

Water quality dips during Ganesh idol immersions in Hussain Sagar: TGPCB report

Hyderabad: The Telangana State Pollution Control Board (TGPCB) has monitored the water quality of Hussain Sagar lake during the Ganesh Chaturthi festivities last month and carried out water quality checks at six locations around the lake before, during, and after the immersion of idols. The findings from this year's analysis indicate an increase in Total Suspended Solids (TSS) and turbidity during the immersion process at all locations. While there was a reduction in these values after the immersion, the post-immersion levels did not return to those observed before the event.

Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) saw an upward trend at four of the monitored locations, including the platforms opposite NTR Park and near Lumbini Park. However, the increase in TDS levels was more pronounced opposite to NTR Park at platform no 1 and 2 and opposite to NTR Park at platform no. 2, while other sites showed minimal changes. Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) and Biochemical Oxygen

Demand (BOD) levels were elevated across all sites, followed by a decrease in both parameters post-immersion. Dissolved Oxygen (DO), which dropped during the immersion period, returned to near-normal levels after the immersion activities concluded.

The study also noted an increase in the total Coliform count from before to during the immersion, with a slight decrease afterward at most locations. Lepakshi Handicrafts was an exception, where the Coliform levels continued to rise post-immersion.

Additionally, Chromium, a heavy metal, was detected at five of the six locations, with concentrations ranging from 0.017 to 0.041 mg/L. The location at Lepakshi Handicrafts was the only one where chromium was not detected. However, compared to the year 2023, the data revealed a general decrease in TDS values in 2024, except at Platform No.1 opposite NTR Park, where the levels remained consistent with last



year. The COD values showed a decline at three locations, while DO and BOD levels were largely consistent between both years. While total Coliform counts remained

steady across both years, Fecal Coliform levels decreased in 2024 compared to the previous year. No significant changes were observed in heavy metal concentrations.

Telangana ranks third in Talent Growth, says Xpheno report

Hyderabad: Xpheno, has released its 2nd Edition of the Annual Study of Indian states for Talent Corridors and Talent Exchange Patterns for the 12 months ending September 2024. According to the latest report released by Kamal Karanth, co-founder of Xpheno, Telangana proved itself as one of India's leading states in terms of talent absorption, retention, and growth. The research highlights the state's Positive Talent Balance (PTB), ranking it third in India, closely behind Karnataka and Haryana. According to Xpheno T+ve Report 2024, Telangana has achieved a milestone by tripling its Positive Talent Base (PTB) to 20,200 for the 12-month period ending September 2024. The state achieved PTB with 61,600 white-collar professionals being absorbed from other states, while 41,400 skilled workers transitioned out of the state. The state's active white-collar talent pool now totals 4.18 million, with 50% having at least one year of experience. Hyderabad retains its status as the key talent hub of Telangana, housing 1.87 million experienced professionals and continuing to attract both domestic and international enterprises. Interest from jobseekers is strong, with 2.1 million candidates from across India expressing a preference for opportunities in Telangana, including approximately 440,000 from Bangalore alone.



When SC cleared way for teen's IIT seat, it had a happy precedent: Prince, now in his 4th year at IIT Bombay

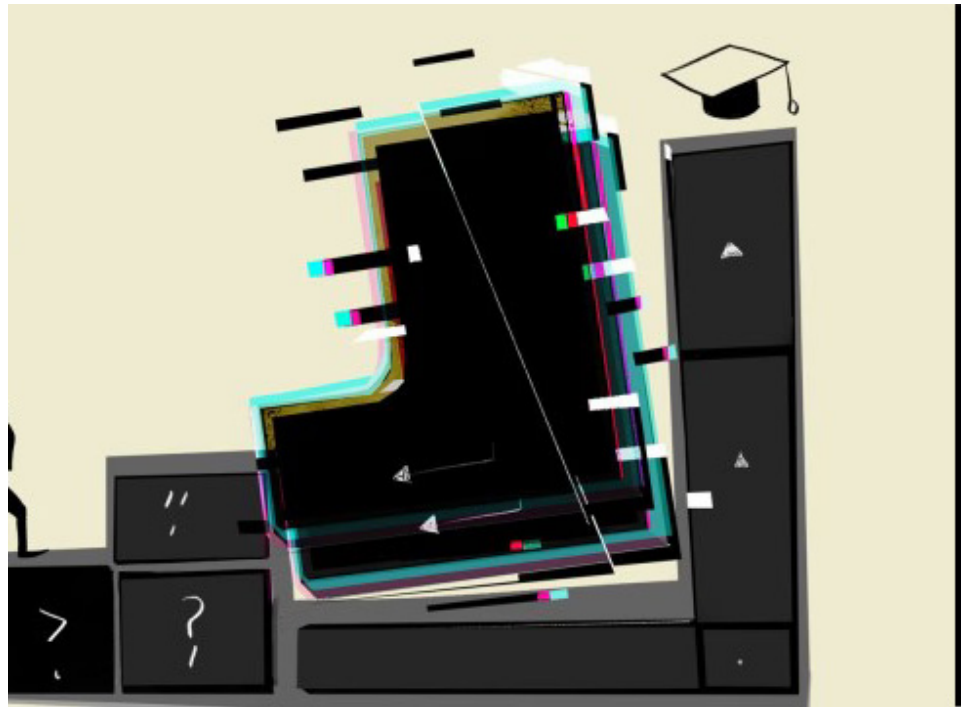
Some time in June, Prince Jaibir Singh saw an unknown number flashing on his mobile phone. For Rajendra Kumar, the unknown caller sitting nearly 1,500 km away in Titora village in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district, a lot was riding on Prince taking his call that day. A part-time tailor and a daily-wage labourer at a Meerut factory, Rajendra's son Atul Kumar, 18, had lost his seat at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Dhanbad on June 24 due to an alleged technical glitch that prevented him from paying his acceptance fee of Rs 17,500 three minutes before the 5 pm deadline. Not only did Prince answer Rajendra's call, he also encouraged him to approach both the Supreme Court and his own lawyer to fight for Atul's lost seat. On Monday, the Supreme Court directed IIT Dhanbad to create a supernumerary seat in its electrical engineering BTech course for Atul, who belongs to the Scheduled Caste, in the same batch to ensure that no existing student is disturbed in the process. "We are of the view that a talented student should not be left in the lurch," a Bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra ordered. Prince told The Indian Express, "I received a call from Atul's father in June. After hearing about their situation, I was sure it wasn't their mistake. They tried to make the payment before the deadline, but the system didn't allow it. So I encouraged them to take the issue to court and my own lawyer." Prince, who belongs to the Dalit community, too had lost his seat at IIT Bombay on October 31, 2021, due to his bank facing a technical glitch, which prevented him from paying the seat acceptance fee before the deadline. On October 29, 2021, he uploaded the requisite documents but realised that he was short of the total amount required to pay the fee. On October 30, 2021, his sister transferred the balance amount to his account. For 10-12 hours that day, he tried to make the payment but a technical error at the bank's end prevented him from doing so. On October 31, 2021, he went to a cyber cafe to make the payment. Once again, all his attempts failed and the deadline expired. The Supreme Court came to his rescue on November 20, 2021, saying that the fault lay not with the student but with the system.

