

## Pet adoption organisation hosts heartwarming drive for Indian dog breeds

Hyderabad: A heartwarming scene unfolds every Sunday at the bustling Neredmet main road, where a group of dedicated volunteers are on a mission to find loving home for adorable desi puppies or Indies, the collective term used to refer to Indian dog breeds. A temporary pandal, erected on Sunday in front Rachakonda Commissionerate office at Neredmet main road with posters 'Telangana Pet Adoption', a voluntary organisation run by G Vijaylakshmi, is a big draw for dog lovers.

Curious onlookers park their vehicles nearby to admire the adorable sight of just months-old puppies, some curled up in a peaceful slumber while a few playfully tumbling over each other and interacting with their caretakers. Youngsters, eager to find furry friends, carefully look at the puppies in the hope of forming a special bond so that they can convince their parents to take them home. The volunteers at the pet adoption drive swear by the desi breed of dogs. "Compared to imported breeds, Indies are street smart, resilient, adopt quickly, intelligent, loyal, healthier and don't need high maintenance. Even if they fall sick, they bounce back quickly," says Dr. Vasil Quadri, a senior orthopaedic surgeon and a long-time volunteer for the Indie pet drive. Dog lovers and volunteers from across Hyderabad, along with their months-old puppies gather at the pet adoption, in the hope of finding loving homes for their puppies. "I have four puppies and I am hoping that they get a loving new family. There is a lot of negativity around stray dogs. I always tell young people that be-



fore judging them, people should adopt a desi breed or feed them regularly. This will help them in understanding the dog's behaviour," says G Bharathi, a volunteer at the dog adoption initiative. Every week, on an average, at least 20 to 25 people decide to take the plunge and adopt a desi

dog at the adoption drive. "The aim of this drive is to ensure people are more aware about desi Indian breeds and also the Indies get a loving and responsible new home," says Nagesh, another volunteer. Vijayalakshmi, the founder of Telangana Pet Adoption, says that the ini-

tiative has provided a platform for people passionate about Indies. "All kind of services and information related to Indian dog breeds and guidance are shared with new pet owners. Over the years, this adoption initiative has become a must-visit for dog lovers every week," she says.

## Community resistance grows against Adani's proposed cement factory in Yadadri-Bhongir

Hyderabad: With communities depending on their traditional occupations voicing their fears over the long-term impact on their livelihoods and the environment, the fight against the proposed Ambuja Cement factory by the Adani Group in Ramannapet in Yadadri-Bhongir district is gaining momentum. Environmentalists and organizations representing these communities have joined the frontlines of the fight. Despite the group's claims that the cement unit would generate employment for local youths, the proposal has seen no support from the local population. The public hearing held on October 23 only intensified the protests, with student organizations now joining the fray. Hundreds of students from various professional institutions across the State also gathered in Ramannapet to stage a protest opposing the cement factory.

People from 15 villages across

Ramannapet and Chityala mandals, including Siripuram, Yellanki, Bogaram, Nidanapali, Iskilla, Lakshmapuram, Munipampula, Nirnemula, and three villages in Chityala, would be severely affected by the pollution from the cement factory. The pollution poses a significant threat to the weaver community, which has been working in pollution-free environments.

The factory's operation could also change the lives of over 4,000 weaver families who are already facing hardships. Rapolu Narasimha, a weaver from Ramannapet mandal, expressed concerns that people who have already been dealing with the scarcity caused by Musi River pollution would now face air pollution as well. "Our weavers are tied up with different handloom workers' societies across the State. Some of the best silk sarees are made in the Ramannapet cluster," he said. Every village outskirts have plenty of

handlooms operating right in the open. The yarn they use is also dried in the open, and the rest of the processes are carried out in the open as well.

"Sarees made in a clean environment is our unique selling point. Any exposure to cement factory pollution, and our sarees would not have any takers," added Narasimha. In addition to the weaver community, the sheep-rearing community is also worried about the long-term impacts. Anjaneyulu, (name changed) a member of this community, with strong Congress leanings voiced his fears: "Our sheep need clean air and pastures to thrive. The cement factory will destroy our livelihoods. The Adani group might buy the acceptability of the government by donating Rs 100 crore for the Skill University. But they cannot silence the people of the affected villages. We will rise above party lines to stall the establishment of the factory," he as-

serted, noting that not even a single person had supported the proposed factory at the public hearing recently.

"Nearly 3000 Yadav families living in Ramannapet mandal have at least 40 to 50 sheep and goats each. No Adani can compensate for our loss," he said, adding that the two mandals had about 700 fishermen families who would be equally affected with pollution of the pond and tanks. People from these villages prefer to buy fish from the ponds instead of the fish from the Musi river.

The cement factory, it is feared, could have potential impacts on the cotton crop widely grown in the region as well. The emission of pollutants can affect the quality of the air, which in turn affects the health of the cotton plants. Pollutants can block sunlight and reduce photosynthesis, leading to stunted growth.



# Can Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam seek a new election symbol in 2026? | Explained

The story so far: The most keenly watched new entrant in Tamil Nadu politics is film actor C. Joseph Vijay's (popularly known as Vijay) Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK). The party has been registered with the Election Commission of India (ECI) under Section 29A of the Representation of the People (RoP) Act, 1951, and the application identifies Mr. Vijay as the party's president and Anand alias Munusamy as its general secretary, besides other office-bearers. The TVK has decided to conduct its first State conference near Vikravandi in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu on October 27, 2024, with the aim of entering the electoral fray in the 2026 Assembly elections. The actor's fans-turned-political supporters are now eager to know what the party's new election symbol would be and whether it would get a common symbol or completely new one. What does the law say about the matter? We explain.

What is the difference between a registered and recognised political party?

