few more days for him to have done so? The other possibility is that this might be the extent of information available to the public for the foreseeable future since “next steps” are still pending.

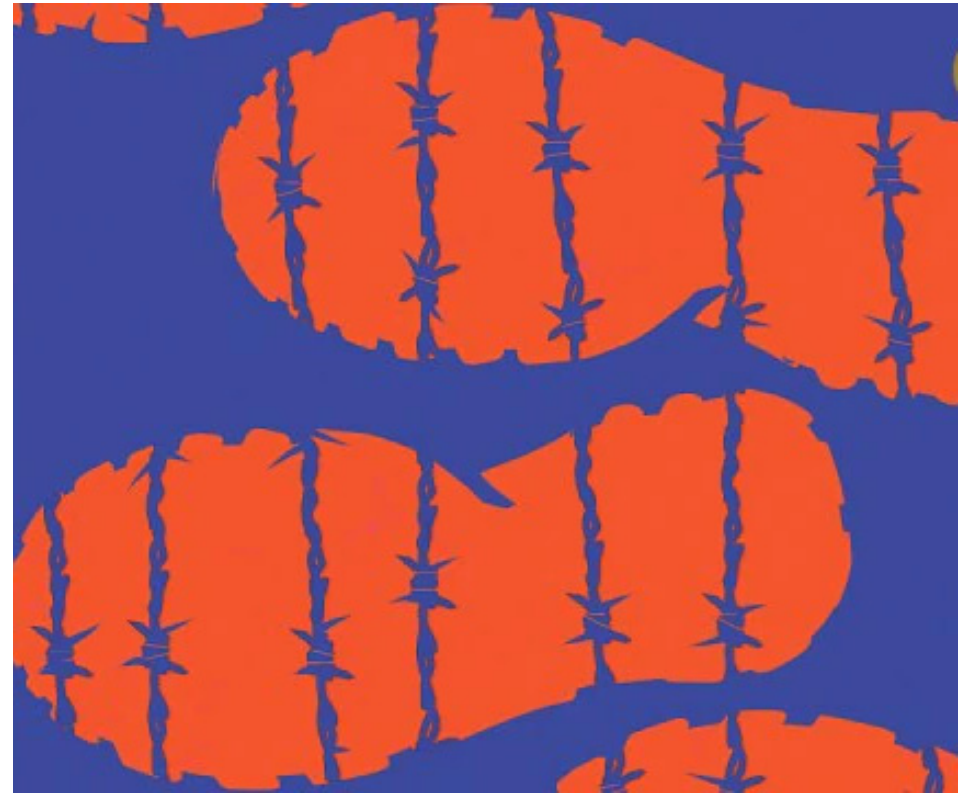
Another reason might have to do with the scale of the progress actually achieved. In September, when Jaishankar declared that “roughly... about 75 per cent of the disengagement problems are sorted out” and the Chinese followed up saying “the two countries have realised disengagement in four areas in the Western sector”, it was possible to imagine that the older disputes at Demchok and Depsang, where stand-offs continue, constituted the remainder of the “disengagement problems” that had to be sorted out. News reports since Misri’s announcement suggesting that this is the case, will need to be confirmed. The patrolling agreement is certainly an achievement of Indian diplomacy, but it is also a limited one, for India has achieved no forward movement over the past four years — it has been devoted to the task only of reversing Chinese transgressions, not punishing them, let alone resolving the boundary dispute itself. The idea for now seems to ensure the impression of progress and the optics necessary for a “successful” BRICS sojourn by the Prime Minister. This, then, highlights other issues and implications.

One, that India’s BRICS engagement is a sensitive matter at this point in geopolitical time — Russia’s Ukraine invasion and China’s “no-limits partnership” with the former has drawn such Western opposition that it cannot fail to singe India, too. New Delhi needs more than “strategic autonomy” as an argument to explain a head-of-government engagement and that is something the patrolling agreement delivers, essentially drawing attention away from the BRICS summit itself. Two, there are now concerns within the Indian government about the feasibility of keeping up

restrictions on Chinese investments, particularly when India remains dependent on manufacturing supply chains and technology transfers from that country. Even a limited agreement on the LAC offers a face-saving way to move forward on trade and investment from China.

Meanwhile, it is worth noting that the Army was missing from the scene when the announcement of the patrolling agreement was made. Arguments could be made that the final mile had to be covered by diplomats, but for a military aiming at theaterisation, with the attendant requirement of global-level strategic and diplomatic engagements, it is rather odd that senior military officials were missing from the dais. This is also particularly ironic for if there is one stand-out feature of India’s response to the Chinese transgressions of 2020, it is that the Army was not allowed to respond in kind — with the exception of the capture and brief occupation of the Kailash Range in August 2020. That, even as it built up along the LAC, the Army’s primary role of responding to aggression was curtailed by diplomatic tasks.

Perhaps, the Army or the government or both decided that a like-for-like response was escalatory, which begs the question why concerns about escalation must matter only to India. Or, that despite claims of multiple plans to counter Chinese moves, the Army was simply not equipped to execute them with the political leadership, preferring to focus on incremental measures, such as shoring up border infrastructure instead. This, then, raises the question of why such gaps exist or why it takes a crisis to get critical physical infrastructure development moving. Either way, the debate has not been joined in public. If there has been “forward movement” in India in the wake of 2020, it has been in the sense



that like in 1962, the events in eastern Ladakh awakened a generation or two of Indians to the long-term challenge that China will likely pose to Indian interests.

