

BRS to support farmers opposing Pharma Hub

The party leaders and huge number of workers will participate in a massive dharna in these villages on Thursday

Green, hilly terrains and Dappur Cheruvu in Nyalkal mandal are reportedly under threat due to the proposed pharma hub Sangareddy: Bharata Rastra Samithi (BRS) will be supporting the farmers of Dappur, Vaddy and Malgi villages in their fight against the proposed pharma hub in their villages.

The party leaders and huge number of workers will participate in a massive dharna in these villages on Thursday, to express their solidarity to the farmers fight. The government had recently announced that a pharma hub would be set up on 2,000 acres of land very close to river Manjeera, the prime drinking water source for Hyderabad, Sangareddy, Medak

and Kamareddy districts. Since more than 85 per cent of lands identified for acquisition were fertile, farmers were getting two crops every year. This had prompted a strong opposition from farmers. Since the streams flowing through these villages join the river Manjeera, environmentalists were also opposing the move since effluents would pollute the river. As the river Manjeera was also a well-known wildlife sanctuary in the State, environmentalist warned that the proposed pharma hub would damage the habitat of the birds and wildlife. Manjeera is home to 300 varieties of bird species, which include 117 migrants. It is also a home for more than 500 mugger crocodiles.



All is not well in Aswaraopet Congress, old timers up against MLA Adinarayana



Kothagudem: All is not well in the Congress party in Aswaraopet Assembly constituency as groupism as well as dissent against the local MLA Jare Adinarayana has become a common feature during party meetings. A section of leaders and cadre, especially old timers, have been accusing the MLA of neglecting them and not giving prior information about his tour programmes in the constituency. At a recent meeting at Aswaraopet held to prepare the cadres for upcoming local bodies' elections, leaders of two groups clashed with each other and also hit out at the MLA for acting unilaterally. It might be noted that Adinarayana joined Congress

from the BRS prior to the last Assembly elections and is a follower of Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy. The old timers are accusing the MLA of promoting the leaders and cadres who joined Congress along with him. The MLA who is supposed to work along with all the leaders stated that he was not being apprised of issues in the party and he was getting information about such issues only after it reached the three ministers, Srinivas Reddy, Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Tummala Nageswara Rao. The party leaders M Keshava Rao and Jupalli Ramesh who are maintaining their own groups in the constituency are against the MLA's alleged

support to those joined Congress from BRS and other parties. On the other hand, the followers of minister Nageswara Rao have been staying away from the party activities as they are sulking at the MLA's change of stance in appointing the Dammamet mar-

ket committee office bearers. The minister's followers are complaining that MLA Adinarayana, who during a meeting attended by Nageswara Rao, assured them that the market committee chairman post would be allotted to a leader from the minister's faction.

Ban on usage of DJ in Rachakonda Commissionerate

Police Commissioner Sri Sudhir Babu IPS has issued an order banning the use of DJ sound system in religious processions under the jurisdiction of Rachakonda Police Commissionerate as per the orders of the State Government. Many researches show that due to the high decibel noise generated by DJs, there is a risk of heart attack and other cardiovascular problems in heart patients and permanent hearing problems in children. Apart from this, the Commissioner of Police has taken a crucial decision banning the use of DJ sound mixers, amplifiers and firecrackers in processions from now on in Rachakonda Commissionerate on the grounds that the health of the common people, especially the elderly, will be affected. The CP revealed that cases will be registered under BNS 223, 280, 292, 293, 324, BNSS 152 and Section 15 of the Environment Protection Act if these regulations and government permissions are violated. Commis-



sioner said there will be a fine of Rs. 1 lakh if anyone violates these prohibitory orders and will be punished with imprisonment for five years. It has been stated that orders have been issued to the officers of all zones under Rachakonda to implement these orders in full.

When women's bodies reject the idea of sex

A few months into her marriage, Anjana R., 31, realised that she was unable to have sex with her partner. "My body would not respond. All I could feel was pain. I researched the condition and realised that I may be suffering from vaginismus," says the Chennai resident. Vaginismus is one of the lesser-discussed conditions related to women's sexual health and wellness, where the pelvic floor and the vagina tighten up to avoid penetrative intercourse. It is an uncontrollable muscle spasm, a phobic response to penetration, which has harmful consequences. Over the next few weeks, she visited three gynaecologists. "They gave me fertility advice. I felt gaslit; they were not ready to address my core issue," says Anjana. Taru Jindal, a Mumbai-based gynaecologist, who has helped over 450 women heal their vaginismus through a holistic approach, says that often when women approach gynaecologists complaining about "painful sex," the doctor suggests surgery to remove the hymen or Botox to paralyse the nerves of the vagina. "They don't understand that vaginismus is not merely a physical block; it is the woman's mind saying no as it perceives sex as a threatening activity. It is often linked to trauma or sexual abuse in the past, the portrayal of violence against women in the media, or preconceived notions of sex being painful," says Dr. Jindal, who suffered from vaginismus for nearly seven years. While there is no nationwide prevalence study on vaginismus in India, multiple case reports and hospital-specific studies are cited to establish the prevalence of the condition. For instance, the Department of Obstetrics Gynaecology (OBG) Physiotherapy at the Karnataka-based Institute of Physiotherapy run KLE Academy of Higher Education and Research, conducted an observational study in 160 women from 20 to 35 who faced fertility issues and sought treatment. When they were screened for Vaginismus, 58% were found to be suffering from complaints linked to the condition: fear of penetration, painful sex, and tensing of the pelvic floor muscle.

While researching her condition, Anjana stumbled upon Dr. Jindal's work at a Bengaluru-based company called Proactive For Her. Their three-month online programme focusses on physical and emotional healing. "Traditionally, vaginismus is not taught in medical school. So, I referred to a lot of western material and designed a step-wise approach, which included psychological support, pelvic floor relaxation exercises, dilation of the vagina, couples therapy, and introduced pleasure components," she says. Anjana is middle-class. She enrolled for the three-month programme which cost her a steep ₹30,000. She said the programme was worth it, as it spanned eight weeks and included 24 sessions with multiple experts. Male partners were encouraged to join. "My partner financially supported my situation, so I was okay, but many women are unable to afford these costs. For some, the cost of the programme is their entire monthly salary," she says.