Any association or a body of individual citizens of the country, wanting to call itself a political party and intending to avail the benefits under the RoP Act of 1951, should necessarily make an application to the ECI seeking registration. The application must be filed within 30 days of the formation of the political party and clearly mention its name, the list of office-bearers, the numerical strength of its members, and other details. The application, on the party's letter head, must also be accompanied by a copy of the memorandum of rules and regulations of the political party, and those rules should contain a specific provision that the party would bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India and to the principles of socialism, secularism, and democracy, and would uphold the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of the country. The party's rules and regulations must also specify the powers and functions of the office-bearers, and the decision-making power conferred on them must reflect democratic spirit without any veto power. The party's constitution must also fix the office-bearers' term, for a period not exceeding five years, and insist on the conduct of periodic intra-party elections. The rules related to the maintenance of discipline by the members and the mode of dispute resolution must also be provided in the regulations.

Further, the rules and regulations must specify how the party funds would be utilised for political activities and the mode of maintenance of accounts. Submission of audited accounts before the ECI, within six months after the end of every financial year, should also be made mandatory under the party's constitution. Registration of Political Parties (Furnishing of Additional Particulars) Order, 1992, also requires the application to be submitted along with individual affidavits from at least 100 members of the party to the effect that they are registered electors and not members of any other political party. The party's president or general secretary must also file a similar affidavit asserting that none of its members hold dual membership. Accordingly, the TVK had submitted its application along

with the requisite annexures with the ECI on February 2, 2024, and issued a notification in a newspaper on May 11 calling for public objections, if any, for its registration by June 11. On September 8, Mr. Vijay made a public announcement of the party having been registered with the ECI. The registration makes the TVK entitled for allotment of a common symbol, subject to certain conditions, but it could become a recognised party, entitled for a reserved symbol in the subsequent elections, if it manages to secure not less than 6% of the total valid votes to be polled in the 2026 Assembly elections and, in addition, returns at least two of its members to the Legislative Assembly. Alternatively, the party would be entitled for recognition if it wins at least 3% (seven seats) of the total number of seats (234) in the Legislative Assembly, irrespective of the percentage of votes garnered by it.

How is the common election symbol allotted?

The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, governs issues related to the allotment of symbols to political parties. Provision 10B of the 1968 order entitles a Registered but Unrecognised Political Party (RUPP) to allotment of a common symbol in a general election to a Legislative Assembly, subject to certain conditions. As per the conditions, the TVK must set up candidates in at least 5% (12 seats) of the 234 Assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu in order to be eligible for allotment of a common symbol. Further, the application for allotment of a common symbol must be made



six months prior to the date of the expiry of the term of the Assembly. Since the current 16th Legislative Assembly had commenced its first session on May 11, 2021, its five-year tenure would expire on May 10, 2026. And since the allotment of a common symbol is done on a first-come-first-serve basis, the crucial date from when the TVK could approach the ECI for such allotment would be on or after November 11, 2025. While submitting the application, the party should list the names of 10 symbols, in descending order of preference, from the list of free symbols notified by the EC. However, if it so desires, the TVK could also propose three new symbols of its choice with the names and clear design and drawings of those symbols, in the order of preference. The new symbols proposed by the

party should neither have resemblance to the existing reserved/free symbols nor have any religious or communal connotations. The new symbols should also not depict any bird or animal. Though the application for the allotment of a common symbol from among the free symbols could be submitted till five days prior to the issuance of the election notification, the application for the allotment of a completely new symbol must necessarily be filed at least three months before the expiry of the term of the Assembly, so that the ECI could examine it in detail before accepting or rejecting the request. The list of free symbols notified by the ECI include a camera, microphone, and so on, but it has to be seen whether the TVK would choose any of them or prefer to opt for a completely new symbol.

## Nvidia overtakes Apple as world's most valuable company

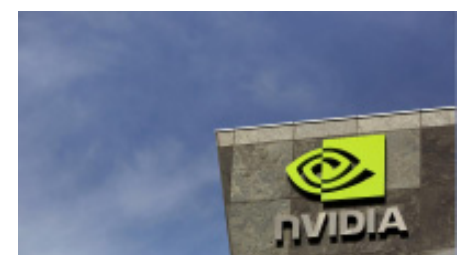
Nvidia dethroned Apple as the world's most valuable company on Friday following a record-setting rally in the stock, powered by insatiable demand for its specialized artificial intelligence chips. Nvidia's stock market value briefly touched \$3.53 trillion, slightly above Apple's \$3.52 trillion, LSEG data showed. Nvidia was last up 2.2%, with a market value of \$3.52 trillion, while Apple's shares rose 0.9%, valuing the iPhone maker at \$3.54 trillion.

In June, Nvidia briefly became the world's most valuable company before it was overtaken by Microsoft and Apple. The tech trio's market capitalizations have been neck-and-neck for several months. Microsoft's market value stood at \$3.20 trillion, with its stock up 1.3%.

The Silicon Valley chipmaker is the dominant supplier of processors used in AI computing, and the company has become the biggest winner in a race between Microsoft, Alphabet, Meta Platforms and other heavyweights to dominate the emerging technology. Known since the 1990s as a designer of processors for videogames, Nvidia's stock has risen about 18% so far in October, with a string of gains coming

after OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, announced a funding round of \$6.6 billion. Nvidia and other semiconductor stocks got a lift on Friday after data storage maker Western Digital reported quarterly profit that beat analysts' estimates, buoying optimism about data center demand. "More companies are now embracing artificial intelligence in their everyday tasks and demand remains strong for Nvidia chips," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell. "It is certainly in a sweet spot and so long as we avoid a big economic downturn in the United States, there is a feeling that companies will continue to invest heavily in AI capabilities, creating a healthy tailwind for Nvidia."