With the benefit of some distance from the events of 2020, Indians should also now be asking more questions. Why did China do what it did? What might it do next? Why has Indian expertise been lacking in answering these questions? Or, if the expertise is available, why has it not found greater acknowledgement and public visibility? Equally important are questions of

accountability surrounding the events of 2020 itself. What were the lapses on the Indian side that caused intelligence on the Chinese build-up to be ignored? Why has public accountability not been forthcoming? Without answers to these questions and more, India will remain unprepared for the next border crisis with China. The writer is an associate professor, at the Department of International Relations and Governance Studies, and director, of the Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies, Shiv Nadar University, Delhi NCR. Views are personal.

Eggs and height: We find out if there is any link

Eggs are a powerhouse of nutrients, and according to author and content creator Krish Ashok, eggs can also help increase height. “Eggs are a superfood. Those government school children who eat eggs in their mid-day meals have reduced stunting and are better at height than those who don’t eat owing to various religious reasons,” Krish Ashok told host Nitin Thakur. He added that eggs comprise six grams of protein, and the yolk has fat-soluble vitamins.

Many people like to start their day with eggs — in various forms — for breakfast owing to their easy availability and quick prep time. Eggs contain essential nutrients like riboflavin and selenium, which support various body functions. Experts say egg whites are also low in fat and cholesterol-free, making them a popular choice for those looking to manage their weight or cholesterol levels. Dr Bhavana P, chief dietitian, Gleneagles Hospitals, Lakdi Ka Pul,

Hyderabad said eggs are rich in high-quality protein, which is crucial for muscle development, tissue repair, and growth. “They also contain important vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin D, which helps the body absorb calcium — a key nutrient for bone health. Adequate calcium intake contributes to stronger bones, which is essential for optimal height potential,” said Dr Bhavana. Additionally, the vitamins and minerals in eggs, like iron, phosphorus, and vitamin B12, support healthy body functions that contribute to growth, said Dr Bhavana.

Fauziya Ansari, dietitian at Apollo Spectra Mumbai, said eggs are believed to have significant health benefits for physical well-being. However, there is no direct correlation between eating eggs and an increase in height. Eggs or any kind of food—vegetables or fruits—can’t instantly make you taller. Your height is determined by genetics, nutritional intake, and physi-

cal activity,” said Ansari. Dr Bhavana seconded Ansari and shared, “Growth depends on parents’ genes and good nutrition during pregnancy for bone health and fetus growth, and physical activity along with good balance nutrition.” After a certain age, your height stops growing because the growth plates in the bones responsible for increasing height tend to close. “Remember, do not blindly believe everything you see online or try to incorporate it into your daily lifestyle. These hacks or videos you see online are often not verified or true, which can further misconceptions in many,” said Ansari. Research suggests that regularly engaging in physical activities like cycling, yoga, and stretching can help increase height by a few inches. **DISCLAIMER:** This article is based on information from the public domain and/or the experts we spoke to. Always consult your health practitioner before starting any routine.

GRIET Partners with Curtin University Malaysia for Research and Student Exchange

Strengthening Global Academic Ties to Enhance Student Opportunities and Collaborative Research Initiatives

Gokaraju Rangaraju Institute of Engineering and Technology (GRIET) proudly announces the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Curtin University Malaysia, marking a significant step towards fostering research collaboration and student exchange between the two esteemed institutions. Dr. KVS Raju, Senior Administrative Officer at GRIET, emphasized the institute's commitment to creating more international partnerships, indicating plans for future MoUs with other highly ranked universities around the globe to enhance student benefits. As part of this collaboration, Prof. Swadesh Kumar Singh, Dean of R&D at GRIET, revealed that Curtin University will introduce student projects this year. Students in their third and final years across all branches will have the unique opportunity to physically travel to Curtin University Malaysia to engage in these projects. During the signing ceremony, Prof. Vincent Lee Chieng Chen, Pro-Vice Chancellor of Curtin University, expressed his enthusiasm for the MoU, stating that it would be advantageous for both institutions. He remarked, "This partnership opens doors for unparalleled opportunities for our students and faculty alike."

Mr. GVK Ranga Raju, Vice President of the Gokaraju Rangaraju Educational Society (GRES), reiterated GRIET's dedication to enhancing student quality through global exposure, asserting, "We are committed to providing our students with meaningful experiences that will prepare them for a globalized world." Prof. Lim Chye Ing, overseeing international relations, rein-



forced the aim for a long-term partnership, emphasizing that "collaborative initiatives like these are vital to enriching our educational framework." The signing ceremony was also attended by Dr. Moola Mohan Reddy and Prof. Sujan Debnath, who highlighted the potential benefits of this part-

nership for the broader academic community and society. Curtin University is internationally recognized for its robust industry connections, high-impact research, and a wide array of innovative courses. The university has recently positioned itself among the top one percent of institutions

worldwide, according to the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) 2023. This partnership between GRIET and Curtin University Malaysia marks a significant development in the global academic landscape, promising to create enriching experiences for students while fostering innovative research endeavors.