Dr. Jindal said that currently she is running the 32nd batch of 60 women, and there are already 35 women on the waitlist to join the next batch. "We now have the

largest cohort of women living with vaginismus who have healed. We are in the process of publishing our research findings in an international journal, as historically there is hardly any research, data, or documentation of such cases from India," she said. Dr. Jindal said the programme cost has now been reduced from ₹30,000 to 20,000. "We have been receiving enquiries from women who could not afford the fee, so we have brought it down," she said.

It is not the case that vaginismus was not present in Indian women of the previous generation. However, in the previous generation, sexual pain was normalised and not questioned. Vaginismus has been described in medical literature since the mid-18th century in the United States. Women who have healed themselves like Petek Tatli from Istanbul and Katrin Maslenkova from Canada are now vaginismus coaches who help women heal worldwide. Initiatives and start-ups that address lesser known conditions related to women's sexual health in India are a positive step. "Women today are more empowered, and they are questioning their pain and speaking up," says Dr. Jindal. Proactive For Her was founded in 2020, with a business model revolving around OPD healthcare clinics for women. It currently has seven physical clinics in Bangalore and a large offering online. Just like private dental and eye care chains, Achitha Jacob, founder of Proactive For Her, aims to expand to 120 clinics in the top 20 to 25



cities in India. The firm has raised \$6.5 million from Nexus Venture Partners and Vertex Investments. The company is an omnichannel women's health clinic, offering outpatient treatment for fertility, Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome, preventive cancer screenings, postpartum issues, mental health, pregnancy, and consulting lactation specialists. "As a company, we treat sexual health concerns, but we also look at hormonal, menstrual health, cancer screening and prevention, and pregnancy-related pelvic floor health issues," Ms. Jacob said. Ms. Jacob says that in her twenties, she didn't get answers to her questions about sexual health. "Healthcare is

dismissive of women's discomfort and pain, so I started a company that puts women at the centre of all of the offerings." She adds: "There is already a lot of investment in research and development funding for men's sexual health issues like erectile dysfunction and so on globally, whereas women's sexual health and dysfunction as a topic is very new. It has just poked its head out in the past five years," she says. While currently the patient flow in the clinics is skewed towards women under 40, the company also works with older women. "For instance, we work with menopausal women on addressing their issues like sexual arousal and so on," she adds.

Struggling with wilted bouquets? This is how you can make your flowers last longer

Who doesn't love a bunch of fresh flowers? They smell great, add to the beauty of your room or workspace and, of course, do wonders to uplift your mood! But the only downside is that they die too quickly. If you struggle with keeping your flowers alive and want tips to extend their lifespan, look no further! Indianexpress.com spoke to Paridhi Joshi, assistant vice president at FNP (formerly Ferns N Petals) to understand the tips and tricks to make flowers live longer, and avoid any pitfalls that may be cutting their life short. "Always use a clean vase with fresh, room-temperature water. Change the water every two days to prevent bacterial growth and trim the stems at a 45-degree angle to boost absorption," Joshi said.

Remove any leaves below the waterline to avoid contamination, and use the flower food packet that comes with your bouquet, as it provides essential nutrients and antibacterial agents. "Keep the bouquet in a cool, shaded area away from direct sunlight, drafts, and ripening fruits, which emit ethylene gas that can cause flowers to wilt. Lightly mist the flowers with water every day to keep them hydrated, especially in dry climates," she said.

What are some common mistakes people make that kill flowers?

listed out some mistakes people are guilty of when it comes to taking care of the flora in their homes. Not Changing the Wa-



"Keep the bouquet in a cool, shaded area away from direct sunlight, drafts, and ripening fruits, which emit ethylene gas that can cause flowers to wilt. Lightly mist the flowers with water every day to keep them hydrated, especially in dry climates," she said.

ter Regularly: Stale water promotes bacterial growth, which can block the stems and prevent water absorption. Change the water every two days. Leaving Leaves in Water: Submerged leaves rot quickly, contaminating the water and affecting the flowers. Always remove any leaves that will be below the waterline. Not Trimming the Stems: Cutting the stems at a 45-degree angle allows better water absorption. Failing to trim them regularly can shorten the flowers' lifespan.

Placing Flowers in Direct Sunlight or

Near Heat Sources: Exposure to direct sunlight, heaters, or air conditioning can dehydrate flowers and cause them to wilt prematurely. Keeping Flowers Near Ripening Fruits: Fruits emit ethylene gas, which can cause flowers to age faster. Keep your bouquet away from ripening fruits. Not Using Flower Food: Flower food provides essential nutrients and helps prevent bacterial growth. Skipping it can reduce the flowers' lifespan. Ignoring the Environment: Placing flowers in a drafty area or in a room with fluctuating temperatures can stress the flowers and cause them to wilt.

Launching ICICI Pru Signature Pension – benefit from the India growth story to build retirement savings

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched 'ICICI Pru Signature Pension', a market linked pension product enabling customers to build a cost and tax efficient retirement fund. Retirement planning is a crucial activity and a must for all customers to be financially independent. This unique product helps customers to effectively plan for both the accumulation and income generation phases of retirement planning. Announcing the launch Mr. Amit Palta, Chief Distribution Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance said, "We are happy to offer ICICI Pru Signature Pension, a market linked product which provides customers the opportunity to participate in the India growth story to build their retirement corpus.