Nvidia's shares hit a record high on Tuesday, building on a rally from last week when TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker, posted a forecast-beating 54% jump in quarterly profit driven by soaring demand for chips used in AI. Meanwhile, Apple is struggling with tepid demand for its smartphones. iPhone sales in China slipped 0.3% in the third quarter, while sales of phones made by rival Huawei surged 42%. With Apple set to report its



quarterly results on Thursday, analysts on average see its revenue climbing 5.55% year over year to \$94.5 billion, LSEG data showed. That compares with analysts' projections for Nvidia of nearly 82% revenue growth to \$32.9 billion. Shares of Nvidia, Apple and Microsoft have an outsized influence on the richly valued technology sector as well as the broader U.S. stock market, with the trio accounting for about a fifth of the S&P 500 index's weight.

Optimism about the prospects for AI, expectations that the Federal Reserve will considerably bring down U.S. interest rates, and most recently, an upbeat start to the earnings season, helped lift the benchmark S&P 500 to an all-time high last week.



# Indian chefs in New Zealand celebrate Diwali with a specially crafted dish as homage to both countries

Two talented chefs from India – Vaibhav Vishen and Varun Toorkey – are celebrating the festival of lights in New Zealand with a special dish that's an homage to their Indian heritage and adopted homeland. Their dish – Goda Masala Paneer Stuffed Kulcha, served with a Kiwi-fruit Panch Phoron Chutney – doffs a chef's hat to the flavours of Vishen and Toorkey's respective childhoods in Kashmir and Mumbai in India, alongside their time in Wellington, New Zealand. Chef Vishen is the owner of Chaat Street, a genuinely Indian food eatery in Wellington that brilliantly showcases the complex, lip-smacking combination of textures, flavours and spices that go into Indian street food. Chef Toorkey is an actor who left behind a 13-year career in the glitzy world of Indian television to follow his culinary study dream in Wellington.

The chefs are both (or have been in Vishen's case) students of Le Cordon Bleu New Zealand's Bachelor of Culinary Arts & Business programme. The dish they have created is a suitably festive one to add to any Diwali table but isn't too decadent to be off limits. The creative and emotional aspect of cooking food is what inspires Chef Vishen to play with flavours and textures. "Food not only allows you to be creative, it's also a canvas where you get to showcase your emotions, what you feel, not just by cooking but also by looking at someone consuming your work of art. That relationship of cooking and feeling is addictive. I love how a community can come together with food," Vishen says. For Toorkey, creating this dish with Vishen was a wonderful way of reliving fond Diwali food memories. "Food is the perfect way of bringing together family and friends. What better reason to get family together than food? We'd love celebrating Diwali every year, lighting up the house, stuffing our faces with



treats and visiting friends and family," he says. This year, the chefs are both looking forward to creating some new Diwali memories in their adopted home of Wellington. "It's brilliant how Wellington has embraced a wide range of cultures, you can see it in how the community comes together to celebrate. The special Diwali fireworks display on the Wellington water-

front is definitely a highlight," says Vishen.

Bios About Vaibhav Vishen Vaibhav Vishen is an award-winning chef and owner of Chaat Street, an Indian street food eatery in Wellington.

A former software developer from Srinagar in India's Kashmir valley, Vishen came to New Zealand in 2014 to pursue his dream of becoming a chef through Le

Cordon Bleu New Zealand culinary school based in Wellington. Read more About Varun Toorkey Varun Toorkey is a former Indian television actor who has taken a big leap towards pursuing his dream in the culinary industry. Varun has left a 13-year career in television to study Le Cordon Bleu New Zealand's Bachelor of Culinary Arts & Business.

## Cyient acquires stake in Azimuth AI to build cutting-edge ASIC Chips, strengthen semiconductor capabilities

Hyderabad: Cyient, a global Intelligent Engineering services company, announced the acquisition of a 27.3% stake in Azimuth AI, a fabless custom ASIC company known for its expertise in intelligent energy and power solutions. This strategic investment marks a significant milestone in Cyient's semiconductor journey and demonstrates the continued focus to drive accelerated growth in this industry, a press release said.

Krishna Bodanapu, Executive Vice-Chairman & Managing Director of Cyient, said, "Driven by the Indian Government's initiatives to boost domestic innovation in semiconductors, India is emerging as a hub for chip development, especially in power and energy-efficient systems." Praveen Yasarapu, Founder and CEO of Azimuth AI, said, "together, we aim to deliver groundbreaking solutions that will push the



This strategic investment marks a significant milestone in Cyient's semiconductor journey and demonstrates the continued focus to drive accelerated growth in this industry

boundaries of semiconductor technology for the global as well as Indian market. "This strategic investment marks another significant step in Cyient's ongoing efforts to expand its capabilities and drive innovation across the semiconductor industry.

## Precautions to take this Diwali

Hyderabad: Ophthalmologists from Hyderabad-based L V Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI) on Tuesday urged people to celebrate Diwali festival with caution while they light-up firecrackers. A few precautions alongside the excitement of lights, firecrackers, and family gatherings, will ensure that our Diwali celebrations remain joyful and safe for everyone, Dr Shalini Singh, senior ophthalmologist, LVPEI, said. In case of eye injury: Do's Rinse eye gently to remove debris in the eye, rinse clean water or saline solution. Place a clean, dry cloth or eye shield over the eye to prevent additional injury. Keep the injured eye closed to avoid further damage. Adhere to instructions from a medical professional after the initial examination. Don'ts Put pressure on injured eye, as this could worsen the injury. Touch or rub injured eye, as this can exacerbate the injury. Use ointments, creams, or home remedies on the eye without professional guidance. Try to remove a foreign object lodged in the eye. Delay seeking medical care because prompt treatment is crucial. Ignore symptoms like severe pain, vision changes, or excessive



bleeding. Precautions on firecrackers Purchase fireworks only from authorized manufacturer. Safely store firecrackers in cardboard boxes, out of children's reach. Supervise children while they play with firecrackers. Allow only one person to light a firecracker while others watch from a safe distance. Choose open areas for lighting firecrackers. Utilize long candles/phuljharis to ignite firecrackers. Keep two buckets of water to douse burns immediately. Wear protective shatterproof goggles when bursting firecrackers. Avoid lighting crackers inside a container/ bottle/ tin can/ overturned pot. Do not collect leftover firecracker. Wear thick cotton clothing, avoiding synthetic materials when lighting crackers. Secure all clothing tightly;