Experts highlight delaying breast cancer diagnosis in men leading to worse outcomes



New Delhi: While breast cancer is often perceived as a women's disease, men also suffer from the deadly disease. However, stigma delays their diagnosis and treatment, potentially worsening outcomes, said experts on Wednesday. October is marked as Breast Cancer awareness

month. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 0.5–1 per cent of breast cancers occur in men. While this percentage may seem small, it translates to thousands of men worldwide facing this diagnosis each year.

"Despite its rarity, breast cancer in

men is often diagnosed later than in women. Many men are unaware that they can develop breast cancer, leading to delayed detection. However, early detection significantly improves survival rates," Dr. Ramesh Sarin, Senior Consultant, Surgical Oncology, Apollo Cancer Centres, told IANS. "One of the biggest challenges in addressing male breast cancer is the stigma surrounding it. Many men feel embarrassed or emasculated by a diagnosis traditionally associated with women. This stigma can lead to delayed diagnosis and treatment, potentially worsening outcomes," she added. The most common type of male breast cancer is invasive ductal carcinoma (IDC), which starts in the ducts and spreads to surrounding tissue. Other types include invasive lobular carcinoma (ILC), Paget's disease of the nipple, and ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS), a non-invasive form. According to Sarin, the symptoms of breast cancer in men are similar to those in women. As women, men should also be aware of potential signs like a lump or thickening in the breast tissue, changes in the skin covering the breast, such as dim-

pling, redness, or scaling, changes to the nipple, such as redness or scaling, or a nipple that begins to turn inward or discharge from the nipple. "It's important to note that most breast lumps in men are not cancerous. However, any unusual changes should be promptly evaluated by a healthcare professional," Sarin said. Age, family history, genetic mutations, radiation exposure, liver disease, and obesity are the risk factors that can increase a man's risk of developing breast cancer. Dr. Anshuman Kumar, Director of Surgical Oncology, Dharamshila Narayana Superspecialty Hospital called out the need to live a healthy lifestyle and avoid ultra-processed foods.

Processed and ultra-processed foods, especially when consumed warm in plastic containers, release harmful chemicals like phthalates and bisphenol A (BPA), which are known to disrupt hormonal balance and contribute to cancer risk. Irregular eating habits and exposure to food adulterants, insecticides, and heavy metals further exacerbate the situation," Kumar told IANS.

Congress in the coalition trap

An ambitious Shiv Sena faction led by Uddhav Thackeray (Sena-UBT), angling for the chief minister's office and fighting to make itself seen as the real Sena, has pushed the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra to settle for a deal that is likely place it on par with the Congress for the number of seats the two parties will contest in the upcoming assembly elections. Nationalist Congress Party leader Sharad Pawar has proposed a formula for 255 seats wherein all three parties settled on 85 seats each. The remaining 33 seats, of which 18 are for smaller allies, will be settled later. If the Pawar political formula holds for the 15 unallotted seats as well, Congress candidates will be in the fray in less than 100 seats in Maharashtra, a historic low for the Grand Old Party. Ironically, the Congress has had to compromise on seats just after it did remarkably well in the general elections — the party won 13 of the 17 seats it contested (a strike rate of 76.4%) in the state.

Read with the Congress's tactical move to stick with the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh, despite the latter's reluctance to provide the seats requested by its state unit, it is clear that the Congress high command, in the backdrop of the Haryana result, has decided to trust its instincts rather than back the satraps, who are more focused on local interests than the national picture. The Congress leadership seems to believe that allies — and coalitions — are necessary to keep the BJP in check, in the states and at the Centre. The tricky question is if it can convince its own leaders and cadres about this vision and get them to play the coalition game wholeheartedly.

The Congress has always had its share of coalition sceptics. This was evident when the party held a conclave in Pachmarhi in 1998, soon after Sonia Gandhi took over as the organisation head, to discuss the advent of coalition governments at the Centre. Between 1989



and 1998, the Janata Dal-led National Front and United Front, and the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) had trumped the Congress to form the government at the Centre. However, the Pachmarhi conclave felt that the rise of coalitions represented a transient phase. Five years later, the party nuanced its stance at the Shimla conclave to appeal for "the unity of secular forces". By then, the BJP had built the NDA into a representative coalition that included many influential regional parties. The Congress' reluctance to forge

alliances had neither helped the party recoup nor enabled it to win office. The Pachmarhi line was quietly abandoned and the unexpected results of the 2004 general election led to the formation of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) with Congress as its pole. The UPA got a second lease of life ahead of the 2024 general election in the form of the INDIA bloc that succeeded in preventing the BJP from gaining a simple majority in the Lok Sabha. It may well be the chastening experience of Haryana and the memory of the

INDIA bloc doing well in the general election that has influenced the Congress to privilege bonds within the MVA over the sentiments of its Maharashtra unit. This may be a practically wise move since the party's primary consideration now is to keep the BJP out of power rather than expand its footprint. Maharashtra is a crucial election and a win for the NDA would wipe out the gains the INDIA bloc made in June. How the Congress negotiates the contradictions of its national goals and regional priorities will be keenly watched.