This product allows customers to have

a 100% exposure to equity besides offering unlimited free switches between equity, debt and balanced funds to maximise returns. With this product we are also offering two new funds – ICICI Pru Pension India Growth Fund and ICICI Pru Pension Balanced Fund. ICICI Pru Signature Pension has a feature which allows customers to 'advance' or 'postpone' the income start date. Advancing the income start date can allow individuals to achieve their goal of early retirement. Whereas customers who wish to start receiving income on retiring can choose to postpone the income start date. Importantly, the product allows customers to make a tax-free withdrawal of up to 60% of the accumulated savings at the end of the policy tenure with the balance required to be deployed to purchase an annuity to receive guaranteed lifelong



income." He added, "Choosing the waiver of premium add-on benefit can ensure the retirement plan doesn't get disturbed due to a critical illness or permanent disability due to an accident. Also, the partial withdrawal feature can help customers overcome liquidity requirements without disturbing the savings plan. Customers can

also use the top-up feature to make additional investments to boost their retirement savings." He concluded, "Our claim settlement ratio of 99.17% in FY2024 for individual death claims, with an average settlement turnaround time of just 1.27 days (non-investigated death claims) is one of the best in the industry."

Dr Ajai Agarwal Conferred with Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr Ajai Kumar Agarwal, the National President of the International Chambers of Commerce and the recipient of the International Bharat Gaurav Award in the British Parliament, London, has been conferred with the prestigious "Lifetime Achievement Award" by the Yuva Shakti Media House in Kolkata.

The award was presented to Dr Ajai Agarwal in the presence of a large audience at the Dhan Dhanya Auditorium in Kolkata. The chief guest Mr. Jinesh Kumar, along with other dignitaries, including Mr. Amit Verma, IPS, and Dr Dhanwantri Tiwari, the National Vice President of the Indian Medical Association, handed over the award to Dr Agarwal.

During the event, a seminar on "The Role of Youth in Making Our Country a Vishwa Guru" was also organized. In his address, Acharya Pujya Muni Jinesh Kumar emphasized the capabilities of the youth in India, stating that "nothing is impossible" and that our country has the highest number of young people. Mr. Sudhanshu Shekhar, the Founder and Managing Editor of Yuva Shakti, welcomed the guests and shared the aim of the seminar, which was to "motivate, instigate, and guide the youth to become world leaders."

Dr Ajai Agarwal is a renowned figure known for his outstanding contributions in the fields of public relations, social services, and many other activities. He is a Guinness Book of Records holder and the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including the Dr. KR Singh Memorial National Award, the Kamal Patra Award, the Outstanding State-Level Young Achiever Award by Jaycees, the Indira Gandhi National Integration Award, and the Unity Award. Dr Agarwal is also a sought-after speaker, delivering lectures in various universities, colleges, and organizations across India and abroad.



Suchitra Academy Hosts Thrilling CBSE Cluster VII Badminton Championship for Girls 2024



The CBSE Cluster VII Badminton Championship for Girls 2024, hosted by Suchitra Academy and Suchitra Badminton Academy, concluded on a high note after a 3-day sporting extravaganza that showcased the exceptional talent and competitive spirit of young athletes from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The championship featured fierce competition across three age categories - Under-14, Under-17, and Under-19, with 75 students from 24 schools in the U14 category, 41 students from 15 schools in the U17 category, and 21 participants from 6 schools in the U19 category.

"It was a thrilling experience to witness the exemplary performances of these young badminton players. The level of skill, determination, and sportsmanship displayed by the participants was truly inspiring," said Mr. Pradeep Raju, Co-founder of Suchitra Badminton Academy. "Events like these play a crucial role in nurturing and promoting the next generation of sports talent in our region." The championship was graced by distinguished guests, including Jeevenji Deepthi, an accomplished athlete with notable achievements in multiple prestigious events, and Muhammad Hafiz bin Hashim, the re-

nowned badminton player and former All England Champion as well as Commonwealth Games Men's Singles Gold Medalist. Ramesh Nagapuri, a Dronacharya Awardee in Athletics and coach of Olympic medalists, also attended the event, offering words of encouragement and inspiration to the participants. *The results of the championship are as follows:*

Under-14 Girls Category:

- *Winner:*

 Bhavan's Sri Ramakrishna Vid Sainikpuri Medchal TL

- Runner-up: Mount Litera Zee School Rajendranagar HYD TL

- 3rd Place: Zee High School Hayath Nagar Yadadri Bhuvanagiri TL

- 4th Place: Edify School Tiruchangoor Tirupati Chittoor AP

Under-17 Girls Category:

- *Winner:*

 Vidyanjali High School Serilingampally HYD

- Runner-up: Bhavan's Sri Ramakrishna Vid Sainikpuri Medchal

- 3rd Place: Delhi Public School Sainikpuri Secunderabad

- 4th Place: P. Obul Reddy Pub Sch Jubilee Hills Hyderabad

Under-19 Girls Category:

- *Winner:*

 Army Public School Bolarum Secunderabad

- Runner-up: Bhavan's Sri Ramakrishna Vid Sainikpuri Medchal

- 3rd Place: Indus Universal School Malkajgiri R R Dist

- 4th Place: Samashti International School Kollur Medak

The CBSE Cluster VII Badminton Championship for Girls 2024 was a resounding success, showcasing the exceptional talent and competitive spirit of young athletes in the region. The event's significance was further enhanced by the presence of distinguished guests and the inspiring words of Mr. Pradeep Raju, Co-founder of Suchitra Badminton Academy.

Twenty two students of TMREIS secure MBBS seats in first round of NEET - UG 2024 counselling

Hyderabad: Twenty two students of Telangana Minorities Residential Educational Institutions Society (TMREIS) secured MBBS seats in the first round of NEET - UG 2024 counselling. Out of the 206 students who appeared for NEET-UG 2024, 137 students including 85 boys and 52 girls successfully qualified. In the first phase of counselling, 22 students bagged medical seats. The society is expecting 50 more seats in the second phase and third phases of counselling. Induction:

The Osmania University's Department of Business Management organised an

induction for newly joined students of MBA, MBA Technology Management and MBA Tourism & Travel Management during the academic year 2024-25. The University College of Commerce and Business Management Principal and Dean Faculty of Management Prof. D Sreeramulu addressed the students and asked them to be regular to classes and be dedicated for their career. The DPIIT IPR-Chair at Osmania University, along with Cell for IPR Promotion and Management, Government of India, conducted an IPR awareness programme on the theme 'Copyright and AI: Issues and Challenges'.