# Dalmia Bharat Foundation Distributes 400 Power Sprayer Pumps to Farmers in Kadapa

Aims to promote sustainable agriculture and empower farmers with advanced tools to boost agricultural productivity

Taking a significant step towards promoting sustainable agricultural practices, Dalmia Bharat Foundation (DBF), the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) arm of Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Ltd (DCBL), distributed 400 power sprayer pumps to farmers nearby villages of plant operations in Kadapa as part of phase 2 initiative for enhanced crop protection. The initiative aims to control crop damage caused by diseases and pests, enhance agricultural productivity and reduce input costs for farmers. DBF under its flagship - Gram Parivartan Project, is committed to promoting sustainable agricultural practices for enhancing food security, improving farmer livelihoods and further environmental stewardship.

The distribution will impact an agricultural area spanning over 1,000 acres, promoting healthier yields and reducing crop losses due to pest infestations. The event saw the allocation of 193 four-stroke power sprayers and 207 battery-operated sprayers, aimed at enabling farmers to more effectively manage pest and disease control in crops such as chilly and Bengal gram.

The project, valued at over Rs. 20 lakh, reflects DBF's commitment to empowering farmers with modern agricultural solutions. DBF contributed Rs. 8,89,500 to the initiative, with beneficiaries contributing Rs. 13,55,500. Commenting on the initiative Mr. Mukesh Kumar Sinha, Unit Head – Kadapa said, "Farmers often lack access to updated agricultural knowledge, resources and support systems. At Dalmia Bharat, we are dedicated to empowering small and marginal farmers through initiatives that bring advanced agricultural tools



within reach. Our goal is to promote sustainable agriculture by equipping farmers with tools that enable efficient, eco-friendly crop management. Through initiatives like these, we aim to support farmers in protecting their crops and securing their livelihoods, while also fostering long-term envi-

ronmental stewardship." Dalmia Bharat Foundation remains steadfast in its mission to drive positive change in rural communities through sustainable development initiatives. By focusing on areas such as agriculture, education, skill development, and environmental sustainability, DBF is

committed to building resilient communities that can thrive in the face of challenges. With each initiative, DBF aims to foster self-reliance and improve quality of life, reinforcing its vision of inclusive growth and a prosperous future for India's rural heartlands.

## New report by World Meteorological Organization report on October 2024

Greenhouse gas levels surged to a new record in 2023, rising by more than 10% in just two decades, according to a new report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). In the course of 2023, large vegetation fire CO2 emissions and a possible reduction in carbon absorption by forests combined with stubbornly high fossil fuel CO2 emissions from human and industrial activities to drive the increase, according to the WMO's annual Greenhouse Gas Bulletin. The globally averaged surface concentration of carbon dioxide reached 420 parts per million (ppm), methane 1934 parts per billion and nitrous oxide 336.9 parts per billion (ppb) in 2023.

These values are 151%, 265% and 125% of pre-industrial (before 1750) levels, it said. These are calculated on the basis of the long-term observations within the Global Atmosphere Watch network of monitoring stations. "Another year. Another record. This should set alarm bells ringing among decision makers. We are clearly

off track to meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius and aiming for 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. These are more than just statistics. Every part per million and every fraction of a degree temperature increase has a real impact on our lives and our planet," said WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo.

The 2023 increase of CO2 in the atmosphere was higher than that of 2022, although lower than that of the three years before that. The annual increase of 2.3 ppm marked the 12th consecutive year with an increase greater than 2 ppm. In the last 20 years, the CO2 level has increased by 11.4% (42.9 ppm) above the level of 377.1 ppm recorded in 2004 by WMO's Global Atmosphere Watch network of monitoring stations.

From 1990 to 2023, radiative forcing — the warming effect on our climate — by long-lived greenhouse gases increased by 51.5%, with CO2 accounting for about 81



per cent of this increase, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Annual Greenhouse Gas Index

cited in the WMO Bulletin. As long as emissions continue, greenhouse gases will continue accumulating in the atmosphere leading to global temperature rise.



# Central Government wants to take revenge for farmers' movement: alleges AAP

Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), October 29: The Aam Aadmi Party once again attacked the BJP and the central government over the issues related to the purchase and lifting of paddy and alleged that the Central Government wants to take revenge for farmers' movement. AAP MP Malvinder Singh Kang alleged that this time the central government intentionally did not empty the warehouses to trouble the farmers of Punjab. Kang stated that it is the routine procedure of the Food Supply Ministry of the Government of India for the FCI (Food Corporation of India) to lift old grains from its warehouses before the arrival of new grains in the mandis (markets) each year, so that there is space available for grain shifting. This process has been in place for decades, not just for a year or two. Addressing the media along with AAP leaders Jagdeep Singh Kaka Brar and Shaminder Khinda at the party office in Chandigarh on Tuesday, Kang said that this time the central government intentionally did not empty the warehouses to trouble the farmers of Punjab. Now, as the controversy has escalated and the central government finds itself in a difficult position, it is misleading the people of Punjab through its minister Ravneet Bittu. The BJP has deliberately created this issue.