Three years on, Prince, now 21, is a fourth-year civil engineering student at IIT Bombay with a CGPA of 7.7. He currently heads the business team of the institute's satellite project, and is thriving both academically and socially. Just like Atul's family, in 2021, Prince followed the example of Siddhant Batra, a senior who had lost and then regained his seat at IIT Bombay — Siddhant had "inadvertent(ly)" clicked on the "wrong" link that was meant to withdraw from the process.

Reflecting on his legal battle, Prince says, "If a candidate has tried to make the payment and it doesn't go through before the deadline, the candidate should challenge it... I was fortunate that the verdict in my case came out on the day of my orientation, so I did not miss any classes." However, his first year at IIT Bombay was fraught with challenges. Between adjusting to IIT's academic rigour

and recovering from the stress of his legal battle, he struggled to keep up. "We were in the middle of the pandemic at the time. I did my entire first semester from home. I set foot on campus only in the second semester. My CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average) in the first semester was around 6.7. Everything was overwhelming at first," Prince admits.

Despite his early difficulties, Prince says he found his footing by the second year. "In the first year, I often found myself lagging behind since I was allotted a reserved seat at a comparatively lower score. By the second year, it becomes alright," he says. Early into his journey at IIT, Prince says he realised the importance of extracurricular activities. "If you're a 9-pointer without extracurriculars, it doesn't count for much if you don't hold any positions of responsibility," he says, adding that he signed up for sports (basketball and swimming) and joined the institute's satellite team. Born and raised in Ghaziabad as the youngest of five siblings, Prince is the first in his family to attend an IIT. Originally from Shamli in Uttar Pradesh, his grandparents worked as farm labourers. His father, however, managed to become an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) in the Delhi Police, while his mother is a home-maker. After his class 10 from a school in his neighbourhood, he got a full scholarship at Delhi Public School, Ghaziabad. Talking about the pressures a student from the reserved category deals with, he says, "...There is a combination of discrimination and academic pressure on campus. While no one discriminated against me directly, discussions about res-



ervation tend to create a sense of alienation at times. Especially, when people say things like, 'You got a seat with a low score'. But what can we do? It's in the Constitution," he says. Stating that at IIT Bombay, he has never felt shy about his background and that there are regular discussions on campus about these topics, he says the institute has a SC/ST welfare cell, where students can raise concerns about discrimination. As he nears the end of his academic journey, Prince looks back at his

own experience of navigating IIT's computerised admission system. "The counselling process by JoSAA (Joint Seat Allocation Authority, which is responsible for counselling for admission to IITs) is totally computerised. One wrong click and you are left out entirely. They should come up with a way to accommodate such candidates. Years of hard work should not be erased by a technical issue. There will always be challenges but if you have worked hard for something, you should fight for it," he says.

YouTube sued in U.S. over claims that the site is fuelling a mental health crisis

Arkansas sued YouTube and parent company Alphabet on Monday, saying the video-sharing platform is made deliberately addictive and fuelling a mental health crisis among youth in the state. Attorney General Tim Griffin's office filed the lawsuit in state court, accusing them of violating the state's deceptive trade practices and public nuisance laws. The lawsuit claims the site is addictive and has resulted in the state spending millions on expanded mental health and other services for young people.

"YouTube amplifies harmful material, doses users with dopamine hits, and drives youth engagement and advertising revenue," the lawsuit said. "As a result, youth mental health problems have advanced in lockstep with the growth of social media, and in particular, YouTube." Alphabet's Google, which owns the video service and is also named as a defendant in the case, denied the lawsuit's claims.

"Providing young people with a safer, healthier experience has always been core to our work. In collaboration with youth, mental health and parenting experts, we built services and policies to provide young people with age-appropriate experiences, and parents with robust controls," Google



spokesperson Jose Castaneda said in a statement. "The allegations in this complaint are simply not true." YouTube requires users under 17 to get their parent's permission before using the site, while accounts for users younger than 13 must be linked to a parental account. But it is possible to watch YouTube without an account, and kids can easily lie about their age.

The lawsuit is the latest in an ongoing push by state and federal lawmakers to highlight the impact that social media sites have on younger users. U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy in June called on Congress to require warning labels on social media platforms about their effects on young people's lives, similar to those now mandatory on cigarette boxes.

UPS launches innovative temperature-controlled facility in Hyderabad for pharma industry

UPS has launched its specialized healthcare-focused cross-docking facility in Hyderabad. Designed to keep the Indian pharma customers and their needs at the core, this pharma-grade facility comes with global freight forwarding capabilities. It is equipped with advanced temperature control capabilities, ensuring that sensitive products are always stored and transported within their required temperature ranges – preserving their efficacy and safety. Providing an additional layer of security for temperature-controlled pharmaceutical shipments, it has a capacity to hold or sort 15 pallets in +15°C to +25°C, 7 Pallets in +2 to +8°C and 50 pallets under uncontrolled ambient conditions. This enables pharma companies to distribute their products more efficiently, eliminating the need for prolonged warehouse storage. The facility also serves as a safety net for critical shipments. It ensures that even in contingency situations, these vital shipments remain protected. UPS Healthcare has been helping companies make their operations more precise, productive, scalable and smart for over 20 years. We have a team of more than 10,000 healthcare logistics experts, spanning 216 facilities with a total of 17 million square feet (10 million cold chain dedicated) of cGMP and GDP-compliant healthcare distribution space servicing over 200 countries and territories. UPS Healthcare has been investing to meet those needs of this growing and innovating market for a long time, building out a 'network within a network' to make sure we provide the best quality, end-to-end service on the market. Globally, these investments include advanced technologies like robotics, automated picking systems,



and track-and-trace solutions have a vital role to play as they help streamline order fulfillment, reduce errors, increase efficiency, and ensure regulatory compliance. In 2023, UPS Healthcare launched UPS Premier in India, a unique track, trace and redirect technology-led service that prioritizes and tracks critical shipments within 3 meters of their location anywhere in UPS's global network.

Adhering to Good Distribution Practice (GDP) standards, the facility meets strict regulations governing medicinal product distribution while maintaining high-quality standards throughout the supply chain—ensuring regulatory compliance at all times and contributing to patient safety. These standards include detailed documentation and traceability for all products, which enhances accountability and enables efficient

recall processes if needed. "With India at the forefront of the healthcare industry, we're committed to simplifying logistics for our customers," said Grégory Goba-Blé, Head of UPS India and Director of MOVIN Express. "When it comes to the future of healthcare, it's all about innovations in biologics, specialty pharmaceuticals and personalized medicine. We're here to back up these innovations with precision logistics that fit like a glove."