SBI Hyderabad Circle organises cleanliness drive on occasion of Gandhi Jayanthi



As part of the Swachhata Hi Sewa 2024 campaign SBI Hyderabad Circle organized cleanliness activities in and around its Local Head Office today on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanthi / Swachh Bharat Diwas. The three pillars of SHS 2024 (Swachhata Ki Bhaagidari, Sampurna Swachhata, Safaimitras Suraksha Shivar) were carried out by State Bank of India, the Lead Bank in the State during the period starting from 14th September and culminating today 2nd October. The event was led by Chief General Manager, Shri Rajesh Kumar along with General Managers, Deputy General Managers, and other senior officials.

The day began with a cleanliness drive conducted around the LHO premises & busy commercial areas of Sultan bazar

& Gujarati Galli reflecting their commitment towards creating a clean and hygienic community. Officers and staff actively participated in this drive, emphasizing the importance of cleanliness in public spaces. The activity spread the message of Swachhata (cleanliness) in an engaging and resonant manner. The activity aimed at creating awareness among participants about the significance of maintaining hygiene and cleanliness in daily life.

Speaking on this occasion CGM Shri Rajesh Kumar said Swachhata Hi Sewa 2024 is a nationwide cleanliness campaign in India, running from September 17th to October 2nd, 2024. This initiative marks the 10th anniversary of the Swachh Bharat Mission, emphasizing the themes of "Swabhav Swachhata" (Natural Cleanli-

ness) and "Sanskaar Swachhata" (Cultural Cleanliness) to foster a collective spirit of cleanliness and hygiene. Shri Rajesh Kumar said that SHS initiatives were taken up by the Bank across the State of Telangana by identifying 57 Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs) as mega cleanliness drives for clearing the dirty and difficult garbage spots (black spots). Also, the circle has taken up 15000 tree plantations under "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign across the state to focus on area beautification and protection of Mother Earth. Shri Rajesh Kumar appreciated and acknowledged the services of the Safaimitras. In recognition of their contribution to the society, all the Safaimitras were felicitated. As part of Safaimitras Suraksha Shivar, Safaimitras were provided PPE kits and protective gear to safeguard them from occupational hazards. To promote awareness on Social Security Schemes among the Safaimitras a literacy camp was organized to highlight the importance of various social security schemes (PMJDY, PMJJBY, PMSBY, APY etc.) of the Government of India, ensuring that the benefits of these initiatives reach as many people as

possible. Shri Rajesh Kumar said that the goal of SHS is to instill a sense of responsibility and pride in maintaining cleanliness, not just as a one-time effort but as a continuous practice. The General Manager Network-2, Shri Prakash Chandra Baror, General Manager Network 1 – Shri Ravi Kumar Verma speaking on the occasion said that Swachhata Hi Sewa initiatives, creates a lasting impact on public health and environmental sustainability, making cleanliness a way of life for every citizen. SBI, as lead bank organized 220 events of the 413 events conducted by LDMs across the State under SLBC activities identified by Department of Financial Services, Government of India. The participation and enthusiasm of all the officials, staff, cleaning workers and security guards made this initiative a grand success. The event highlighted SBI's commitment to contributing to Swachh Bharat Mission and supporting government initiatives.

(G Ramakrishna)

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The Matt Mullenweg and WordPress controversy | Explained

The story so far: Since September 21, a dispute between Matt Mullenweg, the technologist at the centre of the WordPress community, and a company called WP Engine has snowballed rapidly into a crisis for lakhs of WordPress users around the world. WordPress reputedly powers more than 40% of all websites on the internet, which is several millions, so policies that affect users' ability to access the software's essential features could have a wide-ranging impact. The dispute is ostensibly over a trademark violation but also relates to the principles of open-source software development, trademark enforcement, and role clarity.

What is WordPress?

WordPress is the name of a piece of software people can use to build a website, blog or e-commerce portal on the internet; its most popular use has been as a content management system. Its competitors include Ghost, Drupal, and Wix. WordPress is an oft-cited example of open-source software, built by volunteer developers who contribute/and or improve its code, test the software on new platforms and fix bugs, build themes and plug-ins that expand the functionality of WordPress beyond its core features, and routinely conduct camps, workshops, and conference to popularise its adoption for various businesses and use-cases. It is made available under a GPL licence – a type of license that allows others to modify the software while obligating them to distribute the new version under the same license. WordPress is available to use in two ways. The self-hosted version refers to copies of WordPress that users can download for free from the website WordPress.org to use for websites hosted on their own servers. This is the open-source version. The hosted version refers to platforms or services where a third party manages your website's WordPress setup and infrastructure in exchange for a fee. WP Engine is one such provider. Matt Mullenweg is the founder and CEO of Automattic, a for-profit company that makes and distributes many digital products. One of them is WordPress.com, a hosted WordPress offering.

Automattic is also a major contributor to the development of open-source WordPress (3,988 hours/week). It isn't directly affiliated with WordPress.org or the WordPress Foundation. This said, Mullenweg personally owns WordPress.org, although the WordPress Foundation has a separate website (wordpressfoundation.org). Along with WordPress.com, Automattic also owns WordPress VIP (targeted at developers maintaining large, high-traffic websites) and Pressable, all of which offer the same services to different segments of the market.

How did the dispute begin?