OpenAI plans to launch new powerful AI model 'Orion' by December: Report

San Francisco: ChatGPT maker OpenAI is reportedly planning to launch its next AI model called 'Orion' in December this year which is potentially up to 100 times more powerful than GPT-4. According to a report in The Verge, unlike the release of OpenAI's last two models — GPT-4o and o1 — Orion won't initially be released widely through ChatGPT.

The report mentioned, citing sources, that the Sam Altman-run AI company is planning to grant access to companies first, in order to help them build their own products and features. OpenAI or its CEO Altman were yet to react to the report.

According to the report, Microsoft is "preparing to host Orion on Azure as early as November". Microsoft also declined to comment. "The company's goal is to combine its LLMs over time to create an even more capable model that could eventually be called artificial general intelligence, or AGI," the report mentioned. The release of

Orion comes as OpenAI, which has secured a historic \$6.6 billion funding at a \$157 billion valuation, is restructuring itself as a for-profit entity. Last month, three top executives — including Chief Technical Officer Mira Murati — left the ChatGPT developer. Of the 13 people who helped found OpenAI in 2015, only three now remain at the company.

According to reports, Murati is raising money from venture capitalists to finance her own AI startup. The new funding in OpenAI was led by previous investor Thrive Capital. The VC firm invested around \$1.3 billion. Microsoft reportedly invested a little less than \$1 billion, while Nvidia pledged \$100 million and SoftBank reportedly put in \$500 million. "The new funding will allow us to double down on our leadership in frontier AI research, increase compute capacity, and continue building tools that help people solve hard problems," the company wrote in a blog post.

IDBI Bank Limited - Financial Results for the Quarter and Half Year Ended September 30, 2024



IDBI Bank today, announced its quarterly results for Q2 FY25. The Net Profit stood at ₹1,868 crore for Q2 FY25, registering a strong growth of 39% YoY. The operating profit stood at ₹3,006 crore with a YoY growth of 45%. NIM was recorded at 4.87%, and Net Interest Income stood at ₹3,875 crore with a YoY growth of 26%. Cost of Deposit stood at 4.66% for Q2-2025 as compared to 4.22% for Q2-2024. CRAR stood at 21.98% with YoY growth of 72 bps. Return on Assets (ROA) stood at 1.97%,

YoY growth of 38 bps and Return on Equity (ROE) stood at 20.35%, YoY growth of 130 bps. Net Interest Income improved by 26% in Q2-2025 to ₹3,875 crore as against ₹3,066 crore in Q2-2024.

Net Interest Margin (NIM) improved by 54 bps in Q2-2025 to 4.87% as compared to 4.33% in Q2-2024. Net NPA ratio improved to 0.20% as on September 30, 2024 as against 0.39% as on September 30, 2023. PCR stood at 99.42%, YoY improvement by 32 bps.

Another plot to erase the legacy of Bangabandhu

The People's Republic of Bangladesh, having emerged as a sovereign State through a tortuous war of liberation 53 years ago, is currently caught in an existential crisis. In the aftermath of the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government in early August, the State has been reeling from one crisis to another owing specifically to the efforts of those who now hold political power to bring about a wholesale break with the past. Last week, the interim government in Dhaka cancelled eight national holidays linked to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's memory, including the March 7 commemoration of the informal declaration of the country's independence by Mujib in 1971, the August 15 National Mourning Day marking his assassination, and the November 4 National Constitution Day. On the very day the Awami League government lost power (August 5), mobs stormed Gonobhaban, the prime ministerial residence. Worse was the torching of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi. The site, once the family home of Bangladesh's founder Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the place where he and most of his family were gunned down in a bloody coup d'etat in August 1975, was turned into a museum to preserve Mujib's legacy by his surviving children, his daughters Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, in 1994.

The assault on the museum, popularly referred to as Dhanmondi 32, sent shock waves throughout the country. The security forces did nothing to prevent the rampaging mobs from setting it on fire. To date, no one in the interim government has condemned the ransacking and burning down of Dhanmondi 32, which raises questions about the motives of those currently wielding authority in Bangladesh. It is not the first time that the legacy of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has come under attack in independent Bangladesh. His assassination in 1975 swiftly led to the coup leaders pushing the country down the road to mediaeval darkness. The nationalist slogan "Joi Bangla" was replaced with the Pakistan-sounding "Bangladesh Zindabad". In the years following Mujib's assassination, neither the name of Bangabandhu, revered as the Father of the Nation, nor of his close political associates who led the War of Liberation were mentioned in public. Mujib and the history of the war were airbrushed out of history. The legacy of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was restored only after Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina led the Awami League back to power in June 1996.

Mujib died at the age of 55, but in that relatively brief span of time he transformed politics in what was East Bengal/East Pakistan. Even as he argued for political pluralism in Pakistan, Mujib was focused on the rights of Bengalis within a State that had come into being through the partition of India in August 1947. Beginning in the mid-1950s and going all the way to the early 1970s, Mujib emerged as a Bengali nationalist unwilling to compromise on what he perceived was a need to end the political and economic discrimination against his people. In all, Mujib spent 13

years in incarceration — the first prison stint was soon after the establishment of Pakistan and the last was when the Pakistan army arrested him and put him on trial before a military court in 1971. In the late 1960s, he was charged in the Agartala conspiracy case and accused of conspiring to have East Pakistan secede from Pakistan. Following a mass uprising, the case was withdrawn, and all accused were released in February 1969. At that point that a grateful nation conferred on him the honorific "Bangabandhu" (friend of Bengal). In December 1969, Mujib gave a fresh expression to Bengali aspirations by announcing that the province of East Pakistan would henceforth be known as Bangladesh.