Elevating Navratri celebrations with Tech and Style

Navratri, the nine-night festival of nine colors, is a time of celebration, devotion, and renewal. Each day represents a different form of the divine, and the vibrant hues associated with each day symbolize the diverse nature of the goddess. And, why just co-ordinate your outfits to the nine colours, when you can match your gadgets as well? We've curated a perfect and diverse lineup of smartphones to choose from, that not only compliment your look but also helps you capture the unforgettable garba moments and lets you stay connected with your loved ones!

Crafted From Culture | OPPO Reno12 Pro 5G Manish Malhotra Edition

This Navratri, celebrates India's rich heritage with the OPPO Reno12 Pro 5G Manish Malhotra Limited Edition. Inspired by the grandeur of Indian festivals, this special edition smartphone blends traditional gold filigree and floral motifs with cutting-edge technology, making it the perfect accessory to complement your Navratri Day 2 outfits. Priced at INR 36,999, available at OPPO's e-store, Flipkart, and retail outlets. Celebrate Beauty with Durability | OPPO K12x 5G in Feather Pink

The OPPO K12x 5G Feather Pink

Edition is a perfect fit for Day 8 of Navratri, capturing the spirit and beauty of the festival with its vibrant color. Designed to keep up with your vibrant lifestyle, this smartphone boasts a durable build that can handle all the excitement of dancing the Garba and enjoying lively celebrations. With its sleek Damage-Proof Armour Body, you can dance worry-free, knowing your phone is protected from accidental drops. Plus, the IP54 splash resistance means you can enjoy festive foods and drinks without a second thought! Celebrate in style with the OPPO K12x 5G, priced at INR 12,999, and during Flipkart's Big Billion Days Sale, you can snag it for as low as INR 10,999*. OPPO F27 5G & OPPO F27 Pro+ 5GAs we celebrate the happiness and enthusiasm of Navratri, let the OPPO F27 5G illuminate your festivities! With its lively Halo Light pulsing to the

rhythm of your favorite music, this stunning Amber Orange edition ensures you stand out during every dandiya night. On the 4th day, embrace growth and harmony with the

As we honor strength and valor on the second week of Navratri, the OPPO F27 Pro+ 5G in Midnight Navy reflects this spirit, ensuring that rain won't dampen your celebrations. The vibrancy of Pink with the de-

OPPO F27 5G
Dare to Flaunt

Halo Light
AI Ultra-Clear Imaging
Armour Body



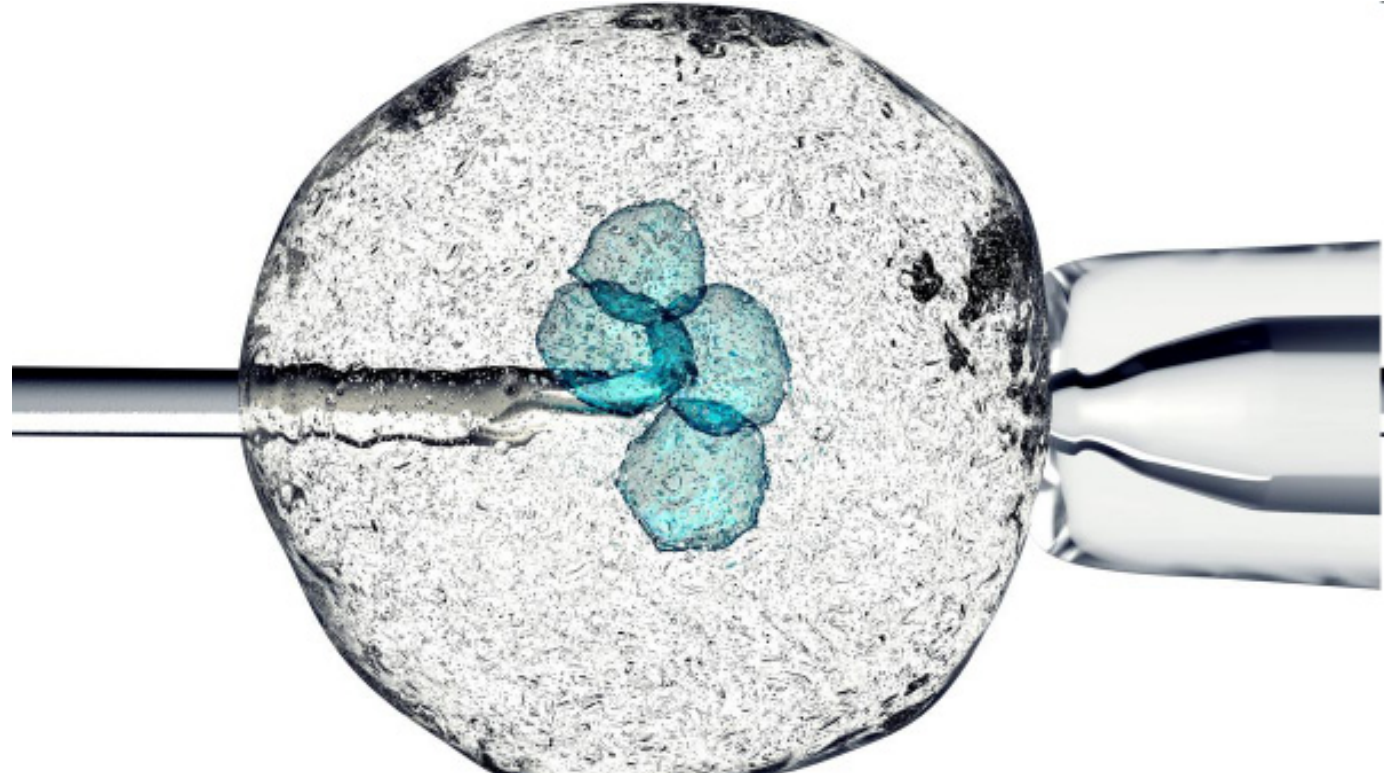
vibrant Emerald Green edition, perfectly capturing the spirit of garba and allowing you to relive joyful moments with loved ones.

lightful Dusk Pink edition, adding a pop of color to your festivities. With the AI Eraser 2.0, you can effortlessly remove unwanted objects from your snapshots, ensuring every memory is picture-perfect.