Kang raised questions regarding BJP leaders asking why the Chief Minister himself is not going to Delhi to resolve the matter. He questioned whether the BJP wants the Chief Minister of Punjab to beg the Prime Minister to empty the warehouses. If that is what they want, they should openly state that the Chief Minister will have to plead with the Prime Minister for a resolution. Kang mentioned that since March, Punjab's Food Supply Department has been writing letters to the FCI and the central ministry, requesting the lifting of grains. But the central government was sleeping like Kumbhakaran for nine months. He noted the dates, saying that the Punjab Food Supply Department first wrote to the FCI on March 5, followed by letters on March 11, 13, 19, and 22. In June, letters were sent on the 14th and 27th. A letter was also sent on September 3. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann also spoke to Central Minister Prahlad Joshi on September 25 and met him in Delhi on September 30. The Chief Minister also met with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Minister JP Nadda. Kang challenged the BJP to tell them whom else the Chief Minister should meet?

Kang stated that after the meeting with the Chief Minister, Prahlad Joshi claimed that 2 million metric tons would be cleared in October, while a total of 18.5 million metric tons of crops are expected to arrive in the mandis. He questioned why the warehouses were not emptied in time? Kang pointed out that BJP leaders are portraying the Rs 44,000 crore Credit Control Limit (CCL) issued by the RBI for paddy purchases as a favour, when in fact it is the central government's responsibility to manage purchases and storage. He accused the central government of trying to tarnish the reputation of the Punjab government to hide its own failures. He argued that the BJP is acting out of a desire to take re-



venge on the farmers and traders of Punjab, demonstrating its stepmotherly treatment of the state. Kang praised the Punjab government and state officials for lifting 5 lac metric tons of grain on October 28 and assured that regardless of the central government's efforts to create difficulties, the Punjab government will not let its farmers, traders, and millers face any issues. "We stand with them," he concluded. On the other hand, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) Tuesday said both the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as well as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were equally responsible for the harassment being suffered by farmers in Punjab due to lack of timely procurement of their paddy crop which was forcing them

to sell below the minimum support price. Asserting that both these parties were responsible for the miserable condition of farmers in the State, senior SAD leader Dr Daljit Singh Cheema said, "Had both the parties shouldered their responsibility in time, the present agricultural crisis could have been averted". He went on to say, "Both these parties are hand in glove with each other and are taking revenge on the farmers for the Kisan Andolan launched against the three agricultural laws". Dr Cheema said it was pitiable that instead of solving the crisis, both AAP and the BJP were resorting to cheap politics by holding press conferences against each other and

indulging in a blame game. Asserting that these press conferences were mere "tamashas", Dr Cheema said "such attempts to play to the galleries will not relieve the agony of farmers who are suffering in the grain markets and being forced to sell their produce below the market rate". Calling upon both parties to sit together and solve the problem being faced by farmers, Dr Cheema said besides ensuring procurement of paddy, appropriate rate for Basmati and lifting of last year's paddy stocks from the State, immediate arrangements should be made to ensure adequate supply of DAP fertiliser to farmers for their upcoming paddy crop.

## ACB nabs Kothagudem Medical College admin officer, staff for accepting bribe

Kothagudem: ACB sleuths caught red-handed an administrative officer (AO) and junior assistant working at the Kothagudem Government Medical College allegedly while accepting a bribe from the owner of an outsourcing agency.

ACB DSP, Y Ramesh, told the media that AO Syed Khalilullah and junior assistant D Sudhakar demanded Rs 15 lakh from the agency to clear pending salary bills of workers engaged in the work at the medical college by the agency as well as to take back 23 workers who were rejected by the AO stating that they were not qualified.

After bargaining, the accused agreed to do the work for Rs.7 lakh, of which Rs 3 lakh was paid on Tuesday and the remaining Rs.4 lakh was to be paid on Saturday, the DSP said.





# As Andhra and Tamil Nadu talk of more children, a look at the different aspects of Sangh Parivar's view

The conversation on ageing population, demographic change, and political representation of South India is again front and centre. Last week, expressing concern over the ageing population in his state, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said that his government was contemplating a legislation to incentivise families to have more children. Days later, Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin, referring to a potential reduction of South India's share in parliamentary seats after delimitation, remarked: "Why not aim for 16 children?" While the two CMs currently sit on opposite sides of the political divide at the Centre, they appear united in their concern. They also seem to echo what has been heard from the Sangh Parivar multiple times over the years — albeit for different reasons. There are three strands to the Sangh's stance on population. Its senior leaders have spoken of "population imbalance" and openly batted for Hindus having more children in order to balance a "rising population of Muslims". The Sangh has also agreed with southern states over rising "regional imbalance" vis-a-vis population growth. At the same time, population control also remains on top of the Sangh's agenda. Speaking at an event in 2005, former RSS chief K S Sudarshan had said: "Do not get into the trap of two-child or one-child norm. If you go by the one-child norm, in the next 120 years, there won't be any successors in your family. You should not have less than three children and if you have more, the merrier it is." In 2013, at an event in Kochi, RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale, said "bigger Hindu families would prevent minorities" from gaining the upper hand in population in certain parts of the country. He added that elite Hindus should "seriously review family planning". In 2015, VHP leader Champat Rai said at a press conference that family planning "was no more a personal matter for Hindus". He went on to suggest that "if they continued to remain content" with a single child, "Muslims would take over the country". The regional concern in its July issue this year, RSS-linked weekly Organiser echoed the concern of southern states on delimitation and political representation. Opposition parties, particularly those who do well in the South, feel a delimitation exercise based on population could skew elections in favour of parties in the more populous North as it would give the North more parliamentary seats. "Regional imbalance is another critical dimension that will impact the delimitation process of the parliamentary constituencies in the future. The states from the West and South are doing relatively better regarding population control measures and, therefore, fear losing a few seats in Parliament if the base population is changed after the census," Organiser's editor Prafulla Ketkar wrote in an editorial. Ketkar argued that the country needed a policy to ensure that population growth does not disproportionately impact any religious community or region, which, he says, "can lead to socio-economic disparities and political conflicts". Demography: Dividend vs imbalance In his 2022 Vijaydashmi speech, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat raised