On September 21, Mullenweg published a post on WordPress.org accusing WP Engine of being a "cancer" to the WordPress community. His ire was directed at a core feature of WordPress: its ability to record all revisions a user has made to content created on WordPress. WP Engine

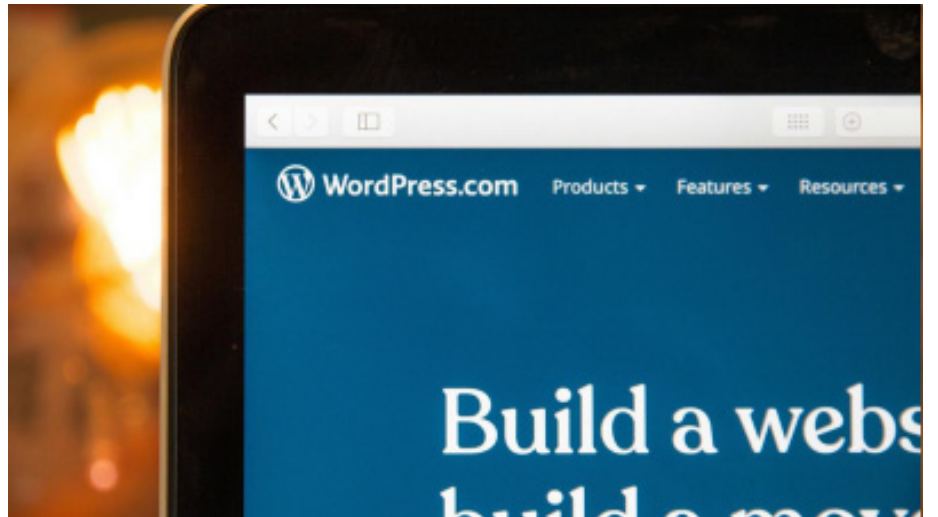
has disabled this functionality stating that each change adds to the site's database, and which over time becomes heavy and slows the website down. Instead, WP Engine has asked its users to contact its support staff if they need to enable revision control on a per-website basis. Mullenweg had charged that WP Engine is thus not WordPress. He also alleged WP Engine was profiting from free access to WordPress without itself contributing to WordPress's development. WP Engine helps its users set up new WordPress websites by automatically connecting to WordPress.org, downloading a copy of WordPress, and installing it. It also offers tools that regularly check for updates to WordPress and updates its users' websites in turn. WordPress.org recommends these updates in order to keep websites secure. WordPress websites are also able to access the plug-ins directory hosted on WordPress.org. Plug-ins are 'smaller' pieces of software the WordPress community has built; users are free to install plug-ins to extend their sites' functionality in specific ways. After Mullenweg's post appeared, WP Engine's lawyers sent a cease-and-desist (C&D) letter to Automattic on September 23 asking that Mullenweg stop disparaging WP Engine. Later the same day, Automattic's lawyers responded with a C&D letter to WP Engine alleging that the latter had violated the former's trademark policy.

What is the trademark issue?

According to Automattic's C&D letter, WP Engine's use of the label "WP" in its name has confused consumers into equating WP Engine with WordPress itself — a continuation of something Mullenweg had mentioned in his September 21 post. This part of the dispute centres on whether Automattic had a trademark on the label "WP". In its C&D letter, WP Engine responded by quoting a line from the WordPress Foundation website's page on "Trademark Policy". The line read: "The abbreviation 'WP' is not covered by the WordPress trademarks and you are free to use it in any way you see fit." But at some point after September 21 the line on the website was changed to: "The abbreviation 'WP' is not covered by the WordPress trademarks, but please don't use it in a way that confuses people." Based on the previous wording, WP Engine said it had complied with trademark law. WP Engine also said in its letter that it had been using the label "WP" for "more than a decade". Trademark law in the U.S. requires trademark owners to look out for and act to sanction potentially infringing uses. If they don't, they are liable to lose the trademark. In this regard, WP Engine's argument is that it has been able to use the "WP" label for many years without inviting punitive action from Automattic.

How did the dispute evolve?

WP Engine's C&D letter on September 23 contained a significant allegation. On September 20, Mullenweg delivered the keynote address at WordCamp U.S., an annual WordPress-focused conference. Up to a minute before he was to deliver his talk, according to WP Engine's C&D letter,



Mullenweg had allegedly messaged WP Engine's CEO asking that the company divert a percentage of its revenue to Automattic as a form of giving back to the development of WordPress. The C&D letter included what it said were screenshots of Mullenweg's messages. These messages said that if WP Engine didn't acquiesce to the sender's demands, the sender would adopt a "scorched earth nuclear approach" towards WP Engine. The letter characterised the demands as "astronomical and extortionate". Automattic's C&D letter didn't mention any of these issues and focused instead on WP Engine's alleged violation of WordPress trademark. On September 24, in response to a user's post on Reddit, Mullenweg wrote: "[WP Engine] had the option to license the WordPress trademark for 8% of their revenue, which could be delivered either as payments, people (Five for the Future .org commitments), or any combination of the above." Five for the Future is a programme developed at WordPress.org through which organisations that benefit from WordPress can help by committing some of their resources to its development. The next day, Mullenweg banned WP Engine from directly accessing updates and plug-ins hosted on WordPress.org.

What were the ban's consequences?

The unprecedented ban prevented several lakh WordPress websites from accessing the resources they needed to function normally. In his post, Mullenweg wrote that if WP Engine "wants to control your WordPress experience" by disabling revision controls, it could also develop and run by itself the various other resources the WordPress ecosystem availed it for free, including updates, the bug-tracker, and a user authentication system. Public sentiment, especially within the community of WordPress users, was already negative towards Mullenweg after his September 21 post; the September 25 ban heightened it. On popular public fora where industry observers as well as insiders have been known to gather, including Reddit and Hacker News, users focused as much on the ban's consequences — whose magnitude they didn't dispute — as Mullenweg's motivations. One point of contention was private equity. Mullenweg had written on September 21 that WP Engine had decided

to not pay for larger databases to accommodate revision controls in order to cut costs and increase the margins for its private equity owners. Since 2018, a private equity firm called Silver Lake has controlled WP Engine, and both Mullenweg and Automattic had singled the firm out by name in posts on September 25 and 26, respectively. Another popular subject of debate was confusion surrounding Mullenweg's role within the WordPress ecosystem. According to the "Trademark Policy" page on the WordPress Foundation website, the "WP" label is licensed for commercial use to two companies: Automattic and Newfold (another company like WP Engine that provides WordPress hosting services). Mullenweg has interpreted this to mean all other companies using the "WP" label in a confusing or misleading way, in his view, owes money to the WordPress Foundation. Should WP Engine be liable to pay a trademark licence fee, it will be to the Foundation — whereas the C&D letter alleging trademark misuse was issued by Automattic, an unaffiliated entity. Many developers have also interpreted Mullenweg's decision to ban WP Engine's access to WordPress.org to mean a subversion of the WordPress open-source community's equal-opportunity structure in favour of an Automattic CEO's bid to resolve a dispute centred largely on himself. Some have even called for Mullenweg to step down as the leader of WordPress development. They have also alleged that Mullenweg has a conflict of interest since WP Engine competes directly with Automattic's WordPress.com, WordPress VIP, and Pressable hosting products. On the other hand, another section of developers and users have said WP Engine has erred by not contributing to the WordPress community despite its high revenue and that it has profited from confusion in the public that WP Engine is affiliated with WordPress itself.