Stem cell therapy to cure T1 diabetes? The Indian perspective

Stem cell therapy is a cutting-edge development in regenerative medicine that holds the promise of a functional cure for Type 1 diabetes (T1D) by enabling the body to regenerate insulin-producing beta cells. A recent report of a woman with type 1 diabetes (T1D) in China who regained her insulin production has made headlines. She received a transplantation of reprogrammed stem cells that reportedly “reversed” the disease. It marks a significant milestone in diabetes management. This is the first ever successful breakthrough in regenerating functional insulin-producing cells through stem cell therapy. There are other such trials that are still underway. T1D is an autoimmune condition where the immune system attacks and destroys the insulin producing beta cells of the pancreas, resulting in diabetes. That means you are insulin-dependent to manage the ailment for life. For decades, managing T1D has relied on insulin therapy alone. In type 2 diabetes, the insulin that is produced by the body is either insufficient or ineffective, which is managed mostly by taking oral drugs. Insulin may be needed in some cases. Stem cell therapy in T1DM

The concept of stem cell therapy lies in regenerative medicine. Pluripotent stem cells that have the ability to transform into any cell type are pre-programmed into insulin-producing cells and transplanted into the human body. These pre-programmed cells will then start producing insulin and help regulate glucose. This is a potential game-changer in the treatment of T1D. Scientists have been making great strides in creating the cells that would mimic the pancreatic islets in functionality from different pluripotent stem cell sources. These include embryonic stem cells (ESC), derived from early-stage embryos, which can differentiate into beta cells; and induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs), adult cells that can be genetically reprogrammed to a pluripotent state and can differentiate into insulin producing cells. These offer a less controversial alternative to ESC. The challenges Although stem cell therapy does show positive outcomes in a controlled setting, there exist several challenges in achieving desired results in real-world practice. Firstly, the fact that it is an invasive procedure, and any invasive procedure carries risks. Also, newly-transplanted cells are prone to rejection by the body and will require long-term immune suppression that could cause infections and cancer. Even the encapsulation technology that protects the transplanted cells from immune rejection carries a risk in the long term. The requirement for periodic replenishment to sustain the durability and functional efficiency of the beta cells is also under question. In addition, regulatory approvals by the authorities need to be addressed before becoming available to the broader public. The Indian perspective In India, there are more than 8.6 lakh people living with T1D. The costs of healthcare for a person with T1D are far higher than for a person with the more common type 2 diabetes. The day-to-day life of a person with



T1D can be challenging, considering total dependence on externally administered, multiple daily insulin injections. As it occurs in the very early years of life, there is also a likelihood of early complications. In our country, where the demand and costs are high, treatments involving stem cell transplantation are far from reality. The availability of newer insulin therapies and improved insulin delivery devices, including more sophisticated insulin pumps that

are AI-enabled, in addition to continuous glucose monitoring devices, have made management of T1D more efficient, especially in children. Given these facts, stem cell therapy represents an exciting frontier in the treatment of T1D, offering the potential for a functional cure. While significant advances have been made in the generation of pancreatic islets from different stem cell sources, further research is needed to address its long-term efficacy. If success-

ful, stem cell therapy could revolutionise the management of T1D, moving beyond insulin replacement to a treatment modality that restores the body's ability to regulate blood glucose naturally and essentially cure the disease. However, considering the cost and, more importantly, the scalability to the population at large; more time may be required to establish stem cell therapy as an accessible, standard routine treatment for T1D.

Six girdads and boymoms share how they're bringing up children differently

Girdad and boymom. If you're chronically online, chances are you will have come across these hashtags. A girdad refers to a man who parents only daughters, a term that gained traction after Kobe Bryant's tragic death in 2020 in a helicopter crash. Many fathers embraced the hashtag to express pride in raising daughters, inspired by Bryant's relationship with his daughter Gianna, who also perished in the crash. The term “boymom,” on the other hand, has been around for some time but gained notoriety after a TikTok influencer sparked controversy earlier this year with a since-deleted video in which she discussed her differing feelings for her daughter and son. She expressed a strong connection to her son, saying that he “has her heart and soul,” and that her “whole life, she wanted to be a boy mom.” Both terms have been met with mixed reactions online, with some supporting the sentiments and others criticising the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and bias. The #girdad

trend often centers on men's virtue signaling, with their proximity to their daughters who will become adult women of the world, while #boymom can perpetuate the “boys will be boys” mentality, implying boys are inherently different and excusable in their behaviour. Turning these notions on their heads are six girdads and boymoms we talked to. From teaching sons how to understand a “no,” and respecting boundaries to empowering daughters to assert them, these parents are reshaping raising children. Here's what they had to say about ensuring their kids grow up differently than they did. Manoj, who grew up in the small town of Malda, West Bengal, is raising his daughter — who was born during the COVID-19 pandemic in Delhi — differently than his own didactic upbringing. “Mine was a hierarchical household where you couldn't be too bold in your thought process, nor speak against an elder, simply because they were an elder,” he said. “This is why we (his wife and him) have made it our mission to have our daughter not grow

up in a top-down household.” At just 5, Manoj's daughter is already assertive. “When she says no, we don't push. If she doesn't want to do something or go somewhere, we respect her decision, we don't try to convert it into a yes.” Mother to two boys, aged four and eight, Divya said the one principle she has drilled into her sons' heads is that domestic responsibilities will be shared by all family members. “My 4-year-old peels veggies, while my older one knows how to cut them and can even make a salad for himself. They also help me and their dad with laundry,” Divya said. She recalled how her son loved a kitchen set they bought him at 5, despite people saying, “Ye ladkiyo ka hai (This is for girls).” When her son said, “Pink to girls ka colour hai (Pink is for girls),” Divya remembered she was coincidentally wearing a blue dress, so she asked him if that made her a boy. Divya also told us how her father-in-law would often say, “Yeh ladkiyo ki tarah kyu ro raha hai” (Why is he crying like girls?)

Why Italy matters to India

In this age of 'polycrisis', Italy and India share common interests but also joint challenges in the Indo-Mediterranean Sea. This region is vital for global trade, especially for Italy which ranks sixth among the world's largest exporters. It is also crucial for digital connectivity: the Blue-Raman submarine data cables will soon connect Genoa with Mumbai. Piracy in the Red Sea, the conflict in Gaza and Lebanon, and the effects of Russia's aggression against Ukraine on agricultural and oil trade require our joint efforts to ensure a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Mediterranean. Therefore, Italy has stepped up its commitment in security and defence in the Indian Ocean Region and West Asia. Apart from joining the Group of Friends of UNCLOS in 2021, it has been the second largest contributor to the European Union Naval Force (EU NAVFOR) Atalanta and the European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASoH). Since February 2024, Italy has been a driving force in the EU military operation, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, to safeguard freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Gulf.

Naval presence We have also increased our naval presence in India. After joining the Information Fusion Centre of the Indian Ocean Region in March 2023, patrol ship ITS Francesco Morosini visited Mumbai in August 2023. The Italian Carrier Strike Group (aircraft carrier ITS Cavour and frigate ITS Alpino) is currently in Goa. We are expecting the amazing tall ship ITS Amerigo Vespucci in Mumbai from November 28 to December 2. It is the training vessel of the Italian Navy. We are also planning to build an 'Italy village' that will offer cultural, fashion, and culinary events, as well as conferences and exhibitions.