the issue of "population imbalance" and asked for a comprehensive population control policy that applied to all without exception. "...When there is population imbalance, new countries are created," he said. The RSS chief also underlined that India's large young population could be leveraged but cautioned that the country needed to plan for the nation when this population ages in the next 50 years. In the interim Budget speech in February this year, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman even announced plans to set up a high-powered committee to consider the challenges arising from fast population growth and demographic changes. The committee has not yet been formed. The numbers While the 2011 Census does record a higher birth rate among Muslims compared to Hindus, the birth rates of the two communities are said to be progressively converging. The decline in the decadal growth rate of Muslims between 1991 and 2011 has been recorded to be higher than Hindus. According to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data, the fertility rate in India stands at 1.99. The fertility rate for Hindus stands at 1.94. Among SCs, it is 2.08 and among STs it is 2.09. For OBCs, the fertility rate is 2.02, almost comparable to the national rate, while for non-SC/ST, non-OBC castes it stands at 1.78. Among Muslims, the fertility rate has been calculated to be at 2.36. Many in the RSS have even argued for a legislation that could keep Dalits and tribals out of the purview of a population control law. Underlining population control as a "sensitive issue", a senior RSS office bearer told The Indian Express: "A large section of Hindus too have higher fertility because of poverty and illiteracy. There are several models for population control. One among them also talks about Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to be left out of the purview of a population control law. All models must be considered to arrive at a decision." Legislative attempts In 2017, the Assam Assembly passed the "Population and Women's Empowerment Policy of Assam" that was further amended in 2021 to exclude those with more than two chil-

dren from applying for government jobs. In 2023, the Uttar Pradesh Law commission came up with a proposal that would deprive those with more than two children of government subsidies. This is still being considered. At the Union level, there has been ambiguity as far as the stated government position is concerned. In 2019, Rajya Sabha MP Rakesh Sinha, seen as associated with the RSS, moved a Bill to enforce a two-child norm. He proposed incentives for those adopting the small family practice and penalties for those contravening it. In April, while replying to a de-

bate on the Bill, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that instead of using "force (jabran)", the government had successfully used awareness and campaigns to achieve population control. He urged Sinha to withdraw his Bill, which the latter did. In response to a petition in the Supreme Court seeking a two-child norm in the country, the Centre in 2020 expressed its unwillingness to bring in a coercive law and said it would be "counter-productive". However, in May this year, Union Minister Prahlad Singh Patel said a law for population control would be brought in soon.

## Earliest known asymmetrical animal

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,



# Kanti Bajpai writes: All the BRICS a stage

Politics is largely a series of public performances. The more public the performance, the more it is staged and theatrical. The just-concluded BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, was an international performance by its five original members and the new members of the grouping. It was a staged event and it was theatre, and its importance is precisely that. To say that it is a performance is not to be cynical. Performing politics is vital. The American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, wrote a book on Indonesian society in which he described a "theatre state". His point was not that we should think about a state — and its executive arm, the government — as if it merely acts theatrically in front of an audience (the public). The point instead is that the state is theatre: It performs its own power and legitimacy through spectacular public demonstrations and thereby signals what it wants and stands for. The BRICS Summit, and summits all over the world, are theatre in this sense. Their performance is a demonstration of their power and legitimacy, and it is a signalling. Much has already been written and more will be written about the Kazan summit and what it achieved. Far more important than anything of substance in Kazan were three performances.

The first performance is the staging of BRICS. Every year, BRICS must demonstrate its continued existence and cohesion and, therefore, its *raison d'être* and seriousness. The whole purpose of the meetings is to indicate that the grouping represents something consequential and is not some evanescent invention of a playful (British) Goldman Sachs executive. This is why the joint communiqués run into dozens of pages that deal with virtually every international problem you can think of: A lot of words and paragraphs signifying that the summit is not just five leaders having a good time in the marquee lights, but rather weighty interventions for the good of the world. In fact, no one expects anything material to happen in the wake of the summit. The importance of the communiqué is not what it contains; it is that everyone signed off on a joint document. It is its messaging of solidarity and seriousness that matters, not the actionable substance it promises.

The second performance, related to the first, is the staging aimed at one's domestic audience — by far the most important audience. Here, the aim is to provide a moment and space in which the leader and his officials signal the majesty and competence of the state to their own public. When the BRICS leaders sit together at the same table, they offer mutual political recognition and affirm each other's supremacy at home. The summit is also a show of competence — a demonstration that one's leader and officials can stand toe-to-toe with the other leaders and officials. It is hard work, but diplomats love summits: They are the most public performances of their roles, which otherwise are cast in the shadows. The third performance of the BRICS Summit is to stage its anti-Westernism and specifically anti-Americanism. Our playful Goldman Sachs impresario who coined the term BRICS did not intend to birth an anti-American grouping. But that is what BRICS is and has been since its inception. Every year, the five original member countries rehearse their



anti-Americanism in full global view — there is no other stage on which they can do this as freely since there are really no dissenters here. Behind all the boilerplate verbiage on multipolarity and multi-alignment is anti-Americanism (and anti-Westernism). China leads the anti-American play in BRICS, since in economic terms, it is two-thirds of the aggregate economic power of the group (in nominal GDP terms). The others join in, with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Right now, it is Russia that is the most anti-West, but all the others harbour their own grievances against the US and its Western allies. For Moscow, the Kazan summit was intended to tell the Americans that Russia is not isolated despite the sanctions and condemnations since February 2022. For Beijing, the summit conveyed that China is the alternative leader of the world, and it even has the grudging backing of India, a US strategic partner. For Delhi, the summit is a signal to the Americans that India has other potential partners, and Washington should not take it for granted — that the finger-wagging over human rights and democratic backsliding, the status of minorities in India, and the public accusations of assassination plots, among other things, will invite Indian payback. BRICS' stance against the US and its allies may be diplomatically polarising, but it is also the promise of checks and balances in the international system. For many smaller countries, a balance-of-power world is a more comfortable world even if it means a degree of polarisation between two or more camps. The positive externality, to use the language of economics, of big power rivalries is that it creates room for manoeuvre for smaller states.