A significant aspect of his career relates to the Six Points programme of regional autonomy he placed before Pakistan's political classes in February 1966. Based on the Six Points, Mujib and the Awami League participated in the 1970 election. In a 313-seat national assembly, the Awami League won an impressive 167 seats. The man once tried for treason was now poised to take charge as prime minister (PM). But that was not to be. Intrigue by the Pakistan army and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party to deprive the Bengalis of power in Islamabad eventually led to a genocide the army unleashed on March 25, 1971. Before his arrest, Bangabandhu passed on a declaration of independence to his party leaders in Chittagong. Bangladesh's indepen-



dence war raged over nine months. Crucial support from India and the Soviet Union buttressed the struggle as the Mukti Bahini, the Bengali guerrilla army, fought the Pakistanis. Away in what was then West Pakistan, Bangabandhu, charged with waging war against Pakistan, was sentenced to death by a military court in November 1971. He escaped execution due to the intensification of hostilities between the Indian Army and the Mukti Bahini on one side and the Pakistan army on the other. Released from Pakistani captivity by the new government of Bhutto,

Bangabandhu arrived in London on January 8, 1972. He flew to Delhi on January 10 to convey his gratitude to PM Indira Gandhi for India's moral and material assistance to the Bengali cause. On the afternoon of the same day, he returned home to a tumultuous welcome. Bangabandhu's legacy has endured. Questions about his post-1971 political moves have been there, of course. But he remains a pivotal figure in Bangladesh's history. His ideals of democracy and secularism underscore the nation's ethos: He remains Bangladesh's Father of the Nation.

Australian researchers uncover cause of mRNA vaccine side effects

Sydney: Australian researchers have discovered why mRNA vaccines can cause side effects such as headaches and fevers in a breakthrough, that they said could help improve the efficacy of vaccines. A new study published by Melbourne's Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity and RMIT University on Thursday provided the first detailed analysis of how messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) vaccines circulate and break down in the human bloodstream, Xinhua news agency reported. The mRNA vaccines are designed to stay in the lymph nodes to produce antibodies to fight infections but the research, which analysed 156 blood samples from 19 individuals over 28 days after receiving an mRNA COVID-19 booster immunization, discovered that a tiny amount of the vaccine found its way into the bloodstream. "The extent to which the vaccine enters the bloodstream varies between individuals, which may explain some of the side effects such as fever, headache, and fatigue, reported after vaccination," Yi Ju, co-author of the research from the School of Science at RMIT University, said. "This variation in vaccine presence in the blood could trigger inflammatory responses, leading to these side effects in



certain individuals." The first mRNA vaccines were approved for COVID-19 in 2020. Rather than using a weakened virus, mRNA vaccines use genetic instructions to prompt the body to produce a pro-

tein that triggers an immune response. Since their introduction, scientists have used mRNA vaccine technology to develop vaccines and therapeutics for other conditions including cancer.

Hosting the BRICS summit: Why Kazan in Tatarstan matters in Putin's Russia

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Russia for the 16th BRICS summit, which China's President Xi Jinping and South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa are also attending, besides the host, President Vladimir Putin. The host city, Kazan, is among Russia's largest and wealthiest cities, deriving its prosperity from a robust petrochemicals and military industry, as well as a fast-growing information technology sector. In 2009, it was branded Russia's third capital after Moscow and the cultural capital St Petersburg. Kazan is also one of the country's cities of the future — in the sense that it already anticipates some of the significant demographic changes that are contributing to Russia's evolving national identity. The country Russia is the homeland of the Russian people, the largest Slavic ethnic group, who speak Russian as their mother tongue. Since most ethnic Russians are Orthodox Christians, religion too has been central to the imagination of who is Russian. But this definition does not capture the socio-cultural diversity of the world's largest country. Sprawled from Finland to its west to Alaska to its east, Russia is a transcontinental, multi-ethnic giant straddling Europe and Asia, and all but touching America. More than 80 per cent of its population is ethnic Russian, but it also comprises as many as 193 ethnic groups and 21 national republics, which are home to specific ethnic minorities. The minority groups have been historically sidelined and repressed by the ethnic Russian majority. But this could be about to change. The proportion of ethnic Russians and Slavs in the population has been declining, and this trend will likely accelerate. The birth rate among ethnic Russians (1.3 children per woman) is significantly lower than that among Muslim ethnicities (2.3), and the share of Muslim ethnic minorities in Russia's population could, in coming decades, triple from the current 10%.