What comes next?

The GPL licence under which WordPress is available doesn't obligate WP Engine to contribute to the development of WordPress. At the same time, Mullenweg has maintained that WP Engine isn't entitled to access WordPress.org and that such access is vouchsafed for services that benefit the WordPress community. "

A journey across the Palk Strait

On a cloudy September morning, five childhood friends in their late 60s gathered at Nagapattinam port in Tamil Nadu, their laughter cutting through the sea breeze. For over four decades, they had travelled across India together, but that day was different. They were boarding the Nagapattinam-Kankesanthurai ferry between India and Sri Lanka for the first time. When asked the purpose of their visit, retired headmaster, C. Sugumaran, who was part of the group, said with a wide grin, "Just for fun." The ferry service had been restarted on October 14, 2023, after a nearly 40-year hiatus. In video messages, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the then Sri Lankan President, Ranil Wickremesinghe, had hailed the diplomatic effort and highlighted the importance of launching the service between the two nations. Calling it a "new chapter in diplomatic and economic ties between India and Sri Lanka," Modi said that the service would help strengthen cultural, commercial, and civilisational ties between India and Sri Lanka. Wickremesinghe said the ferry was an important step in improving connectivity. However, authorities temporarily suspended service after just a week, citing technical issues and rough weather.

On August 16 this year, service was resumed, with support from the External Affairs Ministry. The demand was initially low, forcing the operator to reduce frequency from seven days to three days a week. When interest grew again, the operator, IndSri Ferry Services Private Limited, added a fourth day. In recent weeks, there has been an encouraging rise in occupancy, with an average of 80 passengers per trip. Ticketing agencies said this was due to positive feedback, largely by word-of-mouth. A ferry ride to another country. The ferry accommodates 165 passengers and crew and includes 27 premium seats. The price of a ticket is ₹5,000 for economy and ₹7,500 for premium. Passengers are allowed 23 kilogrammes of luggage for free. They can carry up to 50 kg of luggage by paying ₹50 for every additional kg. The ferry leaves Nagapattinam at 8 a.m. and reaches Kankesanthurai at noon. It leaves Sri Lanka at 2 p.m. and returns to India by 6 p.m. The captain of the passenger ferry, Sivagangai, was J. Baskar. He explained that the vessel would operate at 18 knots with strict anti-smuggling protocols and would be monitored by authorities from both nations throughout the journey. "Both sides can inspect the vessel at any time. It is mandatory for us to provide information on all aspects of the journey, including passenger numbers and nationalities, for transparency and security," Baskar said. He added that the ferry was equipped with life jackets, life rafts, and a rescue boat. A group of five families in the ferry was excited to explore Sri Lanka's cultural and historical ties with India. They aimed to visit places connected to the Hindu epic, the Ramayana. S. Shanthi, who was travelling with her husband and son, was delighted. "We are going to see the land where Sita (from the Ramayana) was imprisoned," she said.

The same day, R. Sugitha, a librarian from Jaffna in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, used the ferry service to travel to Tamil Nadu. She said it offered a more af-

fordable alternative to flying. "Travelling by air costs 60,000-70,000 Sri Lankan rupees (₹12,000-16,000), but the ferry is only 31,000 rupees (₹8,600) to go across the Palk Strait and come back," she said. During the journey, Sugitha and her fellow passengers formed a WhatsApp group called 'Ship Friends'. They promised to stay in touch after the journey ended. Reflecting on her return from Sri Lanka, Shanthi said, "We visited temples and saw remnants of the war. But what stood out was the warmth of the local Tamils who treated us not as visitors, but as family." While the passengers enjoyed the ride, they also had suggestions for improvement. "While most of the trips are smooth, rough seas can occasionally cause bumpy rides. A larger ferry could provide a more comfortable experience in such conditions," noted a senior crew member. Prabhakaran V., an environmental activist from Chennai, who was travelling with his wife, Akshaya, said that the couple had originally planned to go to Sri Lanka for their honeymoon, but the delay in resuming the service had forced them to delay their visit. "There could be more food options," Prabhakaran complained, referring to the packets of instant noodles and ready-to-eat food that were available for purchase in the ferry. "They could also offer better amenities at the ports, a smoother connection to Jaffna, and a help desk for the elderly at the Kankesanthurai terminal." Jaffna is located 21 kilometres from the port. As buses are rare, auto rickshaws are the only mode of transport to the capital city of the Northern Province. Many traders said that while the service is useful, the baggage allowance could be increased to at least 100 kg per passenger. F.A. Rohan, a trader from Colombo, imports ready-made garments from Tamil Nadu using the ferry service. Despite the relatively low fares for the ferry, Rohan said that the margins in his trade are thin, and he would have to save as much on travel costs. "More baggage allowance would help," he said.

The links between India and Sri Lanka are historical. Writer and publisher K. Sachithanathan noted that the Tamil text, Chola Mandala Sathagam, refers to a famine in Jaffna in the 13th century. "Sadayappa Vallal, the patron who supported Kambar in writing the Tamil epic Kambaramayanam, is said to have sent a thousand boats of rice to the king of Nallur in Jaffna," he said. Sachithanathan highlighted the flourishing tobacco trade via the Kankesanthurai port, which thrived until the 1950s, especially with Kerala. The Jaffna Malayalam Tobacco Exporters Association played a key role in this trade, he added. R. Kulasingam, a Tamil writer from Paruthithurai in Jaffna, explained the significance of the ports of the Northern Province, such as Kankesanthurai, Oorkavalthurai, Paruthithurai, and Valvettithurai. His grandfather, a 'Thangayal' (sailor) on the Paruthithurai-Nagapattinam route, witnessed the region's prosperity, he recalled. However, former Sri Lankan Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's nationalisation efforts led to the shutdown of many operations, he said.