To say that BRICS and its summitry is a performance is not to be cynical about it.

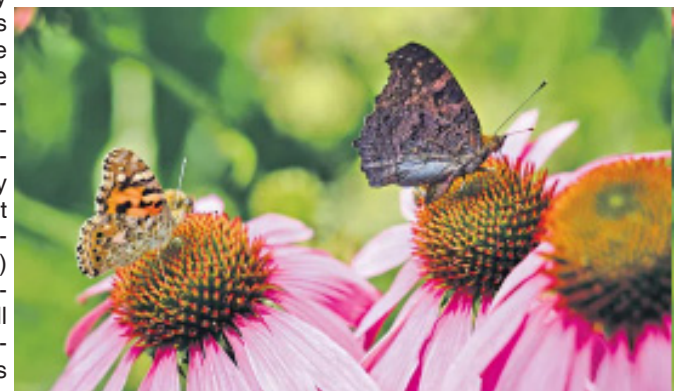
Social life, including international social life, is thoroughly imbued with performances, more or less ritualised. Performance, therefore, is inescapable. We can read the BRICS summits for their substance and come away disappointed at the absence of truly actionable initiatives. The

point of BRICS is quite different. It is to signal the possibility of a different kind of international politics from the dominant. We may or may not agree with that politics, but BRICS has to be thought about in its tacit messaging and not in the literalness of its pronouncements.

## How do pollinators get attracted to flowers?

For our ecology to survive and for food production to occur, pollination is essential. Flowers attract pollinators through a combination of visual, olfactory, and nutritional strategies. Brightly coloured petals in hues like yellow, red, and blue are designed to catch the attention of specific pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, each of which may be drawn to different colours. For the male reproductive cells (pollen) to reach the female reproductive parts (ovaries), all seed plants must be pollinated. This preserves genetic variation and enables the plants to generate seeds for species propagation. In order for pollinators to locate them, flowers have evolved to exhibit clues. In addition, pollinators are frequently compensated with nectar for the "service" they render. Many flowers also emit enticing fragrances that signal the presence of nectar, creating an appealing invitation for pollinators to visit. The nectar

itself serves as a reward, providing essential sugars and nutrients, which encourages pollinators to return to the same flowers repeatedly. Additionally, the shape and



structure of flowers play a crucial role; tubular blooms may attract hummingbirds, while flat flowers often cater to bees and butterflies by providing easy landing platforms. Visual patterns known as "nectar guides" further direct pollinators to the nectar source, increasing the likelihood of effective pollination. Moreover, flowers may time their blooming to align with the activity patterns of their preferred pollinators,



# A high-profile murder in Delhi-NCR and a witness's fight against a political strongman

Ajay Katara only has to close his eyes to remember that night from 22 years ago. A little past midnight, on February 17, 2002, the fog hung low as his scooter went down the largely deserted stretch of Hapur Road that connects Ghaziabad to Delhi. He was on his way home to Shahdara after attending a friend's daughter's birthday party in Govindpuram, near Ghaziabad. Merely 2 km from his friend's house, near the Hapur toll booth, an SUV hit his scooter from behind, throwing him to the ground. It was a minor hit, but it left Ajay shaken and angry. He dusted himself off and walked up to the driver's side of the SUV, itching for a fight. What he saw next would alter his life forever. In the passenger seat was a man in a red kurta and a white stole. Hours later, the man, 23-year-old Nitish Katara, would end up dead. And Ajay would go on to become a prime witness in the murder case. In the car with Nitish that day were Vikas Yadav, son of D P Yadav, a strongman-politician who has been in several parties, including the Samajwadi Party and BSP; Vikas's cousin Vishal Yadav; and their associate Sukhdev Pehalwan. The trio had allegedly abducted Nitish from his classmate's wedding in Ghaziabad, killing him hours later. The Yadav family was reportedly irked by Nitish's relationship with D P Yadav's daughter Bharti. Hours later, Nitish's burnt body was found near Hapur, in Bulandshahr's Khurja village, not far from where Ajay had met with the accident. In the years that followed, 37 cases were slapped on Ajay, including two of rape, one under the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences Act, and multiple cases of cheating, extortion, and forgery. Over the years, courts have dismissed the charges in 35 of the 37 cases against him. The Allahabad High Court stayed proceedings in the remaining two cases — one filed by D P Yadav against Ajay for allegedly insulting him over a phone call in 2009 and the other, a fraud case registered against him in 2018 — until the petitioners provided sufficient evidence for the court to proceed with the cases. Last month, the Supreme Court ordered a CBI probe into what it said was a fraud played on it by some advocates and others who filed a fake petition, allegedly to implicate Ajay in a criminal case. Rattling off dates, FIR numbers and the status of each case, Ajay claims that there have been at least 10 attempts made on his life — including an alleged case of poisoning and multiple instances of shooting. "Four of these cases are still pending in courts," he says. While the accident in the early hours of February 17, 2002 — and the events that followed — "wrecked his life", Ajay believes that he was perhaps ordained to be there, at the spot, that night. Ajay Katara Last month, the Supreme Court ordered a CBI probe into what it said was a fraud played on it by some advocates and others who filed a fake petition, allegedly to implicate Ajay in a criminal case. (Express photo by Amit Mehra)

"I was reluctant to attend the birthday party that day. It was too cold at night and I really didn't want to go back home on a scooter, but my friend called me twice in the evening, insisting I attend. God works

in mysterious ways," says Ajay, 51, who then worked as a small-time gemstone supplier to jewellery shops. He now runs a plant nursery and is the co-owner of a wholesale tyre business.

On October 3, 2016, the Supreme Court sentenced Vikas and Vishal Yadav, as well as Sukhdev Pehalwan, the third accused, to 25 years of imprisonment without remission.