Besides becoming ethnically less Russian and religiously more diverse, Russia's population will likely also be smaller. Official data published last month showed the country recorded its lowest birth rate since 1999 in the first six months of 2024, Reuters reported. To offset the population decline, Russia is expected to allow more migration, with the bulk of new migrants being Muslims belonging to Turkic and Asiatic ethnic groups. Kazan is especially relevant to this discussion on Russia's demography. Located roughly 900 km to the east of Moscow at the confluence of the rivers Volga and Kazanka, this city of 1.2 million is the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, the homeland of the Tatar people, the second largest ethnic group in the country after Russians. The Tatars are a predominantly Muslim Turkic ethnic group with their own language and distinct culture. The population of Kazan is split roughly equally among ethnic Russians (48.6%) and ethnic Tatars (47.6%). This makes Kazan a symbol of the kind of nation Russia is gradually evolving into: a blend of Europe and Asia, a melting pot of diverse ethnicities and religions. Commentators have noted evidence of Kazan's diversity in the neighbourhood of the city kremlin, the fortified complex that lies at the heart of many



Russian cities. Next to the official buildings stands the Orthodox Annunciation Cathedral and the Kul Sharif Mosque — among the largest in Europe — with its distinctive white tiles and turquoise dome and minarets. Originally built in the early 16th century, Kul Sharif was burnt down by Ivan the Terrible during the Siege of Kazan, which led to the fall of the Khanate of Kazan and brought Tatarstan under Muscovite control in 1552. The mosque was rebuilt

with Saudi and UAE help in 2005. President Putin has sought to play a balancing game in his dealings with Russia's ethnic minorities. He has tried hard to incorporate ethnic minorities into the mainstream, reconcile differences, and championed a nationalism that promotes the greatness of Russia, not ethnic Russians. But he has dealt with secessionist sentiments with an iron hand, as his approach towards the Chechens showed. Putin's persecution of

Crimean Tatars following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the devolution of powers and status from the leader of Tatarstan in 2021 have been sore points. Bringing the BRICS summit to Kazan has been seen as a conciliatory step. Moscow and Tatarstan spent more than 8 billion rubles (\$80 million) on city renovation projects in the lead-up to "the largest foreign policy event ever held" in Russia, Russian media have reported.

Suhas Palshikar writes: RSS, a century later

As RSS has completed a hundred years of existence, there will surely be multiple analyses of the organisation and its achievements. In view of its sudden ascendancy in the last decade, the RSS is bound to appear larger-than-life to both its opponents and supporters. Therefore, it will be meaningful to note two key achievements that may impact India's public life in the decades to come. One suspects that the RSS itself may not exactly boast publicly about these achievements because, for the last hundred years, it has remained taciturn about its actual goalposts and achievements. Nevertheless, it will surely intensify efforts to consolidate these gains. Therefore, students and observers of Indian society need to note these achievements and discuss their effects. The first achievement is to twist and transform the meaning of Hinduism, the idea of Hindu religiosity and the practices adopted by Hindus. From its early days, the organisation has always been in awe of its *bête noire* — monotheistic religions. So, efforts to imitate them in shaping Hindu sensibilities have always proved attractive to it. At the same time, the early 20th-century European idea of nationalism as a phenomenon based on the complete oneness of a community has also dominated Hindutva thinking. Combining these two urges, Hindutva has sought to intervene in the bewildering diversity of ideas and practices that are adopted by different groups claiming to be Hindus. In order to bring homogeneity to this chaotic-looking diversity, Hindutva has offered two

pathways. One is that of nationalism based on an identity that is named as Hindu identity. In reality, this identity is often predicated on the idea of the other and deep suspicion of that other. The "other" is most often identified in terms of followers of Christianity and Islam. In this sense, the idea of "we" acquires strength from exclusion rather than inclusion. Over time, besides parochial and religion-based nationalism, Hindutva has also sought to redefine the meaning of being a Hindu. Particular symbolisms have been popularised as pan-Hindu. Since the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, an effort was undertaken to identify a particular idea of Lord Ram as the core of being Hindu. Geographically and across social hierarchies, Lord Ram may have had different connotations but a particular image of the deity was popularised as the symbol of common religiosity. Thus, Hinduness came to be identified with loyalty to this symbolism. Hindutva is currently engaged in a more complex project. It seeks to ensure that local deities and traditions are "nationalised". Rather than conceding the local flavour and autonomy of many practices and deities, the effort is to weave them into a more sanitised and straightforward narrative. This project involves an unprecedented homogenisation of traditions and practices in a manner that disconnects those traditions from their local meanings and reference points, converting them into regional cogs and facilitating the construction of a new, all-India idea of the Hindu.

The success of this project means that being Hindu will eventually have a non-local, non-diverse and uniform meaning that will be easy to connect to the stigmatisation of any divergence. This is no mean achievement. More than constructing an electoral bloc of Hindus, this achievement of transforming the flexible meaning of being Hindu into a regimented identity acquires significance for bridging regional Hinduisms to a pan-Hindu conception of Hindutva. This is nothing less than demoting a civilisation to the status of a religion-based nation. The second achievement of Hindutva has been its clever capture of the entire social space. RSS was never confined to only the religious, the cultural or the political. It has practically been everywhere. In each sphere of public life, Hindutva floated parallel organisations of its own. Simultaneously, it ensured a presence for its sympathisers and supporters. While the former allowed Hindutva to evolve into a social universe dedicated to the propagation of its views — a universe that would replace pre-existing social organisations when opportune power equations would emerge, the presence of its supporters in all walks of life meant that through them, its ideas would continue to penetrate the mainstream and gain slow legitimacy. Thus, while it continued to have sympathisers in the media, among Congress politicians, judges and bureaucrats, RSS also made sure that it would be ready with an alternative social sphere through its own media, think tanks, banks, training centres,

The Biodiversity COP

Ahead of the annual climate change meeting, scheduled in Baku, Azerbaijan, this year from November 11, countries are currently assembled in the Colombian city of Cali for the UN Biodiversity Conference that takes place every two years. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) came out of the same 1992 Rio Earth Summit that gave rise to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). CBD aims to protect global biodiversity, restore natural ecosystems, and ensure that benefits from the world's biological resources are equitably distributed.