Highlighting the region's shipbuilding history, B. Meenakshi Sundaram, son of a shipbuilder from Valvettithurai in Jaffna,



spoke of the prominence of these areas in producing skilled sailors. His father built the ship, Parvatha Pathini, during British rule, which was later sold to Pakistan. Though smuggling increased after the ports ceased functioning, Sundaram said many sailors from these areas continue to work globally, keeping the legacy of their craftsmanship alive. The British, too, established formal transport links between India and Sri Lanka. In the late 1880s, the Boat Mail Express connected Talaimannar and Rameswaram through a collaboration between the Sri Lankan and Indian Railways, allowing for seamless travel and the movement of goods. Under British colonial rule, Indian Tamils, known as 'hill country Tamils', were brought to Sri Lanka to work in plantations and built much of the island nation's early infrastructure. The ferry service was operational until 1964, when a cyclone wiped out Dhanushkodi on the southern tip of Pamban island in Tamil Nadu, shifting the route to Rameswaram. The service continued until the Sri Lankan civil war in 1983 forced its suspension. In 2011, an attempt was made to revive the Thoothukudi-Colombo ferry service, but it was short-lived. S. Rathinamani Ammal, 88, from Matale in the Central Province of Sri Lanka, fondly recollected over a phone call her journey on the ferry in 1965, from Talaimannar on the northwestern coast of Mannar Island to Rameswaram in the Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu. She spent 10 days at her ancestral home in Karaikudi and visited temples in Srirangam and Madurai. "If the rice cooked at home in Matale was packed in leaves, it would still be hot when we landed in Rameswaram," she said. Ammal said that her family would often travel to India to manage their land and pray at temples.

Since then, there have been many efforts to resume the ferry service across the Palk Strait. S. Niranjan Nanthagopan, managing director of IndSri Ferry Services, who has long championed stronger India-Sri Lanka ties, was among those leading the initiative. During colonial rule, Nanthagopan's ancestors operated ships between Jaffna and Vedaranyam town in Nagapattinam district, transporting passengers and goods. According to him, tourism can reconnect the Tamils on both sides of the Palk Strait and open up new opportunities. "Connectivity is the first priority," Nanthagopan said. "Once that is established, other aspirations can follow."

Economic and strategic

ties. Highlighting the need for stronger connectivity between India and Sri Lanka, Sai Murali S., the Consul General of India in Jaffna, explained that the Indian government has been covering part of the costs of the ferry service. "The aim is to lower user costs and strengthen bilateral ties," he said. The Sri Lankan government plans to expand the Jaffna International Airport and introduce new routes to Tamil Nadu and diaspora hubs. Sai Murali said that the Indian government would also bear part of the costs of the expansion of the airport. Thanks to the success of the Chennai-Jaffna route by air, there are now IndiGo flights between India and Sri Lanka every day. "India will also be managing renovation costs at Kankesanthurai port; work is set to begin this year," he said. "Prime Minister Modi's vision includes restoring the Talaimannar-Rameswaram route too. There are feasibility studies under way to reconstruct the ancient land bridge between Dhanushkodi and Talaimannar, with India covering most of the cost." Sai Murali added that discussions are also ongoing with more ferry operators to pitch in and also to improve the quality of service between Kankesanthurai and Nagapattinam. Passenger feedback is expected to help the authorities resolve issues. K.D.S. Ruwanchandra, Secretary of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Aviation, acknowledged India's vital role in enhancing connectivity. A bilateral committee oversees ferry operations, though challenges remain, especially in securing vessels with cargo capacity. "We have implemented security measures at Kankesanthurai port. Customs and immigration officers are working alongside Sri Lanka's Ports Authority security and Naval officers," Ruwanchandra said, stressing the importance of preventing illegal activities.

A boon for the Tamil community. Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in India said they prefer the ferry over flights as it has a larger cargo capacity. R. Manikandan, 25, was born in the Devakottai special camp in Sivagangai district in Tamil Nadu as a refugee. He recently returned to Sri Lanka by the ferry and obtained citizenship for the first time in his life. "I felt a deep connection. Everything seemed so near, both physically and emotionally," he said. The ferry service has been hailed as a boon for the Tamil community. M. Piiratheepan, an Acting District Government Agent in Jaffna, highlighted the deep cultural and spiritual ties between India and Sri Lanka.

Out of Africa - Jharkhand migrant labourers' plight

Kuldeep Hansda, 35, grew up in a forest in Jharkhand, but nothing had prepared him for the harshness of an African jungle where he ended up in March this year. The tough conditions were made tougher by stinging insects and a rude contractor of a multinational construction company, who doled out measly, rationed meals for four months. He returned to Ralibera village, Nawadih block of Bokaro district, four months later, after Chief Minister Hemant Soren undertook the initiative to evacuate him and 26 others from Cameroon on the central-western coast of Africa. Kuldeep has vowed not to leave his State again, even if someone offers him a monthly pay of more than the \$425 he was promised in Cameroon — but never given — despite slogging for hours to install pylons or power transmission towers in the African nation.

"I went abroad to earn more as the two kathas (0.062 acre) of land we grow paddy and wheat on are not enough to sustain my family of six," he says. They have a dozen hens and four goats too. "We knew there would be some challenges because it is beyond our comfort zone but never for a moment did we think we would face so much hardship in a foreign country," he says. Kuldeep used to grumble about walking 4 km every day to fetch drinking water and living a life without electricity in a forest village. Such hardships pale in comparison to what he endured in Cameroon, he says. Kuldeep narrates how he and 26 others landed in Cameroon via a contractor who promised good money: 18 were from Bokaro, five from Hazaribagh, and four from Giridih district. "Sukkar Mahato, a local man who worked in South Africa earlier gave me the offer. He said he was working under a man from Kerala who got us the job through his contact at the L&T (Larsen and Toubro) Construction company," he remembers. They boarded a train from the Parasnath railway station on March 24 and reached Mumbai, he says. "On March 27, we boarded a connecting flight from Mumbai to Cameroon's Douala airport via Ethiopia." There, living conditions were so poor, all they wanted was to return. On July 16, they found a way of sending an SOS to people at home, pleading to be flown back to India. They also said the contractor owed them four months' pay. Shikha Lakra, the team leader of the Jharkhand State Migrant Control Room, said around 1,500 workers stranded abroad have been brought back home over the last four years. They were in some Gulf countries, west African countries as well as south Asian ones.