ITS Cavour is a short take off and vertical landing ship constructed by the Italian naval shipyard Fincantieri and has been in the service of the Italian Navy since 2009. As a 'dual use' vessel, it can project maritime power, but also provide logistical autonomy and serve environmental and humanitarian interventions. We are delighted that PASSEX exercises (training exercises to develop and maintain mariner skills and strengthen interoperability) are being held during the stay. ITS Cavour is also hosting a workshop on defence industry cooperation. At the same time, it serves as a hospital to operate children with facial malformations: a team of Indian and Italian doctors is performing surgeries under the framework of 'Operation Smile', organised by the Smile House Foundation, Italy. Defence ties Bilaterally, the Italy-India defence cooperation relies on a defence agreement signed in October 2023. This document lays the basis for a further expansion of our defence ties in many fields, from research to industrial cooperation, maritime domain awareness, sharing of information, and education and environmental issues related to military activities. At the same time, our defence cooperation strongly relies on regular talks such as the Italy-India Military Cooperation Group meeting, held in March in New Delhi. When it comes to defence production, Italy matters to India: two of our companies, Leonardo and Fincantieri, are ranked among the first 50 of SIPRI's top arms-producing and military services companies in



the world (2022), while other companies, such as Beretta, Elettronica and KNDS, albeit smaller in size, possess outstanding technical know-how. Over the last few years, Italian defence companies have shown to be open to joint ventures, co-production, and joint development. Fincantieri is cooperating with Cochin Shipyard since 2020, while Elettronica signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bharat Electronics Limited in 2019. This partnership approach is in line with India's 'Make in India' ambitions and can respond to growing requirements by the Indian armed forces. Italy also looks at India as a valuable partner for development of the Indian Ocean Region, from East Africa to India's shores via the Arabian Sea. Both Italy and Indian are keen promoters of Africa in international fora and jointly supported the inclusion of the African Union in the G20. During the Italy-Africa Summit in January, Italy launched a new initiative with Africa, the Mattei Plan, aimed at creating a mutually beneficial partnership to realise several important projects across the continent. This initiative mobilises Italian capabilities with €5.5 billion in public investments and the involvement of all public entities and the private sector. Among the first countries chosen for this plan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Mozambique are adjacent to the Indo-Mediterranean area. The ambition is to engage with other partners to realise sustainable projects which will help drive economic and social development in Africa. At the same time, Italy has supported the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Amid the conflict in Gaza and the escalating tensions in West Asia, we believe that IMEC can be part of a long-term vision to ensure shared prosperity in the region. Railway connections, ports, logistics and custom systems can support peace endeavours along a trade route that is as essential for Italy as it is for India.

People-to-people ties Italy matters to India as a friend. We host the second largest Indian diaspora in the EU. Italy is a re-

liable economic and defence partner, the second largest manufacturing country in Europe, and a robust security provider taking up responsibilities as a member of the EU and NATO. What persists over time are

people-to-people ties. These bonds dig deep into an ancient history of contacts between our two civilizations and find new inspiration with every story of cultural exchange, integration, and business success.

World Health Organization approves first mpox diagnostic test



The United Nations health agency said on Friday (October 4, 2024) that it had approved the use of the first diagnostic test for mpox, a key tool in countries battling outbreaks. More than 800 people have died across Africa from mpox, where the disease has been officially detected in 16 countries, according to the African Union's disease control centre. "The approval for emergency use" of the test "will be pivotal in expanding diagnostic capacity in countries facing mpox outbreaks, where the need for quick and accurate testing has risen sharply", the World Health Organization said in a statement. The test, called the

Alinity m MPXV assay and manufactured by Abbott Molecular Inc., enables the detection of the mpox virus from swabs taken from human lesions. "By detecting DNA from pustular or vesicular rash samples, laboratory and health workers can confirm suspected mpox cases efficiently and effectively", the WHO said. "Limited testing capacity and delays in confirming mpox cases persist in Africa, contributing to the continued spread of the virus", it said. The approval of the test "represents a significant milestone in expanding testing availability in affected countries," the statement quoted Yukiko Nakatani, an assistant director-general of WHO, as saying.

No ceasefire yet, says Israeli envoy, defends Israel war a year after October 7 attacks

Despite global calls for a ceasefire, Israel will not stop its airstrikes and operations in Gaza and Lebanon, said Israel's newly-appointed Ambassador to India Reuven Azar. Speaking to The Hindu in an interview just ahead of the one year mark since the October 7 terror attacks, Ambassador Azar, who earlier served as Israel's Deputy National Security Advisor, and Foreign Policy Advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said he still hopes to convince India to change its policy on funding UNRWA and not banning Hamas, and admits that regional connectivity projects like IMEEC have been stalled due to the war.

With the death of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, will Israel end operations on Lebanon- and agree to a ceasefire now?

The operations in Lebanon will end when the 70,000 Israeli residents of our communities in northern Israel will be able to return safely to their homes free from the threat of Hezbollah terrorists.

So the war will continue?

We have done what we had to, as a result of the fact that our army wasn't big enough, and we could not simultaneously deal both with the Gaza strip and Lebanon. In the last year, we had to evacuate about 70,000 residents from the North (Israel-Lebanon border areas) because our defence systems, the Iron Dome and others could not defend border areas from direct fire and tank missiles. So, now that we have the attention span and the capability, we are now trying to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701, that says very clearly that Hezbollah forces are not allowed South of the Litani River. We have opened with a series of attacks against Hezbollah, and we are going to continue escalating and putting pressure until they agree to the international consensus reached. We've been calling the people of South Lebanon to leave their houses as soon as possible, especially in those areas and those towns in which Hezbollah has embedded missiles inside homes.

Israel is willing to go and bomb them because they have missiles buried. Now that Lebanon is part of this war, would Qatar be a part of the war, as Hamas leaders live there?

Qatar is not attacking us with missiles. We are not an irrational country, we are a democracy, we only use force that is needed in order to prevent attacks against us or retaliate when we are being attacked. So countries that are not attacking us should not be concerned.

Nearly a year after the October 7 terror attacks, how close is Israel to achieving the goals it set out at the beginning: to eliminate Hamas, bring back the hostages, and ensure that Gaza cannot be a threat... and is there a timeline to the ceasefire which India has been calling for?

We have managed to remove the majority of military capability that Hamas had before the war. I'm talking about the capability to threaten Israel with thousands

of rockets daily. We have cut their supply chains because we are sitting at the border with Sinai (Egypt). In addition to that, there were a lot of strategic tunnels, including attack tunnels and we've destroyed most of that. They are continuing to operate in a more sporadic way, attacking our forces, but unable to attack our border, unable to attack our villages. As to the hostages, we've managed to bring back about 150. Mostly, as a part of the ceasefire deal (in December 2023) with Hamas and there were also some 25 that we managed to bring with IDF operations. But unfortunately, we still have 101 hostages in the hands of Hamas that we haven't been managing to release. Our dilemma is the fact that we want to destroy Hamas, but we also want to bring back our hostages.