This year's meeting — the 16th Conference of Parties to CBD, or COP16 — is the first after a landmark agreement on biodiversity was finalised two years ago. This agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework that was concluded at COP15 in Montreal in 2022, lay down four goals and 23 targets to be achieved collectively by 2030. These include the so-called 30 x 30 targets — a commitment to put at least 30% of the world's lands and oceans, especially biodiversity rich areas, under conservation by 2030, and to initiate restoration work in at least 30% of degraded land or marine ecosystems by 2030. The discussions under CBD, which have been extremely low-profile in comparison to climate change negotiations so far, are slowly gaining in prominence because of the growing realisation of the severity of the issue, and the implications of it being left unaddressed. The climate crisis and the threat to biodiversity are closely linked — both are caused by indiscriminate extraction of natural resources, over-consumption, and unsustainable human activities. The two crises also feed off each other. Climate change has been expediting the loss of biodiversity, while changes in land and oceans have been contributing to global warming.

While climate change and biodiversity discussions have taken place on separate tracks over the last three decades, their interlinkages are becoming increasingly evident. This has resulted in a growing convergence in the goals and outcomes of these two negotiations. Momentum for 30 x 30 One of the main objectives of COP16 is to expedite progress on the 30 x 30 targets which are the most immediate. Under the Kunming-Montreal Framework, each country is supposed to prepare and submit action plans to halt and reverse biodiversity loss within their jurisdiction. These National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, or NBSAPs, are similar to the Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs, that countries have to submit under the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, mentioning their time-bound goals and actions being taken. So far, only 32 countries out of the total 196 parties to CBD, have submitted their NBSAPs. Many more are likely to do so during COP16. The High Seas Treaty, also known as the agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdictions or BBNJ, which was finalised last year as a separate international agreement to maintain the ecological health of oceans, was a major step forward in meeting the 30 x 30 targets. One of the objectives of the High Seas Treaty is to demarcate protected areas in biodiversity-rich parts of the oceans — just like national parks or wildlife re-



serves on land — where human activities can be regulated and restricted. Shared genetic resources Another goal of the High Seas treaty is to ensure that the benefits from exploitation of genetic resources in the oceans outside of national boundaries of countries, are equitably distributed among all. Oceans host a massive variety of life forms from tiny microbes to giant fish, some of which may be beneficial for medical, commercial, or scientific reasons. This also fits in with COP16 discussions, where the sharing of benefits from common genetic resources is expected to figure prominently. Back in 2010, at COP10, countries had finalised an Access and Benefit Sharing mechanism, also called the Nagoya Protocol, that lay down the general principles of the rights and claims of countries on their bio-resources and rules for their commercial utilisation. At COP16, countries are negotiating the sharing of benefits from the use of genetic information of plants and organisms that has been made possible by advances in modern science. The genetic sequences, stored digitally, are commercially lucrative, and are used by corporations for making a variety of items, including high-yield crops, beauty products or medicines. COP16 is expected to deliver some decisions on how these digital sequences can be used, who can use them, and what a fair and equitable mechanism for sharing of profits would be, particularly for the indigenous populations who might have been the original owners of the bioresource. Like in climate change negotiations, finance is crucial in CBD discussions as well. One of the 23 goals of the Kunming-Montreal Framework is to mobilise at least \$200 billion per year by the year 2030, from all sources, for spending on biodiversity conservation. Out of this, developed countries must provide at least \$20 billion every year to developing countries to support their biodiversity-related work.

This money has to increase to at least \$30 billion every year by 2030. Ways and means to mobilise these financial resources is one of the main items on the agenda at COP16. Countries are also supposed to ensure that perverse incentives

or subsidies that are harmful to biodiversity are phased out, eliminated, or repurposed. These can be incentives that allow overfishing, encourage deforestation, or subsidise the use of fossil fuels. Under the Kunming-Montreal Framework, such mea-

sures should scale up to at least \$500 billion by 2030. Countries at COP16 are also expected to discuss the possibility of setting up a biodiversity fund, new finance mechanisms, and biodiversity credits on the lines of carbon credits.

Earliest known asymmetrical animal



What makes Quaestio particularly remarkable is the unusual "backward question mark"-shaped structure on its back, making it the earliest known creature to display a consistent asymmetry in its body design. Scientists have uncovered fossils of a 555-million-year-old creature, Quaestio simpsonorum, in South Australia's Nilpena Ediacara National Park, revealing what may be the earliest example of an asymmetrical body pattern in animals. This small, ancient marine organism, which moved across the ocean floor like a "marine Roomba," feeding on microscopic algae and bacteria, represents a significant milestone in the evolution of complex life.