Kuldeep now finds his mud-and-straw house a swarg (heaven). Here, his wife Sobha Devi, 10-year-old son Churman, four-year-old daughter Meenakshi, and parents Budhan and Budhni Hansda are by his side. His ailing father finds solace in the fact that beta (son) would be around when it is "time for me to leave this world". Sobha Devi says she will not allow Kuldeep to go anywhere else for a few rupees anymore. "We do not want a lot of money. We were surviving before he went abroad and we will continue to survive in our village. We will face our problems together, but if he wants to bring the kind of money he thinks will change our future, he can do something in the village or nearby," she says, while cooking on an earthen



stove using firewood collected from the forest. "I just want my husband to be with me. Only I can understand the pain that I felt in his absence. I longed to hear his voice when he was away but the call was so expensive that he used to speak to me once in about 15 days," she adds.

Sital Kisku, Kuldeep's 34-year-old neighbour, was also among those who sought greener pastures in Africa. The dream that fuelled his first trip to a foreign land soon turned into a nightmare. "All of us stayed in a jail-like room in the middle of a jungle infested with mosquitoes and other insects. We never got anything more than steamed rice and boiled potatoes to eat, that too in limited amounts. Each of us had a small table and we had to beg for mosquito nets that we got only towards the end of our stay in these inhuman conditions," he says. "People move out for jobs because Jharkhand does not offer opportunities. Poverty made us go abroad, leaving our family behind. It was not by choice," says the father of three girls and a boy. Outward-bound workers According to the 2016-17 Economic Survey of India, Jharkhand is a major source of workers for farms, factories, and contractors in the more progressive States. The report says the State's working-age population decreased by about 5 million between 2001 and 2011 with an average of 5% of this population migrating every year. "The tribal people of Jharkhand's Chotanagpur and Santhal Pargana regions have been emigrating continuously from their home country for over 100 years in search of a better way of life," says a 2024 paper in the International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development. It talks about the "lasting impacts of colonialism, indentured labour systems, and migration". A majority of these workers who migrate are tribal people displaced due to the acquisition of their land for mining or construction of dams and industries. Some, like Chintaman Mahto of Chano village under Bishnugarh block in the Hazaribagh district, find themselves at the mercy of job agents selling dreams. He bit the Cameroon bait despite having been

taken for a ride by another company earlier. Chintaman worked for a similar project in Saudi Arabia in 2022. The contractor there did not pay him for almost nine months before he managed to contact a few friends in Hazaribagh, who arranged the air ticket to get him back. The experience made him sceptical about an offer in South Africa's Johannesburg in 2023, but he decided to give it a go. A satisfactory stint in South Africa made him go to Cameroon.

"The tickets and visa to go to Cameroon were provided by L&T and we were promised payment every month but it did not happen. When we asked for our salaries after a month, the contractor sought 15 more days but extended the time by another 15 days. We got the same reply after two months. We were frustrated as we needed to send money home to our families," Chintaman says. After three and a half months, the contractor allegedly said he had no money because L&T had stopped all payments to him. Chintaman managed to evade his employers and call his wife Chameli Devi via WhatsApp, seeking help to return home. Bikhani Mahto, 45, from Kharna village under Bishnugarh block, says the workers from Jharkhand had originally planned to protest the non-payment of wages. On second thoughts, they made a video on their plight and sent it to their families and friends in Jharkhand. "We needed ₹10,000 to recharge the data pack on a mobile phone, taking turns to speak to our family members once in at least 10 days," he says. The stranded workers sent the video after the last recharge with whatever money they were left with. The video reached the local workers of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, who relayed it to the party leader and the State's Women, Child Development and Social Security Minister, Baby Devi on July 16. She passed on the message to the Chief Minister, whose office contacted the office of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and urged him to intervene and ensure their safe return. The State's Labour, Employment, Training and Skill Development Department then undertook the initiative

to bring them back. All the workers flew from Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, to Mumbai on July 22 and they reached Parasnath railway station by train two days later. Baby Devi, Labour Minister Satyanand Bhokta, and the Chief Minister's MLA-wife Kalpana Murmu Soren welcomed them at Giridih. The workers thanked the Chief Minister for his initiative to bring them back to India.

With the help of the External Affairs Ministry, the Labour Department's State Migrant Control Room contacted L&T and directed the company to clear the pending wages of the workers. On July 17, the company paid ₹30 lakh as three months' pending wages to the 27 workers. The State government also gave ₹25,000 to each worker and urged them to work in Jharkhand instead of going abroad or to any other State. Bhokta says that all the migrant labourers who returned from Cameroon would be given special attention. "Chief Minister Hemant Sorenji has given instructions to ensure that they benefit from several schemes of the State government," he says, adding that he has recommended that Rajesh Prasad, Jharkhand's Joint Labour Commissioner, coordinate the efforts. Labour Department officials say they have met the workers and briefed them about the schemes they can avail themselves of. "We are coordinating with all the Deputy Commissioners concerned concerning this matter. We have collected all possible information about the workers who returned from Africa and asked them what kind of help they want for self-employment," Prasad says. He adds that some have expressed their desire to rear cattle and goats, for which the government gives subsidies up to 90% under Mukhyamantri Pashudhan Vikas Yojana. Some wanted loans to start small businesses. "A few others have sought jobs under the Mukhyamantri Rozgar Srijan Yojana. We have noted all their demands and sent them to the departments concerned," Prasad says. The possibility of their Cameroon-returned husbands getting access to funds has made the women happy. "