Ajay as eyewitness In his testimonies in court, Ajay has insisted that when he walked up to the SUV that knocked him down, he instantly recognised the occupants — all of them, except the man sitting in the passenger seat in front, Nitish. The driver, as it would turn out later, was Vikas Yadav. "Everyone knew D P Yadav and his son Vikas," says Ajay. D P Yadav's reputation preceded him. From UP's Bulandshahr to Haryana's Sirsa, he had a string of cases pending against him. According to his 2014 Lok Sabha election affidavit, he has several criminal cases against him, including of murder, attempt-to-murder and extortion. D P Yadav's son Vikas was, by then, already embroiled in the 1999 Jessica Lal murder case. A friend of the main convict, Manu Sharma, Vikas was in 2006 sentenced to four years of rigorous imprisonment in the case. Standing near the Hapur toll plaza on that chilly February night in 2002, Ajay instinctively realised that he would not win this fight. He moved his scooter out of the car's way and let it pass. Three days later, TV channels beamed news of a murder in Bulandshahr — a man's body had been found on Shikarpur Road. Ajay watched as the man's mother declared on national television that she knew her son's killers. Then, the dead man's photo came up on screen and Ajay felt a knot in his stomach — he recognised the man. "It was the same man I saw near Hapur, sitting beside Vikas Yadav that day. In the photo, he wore that same red kurta and white stole that I had seen him in," says Ajay. Nitish with mother Nitish with his mother Neelam Katara Ajay says it took him almost over a week to summon the courage to go to the police. He went to the Kavi Nagar police station, where, he claims, the Station House Officer (SHO) didn't hear him. "He was probably scared. When I told him that I had seen the four of them near the Hapur toll plaza that night, he didn't believe me," he says. Ajay says the police ultimately had to take his account seriously since he had provided them the most crucial piece of evidence — that Nitish was seen with the accused minutes before he was found dead. "I gave the police the licence plate number," he says. In August 2002, the trial in the Nitish Katara murder case started in the Patiala House courts. On May 31 the following year, Ajay stood up in court to narrate what he saw on that February night in 2002. That's when his troubles began.

The threats In March 2003, nearly two months before his court appearance, Ajay says, an acquaintance called him to Lucknow to discuss something "that would benefit me greatly". "As we engaged in small talk, D P Yadav walked into the room. I realised I had been trapped into negotiat-



ing with him. He told me to turn into a hostile witness. When I refused, my acquaintance, who was still in the room, said, 'Do you want to see your family dead?'," he says, adding that D P Yadav allegedly offered him money to stay quiet. "I had read the room. I knew I was in danger. So I told him I won't give my testimony, but refused to take the money," Ajay claims. Yet, he reached the courtroom and gave his testimony. In the years that followed, a series of cases were slapped on Ajay, all of which, he alleges, were filed at D P Yadav's behest. The first case against Ajay was filed in September 2003, soon after his first testimony in court, allegedly by a relative of D P Yadav. "According to this person, Saroj, I had misbehaved with her and torn her clothes during an argument in Ghaziabad... I was in Haridwar at that time," he says, insisting that he had never met or heard of Saroj before the case was filed against him. When he returned to Ghaziabad to handle the matter, Ajay claims that D P Yadav allegedly sent goons to the police station to intimidate him. A security detail was put in place for Ajay's safety, which has remained with him for the last 22 years. When The Indian Express reached out to D P Yadav, he denied having registered any case against him. "I have not said or written a single word against him. I can give it to you in writing... I can give you an affidavit saying we haven't said or done anything against him." When asked about the attempts on Katara's life, Yadav said, "Why would I do that? Katara is a fraud who likes to flaunt his gunmen around and earn his money through illegal means. He's saying all these lies to keep his security detail with him." However, while dismissing the cases against Ajay, judges have in successive orders taken note of the harassment he has had to face. In one such case hearing in 2024, the court reiterated an order from 2015, where it observed, "The only public witness Ajay Katara, who could not be influenced and stood by his statement, has needed court orders for police protection and is being subjected to multiple criminal complaints

by relatives of the appellants or persons associated to them. The fact that all these complaints and cases arose only after he surfaced before the police speaks for itself." In 2019, during the hearing of a case in which Ajay was accused of raping a minor in 2014, the court observed, "The malafide behind the allegations against the applicant is writ large in view of factual backdrop of the status of applicant, his admitted enmity with Vikas Yadav and Vishal Yadav... the history of his false implication in as many as twenty four (24) criminal cases, wherein either final report was submitted by the local police in favour of applicant or the case resulted in acquittal, or the proceedings have been stayed by the High Court." Despite the drama in his life, Ajay says he yearned for a "normal" life. In 2005, then 32 years old, he married a girl from Ghaziabad, but the marriage ended in a divorce and a case against Ajay under IPC Sections related to dowry and mental abuse. In 2008, the Allahabad High Court disposed of the dowry case against Ajay after the police filed a cancellation report in February 2007 — despite multiple summons, the woman and her lawyers had failed to appear in court. Between 2007 and 2009, Ajay claims he faced multiple attempts on his life: in June 2007, he was allegedly shot at in Meerut while he was there for work; and in November 2007, he was kidnapped and flung from a high-speed car. In 2013, a POCSO case was filed against Ajay after he accused of kidnapping and raping a 12-year-old girl from Badaun. The case would stretch on for nearly a decade despite being disposed of by the Allahabad High Court on December 16, 2019. On April 2 this year, the High Court dismissed an application seeking revision of its 2019 judgment. It was in this case that two special leave petitions were filed in the Supreme Court, allegedly to implicate Katara, after which the apex court on September 20 ordered a CBI probe. In 2013, a woman accused Ajay of raping her in a hotel near Mehrauli. "Once again, I was informed of the case through TV news channels. I was in Andamans this time,"