According to figures accepted by the UN, 40,000 people are dead, 15,000 children amongst them, 100 hostages, as you said, still remain in custody...is the human cost acceptable to Israel?

The human cost is absolutely tragic. It's really something that we didn't want to do. And if you ask any Israel in the last 15 years, the last thing Israel wanted to do is to have to go back to Gaza after we left it in 2005 and this is actually one of the reasons that we were surprised on October 7. As far as the figures are concerned, we believe that they include people that died of natural causes. From their point of view, we have killed 40,000 civilians and no terrorists were killed, which is ridiculous. We have killed at least 15,000 Hamas and other terrorists, and about 5,000 civilians have died by misfired Hamas rockets, according to our estimates. Now the reason that civilians were killed were as a result of the Hamas tactics. They were breaking any rule, any norm of humanity, operating from within hospitals, from within schools, from within civilian areas. We are taking a lot of precautions and working according to protocols, including hundreds of lawyers that sit in on every war and assist the military to decide when to strike and when not to strike.

If that is true, then why is the world asking Israel to stop? Why is India, the UN calling for a ceasefire?

The UN system is problematic, as it has a majority of countries that are hostile to Israel and they appoint people who are biased. It is a natural tendency of countries to try to promote a ceasefire, because they are concerned, and they have interests that they want to promote. But at the end of the day, when you look at the real situation on the ground, the powers that be, the United States, the West, India and other countries, understand that we have a right of self-defence. There's also the geopolitical cost for Israel: the Abraham accords have been put on hold, Countries like Ireland, Spain, Norway have now recognized Palestine. Plans like I2U2, YouTube and IMEC have gone into cold storage. The underlying issue here is that despite this setback created by the war, the cooperation between Israel and its neighbours is increasing in the military and intelligence sphere, and for the first time in the history of the Middle East, the



United States, Israel and moderate, pragmatic Arab countries have cooperated militarily to cope with the threat of Iran [when it sent missiles to Israel this year]. And there are some countries that are very short sighted, like the countries you mentioned, Spain, Ireland, etc, because apparently they don't understand that. They are recognising Palestine. India recognises Palestine. But that was in another era. We think that in the current context, recognising Palestine in the context of the attacks of October 7th would actually send a message to the terrorists that they can continue doing this.

India abstained on a UNGA resolution last week that would have pushed for sanctions against Israel. Did you discuss the vote with your Indian counterparts?

We always have discussions, especially with our friends, and we are happy that India didn't support this resolution. However, India has voted against Israel on other resolutions in the past year. When Prime Minister Modi met with President Abbas last week he promised unwavering support to the people of Palestine, support for a two state solution, which your Knesset has rejected. Do you feel India's support over the last year to Israel has been strained by the continuing violence and the lack of a ceasefire? Well all countries are concerned about the prolongation of the war, but the answer to your question is, no. I think that the only things strained in this year [between India and Israel] are our regional projects. We have to wait until this conflict is over, and then re-engage in the building of this regional projects with India. India has also not banned Hamas, or designated it as a terror organisation and it has increased its funding of UNRWA- these all run counter to what Israel has asked for... I hope that we'll be able to convince the Indian government, as we've done with other governments like the US government, to stop funding UNRWA. On Hamas, I will just say that this may take time, we will continue presenting our information, and it's going to be up to the sovereign government [in India] to decide its policy.

A year since IMEEC was launched, the participating countries haven't been

able to meet because of the conflict- has IMEEC been shelved?

The vision of IMEEC continues to exist because of the very simple reason is that it makes sense, and it brings together a bunch of countries that are interested in creating connectivity. Israel began to speak about this vision since 2008. The Middle East is now divided into two parts. You have the crescent of chaos- Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and then you have this arc of stability (including UAE, KSA and Jordan). India has good relations with Iran and all the others you mentioned.

But the question is, when you have a geopolitical project that you want to build to connect Asia with Europe, are you going to do that with Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq?

India is already part of INSTC and Chabahar with Iran... Well, good luck with that. Any sustainable project needs two prerequisites, security and political stability. If [India concludes that it] can trust the security and political stability of Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, be my guest. We're continuing our dialogue with the Indian government of the issue of IMEEC, and projects to create connectivity through this corridor. I'm sure that this will re-emerge once the war is over.

Israel has also been discussing schemes to bring Indian workers to Israel, particularly as many Palestinian work permits have been cancelled. How many have already gone?

At the moment there are about 10,000 Indian workers as part of two schemes- one through an inter-governmental mechanism and one with the private sector. We also hope that Indian companies will come to build infrastructure projects like the Metro in Israel and bring in their own skilled labour. We are both old peoples, but young countries. Eventually, we are a growing country and we lack a lot of workforce, so we are capable of employing hundreds of 1000s of people, Palestinians, Indians, Chinese, Filipinos, etc.

Regarding the work permits, we have the sovereign right to decide who we are going to allow into our country. We can, of course, you know, reemploy Palestinians when we have reached some stability.

How Israel took the war straight to Iran's 'axis of resistance'

On April 1, 2024, when Israel bombed the Iranian embassy complex in Damascus killing Brig. Gen. Mohammed Reza Zahedi and other officers, Iran saw the war coming towards it. In December 2023, Israel had killed another senior general of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Sayyed Razi Mousavi, in a strike in Damascus. In retaliation, Iran launched a missile attack towards what it called a Mossad base in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan. It was a token response. But the April 1 attack marked a flagrant violation of Iran's sovereignty. On April 14, Iran launched an unprecedented direct attack on Israel, by firing over 300 drones, cruise and ballistic missiles. Iran wanted to change the rules of the game in its hostile engagement with Israel. The message Tehran was trying to send was that if Iranian sovereignty is breached or its officers were targeted, Iran would respond directly. And the message was well-received in Jerusalem in April. Israel's retaliation for the Iranian attack was a meek, unclaimed air strike. But the situation would change in the following months, with two key developments in Iran.

In May, President Ebrahim Raisi, whose political and security views aligned with those of Iran's conservative establishment, was killed in a helicopter crash. Masoud Pezeshkian, a moderate who preferred engagement with the West and restraint in West Asia, was elected President in June. In Iran's transition, Israel found an opportunity to test its resolve. On July 30, Israel killed Fuad Shukur, a senior commander of Hezbollah and a close confidant of Hassan Nasrallah, the group's Secretary General, in an air strike on a Beirut suburb. A few hours later, Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas's Doha-based political chief who was in Tehran to attend Mr. Pezeshkian's swearing-in ceremony, was killed in the Iranian capital. In two strikes in two geographies, Israel hit three of its enemies — Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas — within 24 hours. Both Iran and Hezbollah vowed retaliation. Iran later reportedly decided to hold back its fire to give Gaza peace talks a chance. But Gaza ceasefire talks reached nowhere with Israel continuing to pound the enclave, killing hundreds of Palestinians every week. Iran, wary of triggering a wider war, still did not respond. Hezbollah, on the other side, fired some 300 short-range rockets, after Israel carried out air strikes, most of which were intercepted. Immediately after the rocket attack, Nasrallah said the retaliatory strikes were complete, signalling that he did not want escalation.

By that time it was evident that neither Iran nor Hezbollah wanted an all-out war with Israel. Iran wanted the axis, mainly Hezbollah and Houthis, to continue to bleed Israel through rocket, drone and missile strikes. Nasrallah, when he started firing rockets in the aftermath of the October 7 attack, wanted to keep some military pressure on the Israeli troops in the north at a time when they were waging a full-scale invasion of Gaza in the south. But Israel was ready for a wider war, for a number of reasons.

One, it knew that the Arab countries would do nothing besides issuing state-

ments. It has absolute deterrence against its neighbouring Arab states. Two, if Israel's actions trigger a wider war with Iran, Israel knew that the U.S. would come to its defence. In the early stage of the conflict, the U.S. had moved its carrier strike groups to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. When Iran launched its first direct attack on Israel on April 14, it was the U.S. that put together a defensive coalition which intercepted most of the projectiles. Three, a larger war, with direct support from the U.S. and its allies, would be an opportunity for Israel to hit Iran's critical infrastructure and weaken the regime in Tehran.

So the two sides that were in the conflict had two different approaches towards the conflict. Iran wanted the axis to fight Israel. The axis (Hezbollah) wanted a limited war. But Israel was ready for escalation. And when Israel sensed reluctance on the side of its rivals, it decided to go with full force. Israel had been preparing since 2006 for the next war with Hezbollah. When Hezbollah expanded more like a conventional military force, particularly since its involvement in the Syrian civil war, Israel was preparing like a militia to attack Hezbollah. Once it decided to escalate the war, it first exploded the pagers and walkie talkies, indiscriminately targeting Hezbollah's ground functionaries, its communication system as well as Lebanese civilians—these are tactics typically used by militias and terrorist entities. And then, Israel launched waves of massive air strikes on Lebanon, targeting Hezbollah's senior commanders (also killing 1,000 people in a week). And then, the IDF went for Hassan Nasrallah, dealing the heaviest blow to Hezbollah. It was a bottom-up



attack, aimed at degrading the most powerful non-state actor in the world. And when Hezbollah was still in shock, Israel launched its fourth ground invasion of Lebanon. It wants to push Hezbollah to the north of the Litani River and create a buffer along the Israeli-Lebanese border, something which Israel had tried to do and failed in the past.

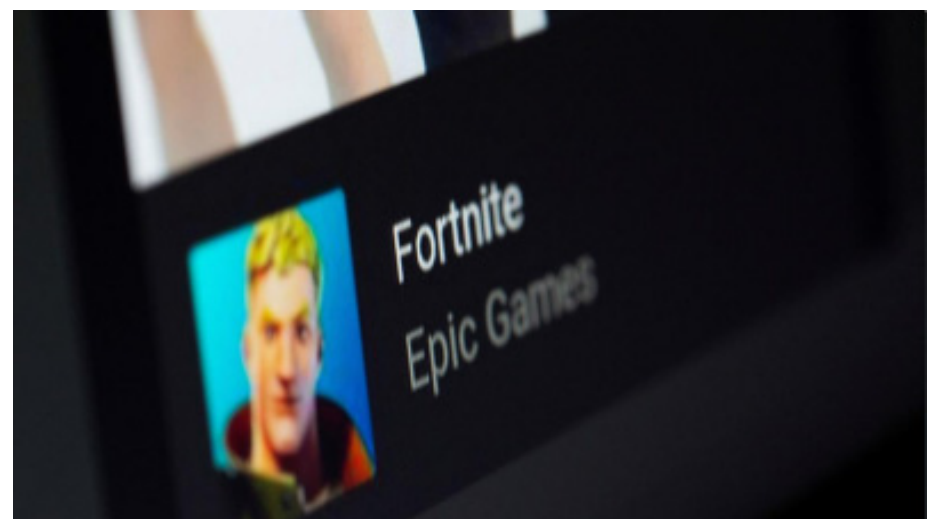
Next stage's to be seen whether Hezbollah would be able to quickly regroup itself and fight back, like it did in 2006. It's also not clear whether Israel, which is yet to meet its declared objectives in Gaza even after a year of fighting, would be able to quickly achieve its goals in Lebanon. Israel's last three invasions of Lebanon did not go as per its script. But a bigger question, irrespective of the result of

Israel's Lebanon invasion, is what would be the next stage of the conflict. As of now, Iran's strategic reluctance has not been rewarding. Nasrallah was a central figure in Iran's axis and Hezbollah was a key constituent of Iran's forward defence doctrine. When Iran waits, Israel goes with full force against the axis. And the weakening of the axis would invariably weaken Iran's deterrence, making it more vulnerable to a future Israeli attack. To bolster its deterrence and regain its regional credibility, Iran's leaders, who did not retaliate after Haniyeh was killed in Tehran, might consider a direct strike against Israel. But if Iran responds with force, that would provide a perfect excuse for Israel to launch direct strikes on Iran, dragging the U.S. also into the conflict. There is no off-ramp.

Epic Games sues Google and Samsung over phone settings, accusing them of violating antitrust laws

Video game maker Epic Games sued Google and Samsung on Monday, accusing the tech companies of coordinating to block third-party competition in application distribution on Samsung devices. At issue is Samsung's "Auto Blocker" feature, which only allows for apps from authorised sources, such as the Samsung Galaxy Store or Google Play Store, to be installed. The feature is turned on by default but can be changed in a phone's settings. The tool prevents the installation of applications from unauthorised sources and blocks "malicious activity," according to Samsung.

In a lawsuit filed in San Francisco federal court — Epic's second against Google — the company said Auto Blocker "is virtually guaranteed to entrench Google's dominance over Android app distribution." Epic, developer of the popular game "Fortnite," filed the lawsuit to prevent Google from "negating the long overdue promise of competition in the Android App Distribution Market," according to the complaint. "Allowing this coordinated illegal anti-competitive dealing to proceed hurts developers and consumers and un-



dermines both the jury's verdict and regulatory and legislative progress around the world," Epic Games said in a post on its website. Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Samsung said it "actively fosters market competition,

enhances consumer choice, and conducts its operations fairly." "The features integrated into our devices are designed in accordance with Samsung's core principles of security, privacy, and user control, and we remain fully committed to safeguarding users' personal data.

BJP seeks to undercut anti-incumbency in Haryana with an invisible Khattar

As the campaign for the Assembly election in Haryana reaches a crescendo, the silence and invisibility of former Chief Minister and current Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar rings loud. Mr. Khattar, the Chief Minister of Haryana for nine years, before he was replaced by incumbent Nayab Singh Saini just before the Lok Sabha election got underway earlier this year, was deeply involved in deciding tickets for party candidates before the Assembly election campaign was rolled out, but he has been largely absent since. Even in Karnal, an area that he has represented both in the State Assembly in the past and currently in the Lok Sabha, Mr. Khattar's face is missing from the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) posters. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed four public meetings in the State, including one rally in Palwal on Tuesday — the first one was in Kurukshetra on September 14, followed by Sonapat on September 25, and Hisar on September 28, before Palwal on Tuesday. Out of these, Mr. Khattar was present only at the rally in Hisar.

"He (Mr. Khattar) was replaced as Chief Minister largely because the BJP wanted to undercut anti-incumbency in the State, especially among party workers," a

senior leader of the BJP, who did not wish to be named, said. A decision was made to coalesce the BJP's campaign behind Mr. Saini's face, along with that of Mr. Modi, which in Karnal at least seems to be having a mixed result. In Karnal, voters have been vocal over their dissatisfaction with the Khattar administration, especially on his excessive reliance on the bureaucracy, and his digital push. "Karnal has had the distinction of being the CM's city for nine years. What have we got in return for it? There is no new factory, the infrastructure hasn't improved either, and law and order is in tatters. We can't step out at night," 46-year old Vinod Kumar, a photographer who works at a local studio in Karnal city, said. Having voted for the BJP in the last two elections, Mr. Kumar said he would go along with the larger mood this time.

Ishwar Kumar who belongs to the Pal community, an Other Backward Class (OBC) group, is a salesperson by profession. He rues the pockmarked roads that he has to suffer on his daily commute. "Under Mr. Khattar's regime, the bureaucracy ruled. His scheme to digitise land records, started in good faith, but he let the bureaucracy have a free run. Now people are running from pillar to post to get the records



corrected," Mr. Kumar said. He has been an ardent BJP supporter and is not planning to shift in this election season, with Mr. Saini's appointment as CM persuading him to stay. "The BJP, for the first time ever, gave the opportunity to an OBC. No one from our community ever got jobs in the Congress regime that worked only for Jats or SCs (Scheduled Castes). Appoint-

ing Nayab Singh Saini, they (the BJP) showed this could change," Mr. Kumar said. The BJP, by affecting a change of the Chief Minister while accommodating Mr. Khattar as Union Minister, is attempting to turn the page on its prospects in Haryana, signalling to the electorate to vote for it in spite of Mr. Khattar rather than because of him, in a redrawing of the last nine years.

Haryana Assembly elections: Decoding Haryana's political landscape

The story so far: The Haryana Assembly elections for a 90-member House are slated for October 5, and as the campaign intensifies, the State's political dynamic is undergoing significant changes. Caste equations, internal party wranglings, the decline of sub-regional elites, and the impact of social movements are reshaping the electoral landscape.

Is there a rural-urban divide?

Yes, a pronounced rural-urban divide exists in Haryana's political scenario. As the crow flies to the west of Delhi and towards Punjab, there is a visible distribution of economy and society along the varying geography of the State. Urban regions of Gurugram and Faridabad in the south and Ambala, Panipat and Kurukshetra in the north have more industries and are dominated by businessmen, traders and middle-class voters who are occupationally linked to the non-farm sectors. The agrarian belt in the south-central area, from Rewari, Bhiwani, Jhajjar, Jind with a primarily rural population and some peri-urban population in Rohtak, Sonapat, Hisar are places where voters are closely linked to the farming sector. This region is also home to a significant Jat population, often described as the Jat belt of Haryana.

What are the electoral issues in the Jat belt?

Speaking to Jat farmers in the villages of Uchana Kalan, we came across three

major issues shaping the electoral discourse for this campaign. These were: Kisan (the farmers' protest and the contentious farm bills, which were later rescinded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government), Jawan (the Agniveer scheme launched by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in New Delhi), and Pehelwan (the wrestlers' protest against the alleged sexual harassment by BJP politician and former chief of the wrestling federation). In some villages, a few disgruntled young men also add a fourth dimension to this discourse by bringing up the issue of rising unemployment. Essentially, these three or four factors are consolidating the anti-BJP vote and playing a key role in shaping the anti-incumbency electoral mobilisation, particularly among the Jat community.

What is the mood in other areas?

In the industrial regions and among businessmen, traders as well as among many service-based communities within the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), one can easily find support for the BJP, which ranges on multiple persuasions, from Prime Minister Modi's strongman image to the BJP's emphasis on nationalism and patriotism. However, even within this support base, there is no visible enthusiasm for any State-level leadership within the BJP.

How are regional parties faring?

Regional parties like the Indian Na-

tional Lok Dal (INLD) and the Jannayak Janata Party (JJP), which traditionally rely on their rural and Jat support bases, lack substantial organisational presence in urban centres. They have not established strong cadres in cities, limiting their influence among urban voters. Conversely, the BJP and the Congress have a more substantial foothold in urban areas. Their better-established organisational structures, broader appeal, and focus on urban development issues enable them to dominate the urban electoral landscape. Urban voters tend to prioritise concerns such as infrastructure, employment opportunities, and governance — areas where national parties often concentrate their efforts. The parties are also more tightly organised around communities in the rural areas compared to urban constituencies, which is also reflected in the campaigning style in both regions.

To campaign in rural areas, large-scale community events are held for entire villages with 500-600 people gathering in every programme. In the urban areas, however, campaigning is done in a more diffused manner with small locality-based events limited to 50-100 voters at the most. While a candidate in a rural constituency covers almost three to four big villages in a day, an urban candidate is holding almost 15-20 small meetings throughout his/her campaign schedule in a single day. This divide highlights the differing priorities and

approaches taken by political parties to reach out to urban and rural voters in Haryana.

What is the OBC stand on Congress' caste census proposal?

The Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Haryana are a critical demographic consisting over one fourth of the population, and both the Congress and the BJP are vying for their support. Traditionally, OBCs have leaned towards the BJP, attracted by the party's policies and leadership. The Congress' recent advocacy for a caste census and promises to enhance OBC welfare have introduced new dynamics into this alignment. The Congress has proposed increasing the OBC creamy layer income limit to ₹10 lakh, surpassing the BJP's increase to ₹8 lakh. This move aims to make more OBC individuals eligible for reservation benefits in government jobs and educational institutions. Additionally, the party's support for a caste census is designed to address issues of social justice and representation, appealing to OBC sensibilities. Recognising the importance of retaining its OBC voter base, the BJP has also intensified efforts to court them. The party has implemented policies to increase reservations in government jobs and education for OBC youth. Financial support measures, such as scholarships and loans for OBC entrepreneurs, have been introduced to demonstrate commitment to the community's economic advancement.