What makes Quaestio particularly remarkable is the unusual "backward question mark"-shaped structure on its back, making it the earliest known creature to display a consistent asymmetry in its body design. This discovery is crucial because

asymmetry played a vital role in the development of more complex organisms, allowing for the evolution of differentiated body parts. In humans, for example, asymmetry allows organs like the heart and liver to occupy different sides of the body, contributing to functional complexity. The fossils were unearthed from Nilpena, a site renowned for yielding some of the earliest known complex life forms. Despite decades of fossil excavation in this region, nothing quite like Quaestio had been previously found. Evidence of its ability to move further excited researchers. Fossilised tracks discovered behind one of the specimens suggest that Quaestio could actively navigate the ocean floor, potentially grazing on food sources as it traveled. This combination of movement and asymmetry hints at the evolutionary advancements taking place during the Ediacaran period, which preceded the more well-known Cambrian explosion of life.

Centre yet to address southern India's anxieties on delimitation

Statements on successive days by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin on declining population trends in India's southern States hasn't elicited any substantive comment from the Bharatiya Janata Party-led (BJP) Central government, with the party yet to arrive at a stand on the issue. Sources in the BJP say that the statements by the Chief Ministers, one of them an ally of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre, are being seen as part of the anxieties expressed by southern States with regard to the constitutionally mandated delimitation exercise currently scheduled for 2026, but that a wider consultation on the population policy was yet to happen. "This is a delicate issue, and the anxieties of the southern States are understood, that declining population trends there may result in diminishing representation under delimitation based on population. But the fact is that there has been, for 70 years and more, a consensus on the population control policy," a senior leader in the BJP said. He added that the BJP and the government led by it were not sure whether the statements by the two Chief Ministers were "off-the-cuff remarks or a substantive view" on the issue. Previous statements by the BJP and the government, however, point to an evolving view on just how to see India's demographic changes. In his address on Independence Day in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had flagged population growth, stating that there was a "need to have greater discussion and awareness on population explosion". In his campaign for the Telangana Assembly election in 2023, Mr. Modi flagged the issue of south-

ern States and demographic changes. In a public meeting in Nizamabad in October 2023, he linked the Congress's "Jitni aabadi, utna haq" (rights in proportion to population numbers) slogan to fears that the southern States, facing a decline in population, would then lose up to 100 seats in the Lok Sabha. "South India stands to lose 100 Lok Sabha seats. Will south India accept this? Will south India forgive the Congress?" he had asked. Following this,

in 2024, during her Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced a committee that would study the challenges of fast population growth and demographic changes. "India's demographics are an opportunity as well as a challenge. The committee will look at those aspects and the final terms of reference will reflect the focus," Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth had said, when asked for a clarification on what this committee

would do. Sources in the BJP had at that time told The Hindu that the challenges that were being spoken of were with regard to what would happen to productivity and social security when the ageing of a large part of the currently youthful population would begin. The delimitation exercise, constitutionally mandated for 2026, looms large over this debate, and the government and the BJP may have to evolve a response sooner rather than later.



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is the latest Gandhi family member to make a poll debut

Considered as one of the most charismatic Congress leaders, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is the latest member of the Gandhi-Nehru family to make an electoral debut. Five years after formally joining politics in 2019, Ms Vadra will be contesting the bye-election to the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat, a seat vacated by her brother and Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi. After winning both Wayanad in Kerala and Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, Mr Gandhi had decided to retain Rae Bareilly. "The people of Wayanad hold a special place in my heart, and I can't imagine a better representative for them than my sister, @priyankagandhi. I'm confident she will be a passionate champion of Wayanad's needs and a powerful voice in Parliament," Mr Gandhi said in a post on X on Tuesday. "The people of Wayanad hold a special place in my heart, and I can't imagine a better representative for them than my sister, @priyankagandhi. I'm confident she will be a passionate champion of Wayanad's needs and a powerful voice in Parliament." "Join us tomorrow, October

23, as she files her nomination for the Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency. Together, let's ensure Wayanad continues to be represented with love," he added. Though Ms Vadra has electoral fray, two decades after her brother first contested and won the Amethi Lok Sabha seat, she isn't a complete stranger to electoral politics. Since 1999, Ms Vadra has had rich experience of managing her mother, Sonia Gandhi's constituencies of Amethi in 1999 and Rae Bareilly since 2004.

Her formal entry into politics was months before the 2019 Lok Sabha polls as the Congress was looking to change its electoral fortunes that had seen its lowest tally of 44 Lok Sabha seats in 2014. Inducted directly into the Congress Working Committee, she was made in-charge of eastern UP. However, the party couldn't translate her charisma into seats and even Mr Gandhi lost his Amethi seat to BJP's Smriti Irani. Ms Vadra tried reviving the party organisation and ran a high pitched Ladki hoon ladh sakti hoon [I am a hurl and I can



fight] campaign for the 2022 Assembly elections. Despite the hype, the campaign didn't get them through votes. However, over the years Ms Vadra has emerged as a key strategist and one of the most sought after star campaigners. Often compared with grandmother and former Prime Minis-

ter Indira Gandhi for her close resemblance, Ms Vadra has been projected as challenger to Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Varanasi. She was also considered as a successor to her mother's former Lok Sabha constituency of Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh.